

Project Title:
NON-FOR-LESL :
Non-formal Learning can prevent
Early School Leaving
Project Number: NI-2014-1-DE03-KA201-001570

Intellectual Output 1

Comparative Study Analysis Report:
Preventing Early School Leaving
through the recognition and validation
of non-formal learning,
within formal education –
from theory to school practice

March 2015



Erasmus+

Non-formal Learning Can Prevent Early School Leaving



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1. Introduction

The NONFORLESL project aims to address one of the main educational challenges in Europe that of Early School Leaving (ESL). Therefore it contributes to the efforts of EU countries to meet the headline target set in the Europe 2020 Strategy by reducing ESL to less than 10%.

According to the European Commission Staff Working Paper on Reducing Early School Leaving (2013): “reducing ESL to less than 10% by 2020 is a headline target for achieving a number of key objectives in the Europe 2020 strategy and one of the five benchmarks of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020). Europe 2020 highlights three mutual reinforcing priorities: ‘smart growth’ based on knowledge and innovation, ‘sustainable growth’ promoting a greener economy and ‘inclusive growth’ fostering high employment and social cohesion. High rates of ESL are detrimental to the objective of making lifelong learning a reality and a constraint to smart and inclusive growth in Europe”.

Although since 2003 when the Education Council set itself a benchmark to reduce the average rate of ESL to not more than 10% by 2010, many efforts have been made by member states to tackle ESL, in 2009 the ESL rate was 14.4% measuring only 3.2% reduction to the percentage of 2000. As a result the Council has renewed its commitment to the 10% benchmark with a new target date of 2020.

The above European Commission’s Report reflects on the policies that member states have taken since 2003 in order to reduce ESL. The comprehensive strategies that have been taken by EU countries can be summarised under three main categories:

- Prevention (early school education and care, measures at system level), such as the “High quality preschool education for all in Sweden, the prolongation of compulsory education in Poland, Netherlands, Italy and Hungary, the desegregation policies taken in Hungary and Bulgaria, the positive discrimination measures taken in Cyprus through the allocation of additional resources to schools with disadvantaged pupil population e.g. Zones of Educational Priority (Cyprus), The Ambition reussite programme (France), the increasing permeability of educational pathways, the strengthening vocational pathways (e.g. Providing attractive alternatives to ESL (Spain).
- Intervention (measures at school level, student focused measures), such as Schools as Learning Communities (Rural Education Project in Romania), early warning systems (Digital absence portal in



Netherlands), enhancing the involvement of parents, (The Home-School Community Liaison in Ireland), Teacher education, empowerment and motivation (Comenius Project: THE GOLDEN 5 which aimed to improving teachers' competences to handle difficult classroom situations), Extra-curricular activities (Open Schools in Naples), personalised learning (Personalised programmes for educational success in France), improving guidance (Career Orientation and Guidance in Netherlands).

- Compensation (second chance opportunities, re-entering mainstream E&T, Comprehensive support), such as the BelvarosiTanodaAlapitvany Foundation in Hungary which is a second change school, support to re-enter mainstream education (Project Learning for Young Adults in Slovenia, Transition classes in France), recognition and validation of prior learning (New Opportunities Initiative in Portugal).

The NONFORLESL Project can be grouped under the measures taken for intervention at the school level since it addresses many of the aspects being explored by the EU countries (empowerment and motivation, personalised learning, student focused measures, extra-curricular activities), but at the same time it has elements for prevention of ESL, as the tool to be produced will be geared for students at risk in order to motivate them to change their decision. Having said that the NONFORLESL Projects comes to fill in the gap that appears in relation to practical measures that affect the educational policies and curriculum implementation, as well as teaching, learning and assessing.

Bearing in mind the above and in order to promote the aims of the NONFORLESL project the 6 partners of the consortium have been involved in a Comparative analysis of the main issues under investigation: (a) Early School Leaving (ESL), (b) validation of non-formal learning within formal education and (c) students' assessment.

In the following report an attempt will be made to:

- Present the EU perspective of the two main issues under investigation: ESL and the validation of non-formal learning.
- Draw conclusions bearing in mind the results of the five national reports.
- Present the reports of the 5 partner countries (Romania, Italy, Greece, Germany and Cyprus) in relation to the main issues of concern both at the theoretical level and the practical level conducted through a survey research among teachers and students.



2. EU perspective in relation to Early School Leaving

Early School Leaving (ESL) is a complex phenomenon and has been increasingly recognised as one of the main challenges faced by European societies. ESL can cause serious consequences, not only on the students and their families, but also on the society as whole thus creating economic and social costs.

At the individual level of early school leavers the consequences can be seen throughout their lives, as it reduce their chance to participate in the social, cultural and economic aspects of society. It moreover increases their individual risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. It can affect their lifetime earnings, as well as their wellbeing and their own health. The affects can even be seen on the lives of their children as their decision to leave schooling earlier reduces their children's chances of succeeding at school.

Equally, there are reported effects at the level of economy and society, as high early school leaving rates have long-term effects on the societal developments and on economic growth. Early school leavers tend to participate less in democratic processes and are less active citizens. Innovation and growth rely on a skilled labour force, not only for high-technology sectors but throughout the economy.

It is widely acknowledged that Europe's future depends on its youth. Through its Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU aims to support young people better and to enable them to fully develop their talents to their own as well as to their economy's and society's benefit. According to the European Commission Staff Working Paper on Reducing Early School Leaving (2010): "reducing ESL to less than 10% by 2020 is a headline target for achieving a number of key objectives in the Europe 2020 strategy and one of the five benchmarks of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020). Europe 2020 highlights three mutual reinforcing priorities: 'smart growth' based on knowledge and innovation, 'sustainable growth' promoting a greener economy and 'inclusive growth' fostering high employment and social cohesion. High rates of ESL are detrimental to the objective of making lifelong learning a reality and a constraint to smart and inclusive growth in Europe" (p.4)

In recent years E.U members have joined forces in order to tackle the above problem, as ESL requires strong political commitment. In June 2011 the EU published the Recommendations of the Council on policies to reduce early school leaving and encouraged all member states to follow the recommendations in order to reduce ESL to 10% by 2020. As a result many actions have been taken in order to create comprehensive policies against early school leaving focusing on prevention, intervention and compensation.



Although the reasons for ESL are highly individual nevertheless EU reports highlight that it is possible to identify some recurring characteristics. ESL appears to be strongly linked to social disadvantage and low educational backgrounds. ESL is also influenced by educational factors, by individual circumstances and by socio-economic conditions.

As reported in a European Commission's report ESL is a process rather than a one-off event. It often starts in primary school with first experiences of school failure and growing alienation from school. The main educational factors can be summed in the following: transitions between schools or between different levels of education, mismatches between curriculum and students needs, insufficient targeted support for pupils to cope with emotional, social and educational difficulties and to remain in education, insufficient respond the different learning styles of pupils, insufficient support to teacher to address the variable needs and insufficient personalised and flexible learning arrangements for motivating students to active forms of learning.



3. EU perspective in relation to the validation of non-formal and informal learning

The validation of learning outcomes, namely knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning can play an important role in enhancing employability and mobility, as well as increasing motivation for lifelong learning, particularly in the case of the socio-economically disadvantaged or the low-qualified.

At a time when the European Union is confronted with a serious economic crisis which has caused a surge in unemployment, especially among young people, and in the context of an ageing population, the validation of relevant knowledge, skills and competences has an even more valuable contribution to make in improving the functioning of the labour market, in promoting mobility and in enhancing competitiveness and economic growth.

The European Council's Recommendation (2012/C 398/01) in December 2012 which urge member states to proceed with the validation of non-formal and informal learning, as this type of learning is seen to play an important role in enhancing employability and mobility, while increasing motivation for LLL particularly in the case of socio-economically disadvantaged or the low-qualified people.

Building on the above, various efforts have been made at the school level to intervene and monitor students' motivation and interest for school. It is believed here that, the EU efforts taken in the last five years, in the area of formal, non-formal and informal learning can contribute to the above. Introducing in school the need for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning of students gained in extra-curricular activities can play an important role for the completion of formal schooling.

Research has shown that although learning often takes place in formal settings, a great deal of valuable learning also takes place deliberately or informally in everyday life, which represents a "rich source of human capital" (OECD). However, much of this learning is not visible as the capabilities of the learner cannot be easily proved and validated in order to be used by the society. The 2010 OECD report states that recognition can allow people (students) to complete formal education more quickly, efficiently and cheaply while also



recognition of non-formal and informal learning can also help employers and workers to get a good job match.

According to the OECD (2010) validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning can create four types of benefits:

- Economic benefits by reducing the direct and opportunity costs of formal learning and allowing human capital to be used productively.
- Educational benefits which can underpin LLL and career development,
- Social benefits by improving equity and strengthening access to both further education and the labour market, for disadvantaged groups and
- Psychological benefits by making individuals aware of their capabilities and validating their worth.

Engaging all students, but perhaps more important students at risk, in self-directed and personalised learning through the use of ICT tools (OER) in Open Educational Environments can contribute to the efforts of societies to deal with current educational and social challenges, especially with Early School Leaving.



4. Intellectual Output 1: the procedure followed

As mentioned above the first Intellectual Output to be produced as part of the NONFORLESL project was the Comparative Study Analysis Report: Preventing Early School Leaving through the recognition and validation of non-formal learning, within formal education – from theory to school practice

The aims of the first Intellectual Output were:

- To investigate the current scene among partners in relation to ESL, students' assessment and the recognition and validation of non-formal learning in formal schooling.
- To identify the main areas in relation to teaching, learning and assessing students' performance that need to be addressed for intervening at school level.
- To identify through survey the students' and teachers' views on the above issues.

In order to achieve the above the partners were involved in three main activities as described in the proposal:

- Activity 1 (O1 A1): Quantitative survey study
- Activity 2 (O1 A2): Literature review – document analysis on main issues under investigation – procedure to be followed for implementation of project idea
- Activity 3 (O1 A3): Comparative report for all partners

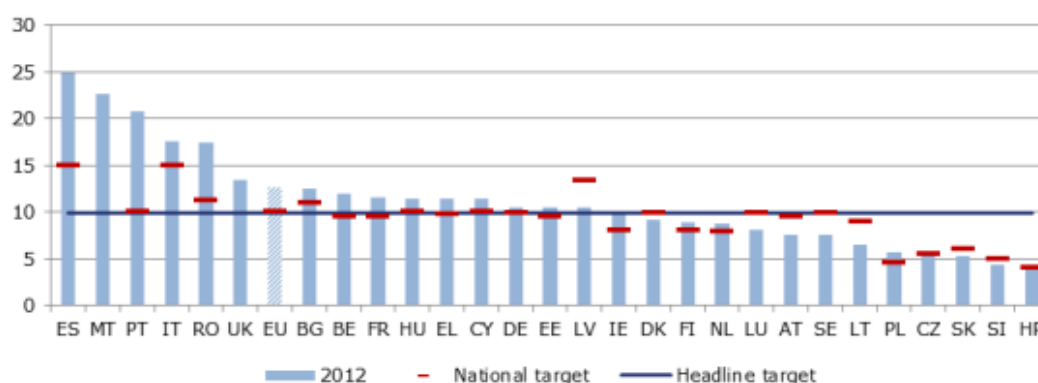
5. Summary of conclusions

Early school leaving (ESL) is a multi-faceted and complex problem caused by a cumulative process of disengagement. It is a result of personal, social, economic, education or family-related reasons. Schools play an important role in addressing ESL but they cannot and should not work in isolation. Comprehensive approaches that focus on the root causes of ESL are required to reduce ESL. Reducing ESL can help towards the integration of young people into the labour market, and contribute to breaking the cycle of deprivation that leads to the social exclusion of too many young people.

Based on the partners reports all countries of the consortium, Romania, Italy, Greece, Germany and Cyprus have made great efforts to deal with this problem and have taken measures at all levels: prevention, intervention and compensation.

Based on the last official report Early School Leaving is seen as a major challenge in Romania (17.4%) and Italy (17.6%), whereas in Greece (11.4%), Germany (10.5) and Cyprus (11.4%) the challenge of ESL seems to be under control.

Figure 1. ESL rate 2012, Europe 2020 target and national targets



Source: Eurostat (LFS).

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/themes/29_early_school_leaving.pdf

According to EUROSTAT 2014 the scene with ESL seems to be following:

1. Romania – 17.7% with a national target of 11.3% by 2020
2. Italy – 15.6% with a national target of 16% by 2020



3. Greece – 9.3% with a national target of 9.7% by 2020
4. Germany - 9.7% with a national target of 10% by 2020
5. Cyprus – 7.9% with a national target of 10% by 2020

The reasons for the above rates are explained in each country report.

Based on the partners' reports the most effective measures taken to deal with the Early School Leaving are:

- The “Second Chance Programme” implemented in Romania to “encourage students who dropped out of school to come back to classes and complete compulsory education and to obtain a vocational qualification” (compensation level).
- The “Zones of Educational Priority” implemented in Cyprus in socially disadvantaged areas with the aim to offer equal opportunities in education and to combat early school leaving, school failure, functional illiteracy, educational marginalization and social exclusion (prevention level).
- The abandoning of “Hauptschule and Realschule” as two separate schools and the merging of these types of schools into one comprehensive school.

The survey research among students and teachers has shown the following results:

- **The main factors that influence students to leave school are:** low grades at school, weakness in main subjects, lack of usefulness of school subjects, family and personal problems and bullying.
- **The possible changes that can be introduced in schools that could help students to complete schooling are:** better understanding in case of family or personal problems and better communication between school and family, recognition of students' talents and interests, introduction of assessment for skills acquired in non-formal learning activities, introduction of more interesting school subjects.
- **The benefits of the introduction of validation of non-formal learning in schools are:** increased motivation for students to come to school and to study harder, better image for the students at risk, assist students to complete schooling and better relationship between students and teachers.
- **The measures taken by teachers to prevent ESL are:** student and family counseling, close communication with students and their families, increase motivation of students and differentiation with regards to students' assessment so that they do not face school failure.



- **The problems identified within the educational system that influence students to leave school early:** overcrowded classrooms with large number of students, unavailability of support teachers in the classroom to offer additional help to students in need, limited financial resources, too many subjects in the national curriculum and inadequacy of formal assessment to record other types of learning other than the subjects taught at school.

- **The problems identified within formal schooling that influence students to leave school early:** school assessment focuses on knowledge, teaching is theoretical with limited practical work due to time available, inappropriate communication channels, too many subjects and too much subject matter to cover.

- **The way the validation of non-formal learning can be introduced into the school procedures are:**
 - in the form of additional evaluation through a certificate to be added to students' portfolio which encourages the official recognition of students' extra-curricular involvement and learning. Students will have to be asked for official proof of the acquisition of the non-formal learning acquired.
 - in the form of partial evaluation, through credits which students can obtain and then be added on their overall assessment.
 - in the form of internal evaluation within each school where students' will be asked to perform in order to show their acquisition of skills and knowledge.



6. Current Scene in Romania

6.1. Introduction

In Romania, the political changes after 1990 led to major economic and social challenges. Among the first social sectors affected by these changes was and still is the education system, which has been marked by a dramatic school dropout rate – one of the most serious problems faced by the school in the Romanian society. School dropout rate has remained high throughout the transition period.

School dropout can be defined as the phenomenon of quitting school, that is, early leaving of the formal learning system, regardless of the level that has been achieved, before obtaining a qualification confirmed by a certificate, which means that the school stage that has been started is not finished. (Cristina Neamțu, 2003, p. 199). Those pupils who drop out of school are not re-enrolled in their former educational institution and are not enrolled in alternative schooling programmes either. As far as the legislation is concerned, school dropout is an issue up to the 10th grade (that is, about the age of 16), which is the last year of compulsory education in Romania. From an educational point of view, school dropout can occur at any age and at any stage of schooling.

Whichever the situation might be, school dropout creates the premises for failure to achieve social integration, as it significantly reduces the individual's chances for self-fulfilment in legal activity fields (Chen, 2008, p. 210).

The long-term effects of school dropout are impacting a country's entire society and economy. According to data supplied by the National Statistics Institute, 52% of the young people who abandon school early became jobless earlier than those who studied for a longer period of time.

In order to provide effective early intervention to support children, school has to enable everyone equal access to quality education, which help people develop all their aptitudes and skills in order to achieve their potential as human beings and members of society. This was clearly stated by Delors Commission (UNESCO, 1996): "Education is at the heart of both personal and community development; its mission is to enable each of us, without exception, to develop all our talents to the full and to realize our creative potential, including responsibility for our own lives and achievement of our personal aims."



6.2. Early School Leaving

6.2.1. Extent of the ESL in Romania: statistics, reasons, policies

In Romania early school leaving increased to 17.5 percent in the last five years, according to a national study conducted by UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor, the National Statistics Institute and the Institute of Education Sciences. However, Romanian authorities aim to lower the rate of students dropping out of school to 12.8 percent by 2017 and 11.3 percent by 2020.

Children from rural and Roma areas register the highest rates of drop-outs. Only 37 percent of 19-21 year olds coming from rural households have completed a high school degree, compared to 68 percent of their peers in urban households. The low number of upper secondary education schools located in rural areas is an important contributing factor. Students from rural areas who attend upper secondary education are often forced to travel long distances or to move away from home to go to schools closer to urban centers, which results in high costs for them and their families. Regarding Roma students, fewer than 10 percent of Roma children complete high school and, though exact estimates vary, it is thought that less than one percent of Roma children complete education. Roma communities tend to exhibit multiple factors that place them at risk for failure in education, as these communities are more likely to be poor, rural, or with adults with low educational attainment and limited capacities to support their children academically. The highest drop-out rates are registered at the transition stages from one cycle to another, especially at or during the 1st, 5th and 9th grades.

The financing of education in Romania is among the lowest in Europe. Public expenditure for education was at 3.4 percent of GDP in Romania, in contrast to countries like Hungary (4.88 percent), Slovakia (4.22 percent), Bulgaria (4.10 percent), Denmark (8.8 percent), Sweden (6.98 percent) and Norway (6.87 percent). Romania has decreased its per-student expenditures, since 2008. The current education budget allocation is unable to fully cover the necessary additional resources to schools to provide effective support to disadvantaged students.

At the national level a series of characteristics of early school leaving have been identified. Among the most important we mention :

- lack of proper financial means of the family (families with a large number of members, families that lack in resources, and have problems providing the proper clothing for their children, families where children have to help with field work or household chores).
- family problems (divorce, alcoholism, domestic violence)



- limited parental education
- immaturity, psychological instability, behaviour disorders
- learning related difficulties and lack of help with studying
- lack of motivation associated with lack of counselling and orientation
- -abandoning school for the world of work; entering the labour market. It does not matter whether it is about working as a day labourer or having a regular activity.
- the educational model shown by parents and siblings (children who drop out of school before completing their studies come from families where parents did not complete their education themselves. The educational model offered by the sibling is even stronger. If there is an elder child who dropped out of school, there are high chances that the younger brother will 'repeat' the same scheme.

6.2.2. Good practices for prevention and intervention

For some years the Romanian state has been offering different social programmes in order to keep students in institutionalized forms of education.

Some of these programmes are as follows:

- *the "Euro 200" programme*, which helped student with acquisition of personal computers, different types of scholarships, school equipment, refund of transportation costs for students who come from the countryside, etc. According to Law no. 269/2004, in Covasna County for instance in one year only there were 261 students coming from families with very low budget who were given the "Euro 200" help. There was another kind of national programme named "*Bani de liceu*", within which in Covasna County 1,045 students coming from families with very low budget received financial help.
- *The Second Chance programme* encourages people who dropped out school to come back to classes and complete their education; the programme offers attendants the opportunity to complete compulsory education, and to obtain a vocational qualification. The Second Chance Programme pursues to support youths that have abandoned school for poverty reasons, to compensate school dropouts through education complementary to the comprehensive compulsory schooling, to offer vocational training adapted to every young student's goals, and to each community's economic and social development needs, thereby enabling the trainees find a place in society and on the labour market. The programme is a two-tier scheme: for primary (forms 1 to 4) and for lower secondary education (forms 5 to 8).
- The Ministry of Education encourages, stimulates and give financial support to high achievers or students who have made special efforts and managed to get over their problems. Students with excellent results also benefit from school scholarships, which stimulate them to complete their studies.



- The Ministry of Education also fines parents who do not send their children to school and keep them home. Parents have to pay 1,000 lei fine or to do unpaid community work.
- Programmes have also targeted teachers' performance, infrastructure and parents/ school partnership; a better training of teachers to work with children facing the risk of school abandonment, improved infrastructure and better participation from the parents are some of the measures that could be taken to improve the situation.
- Schools have been encouraged to keep a rigorous record of students' absences and contact parents to see what the reasons are. This has led to an improved school-parents partnership. The data are sent to the school inspectorate in each county and measures are commonly agreed on (experts in the field, teachers, parents).
- The introduction of optional classes resulted in an increased attractiveness of schools; students can choose some of the subjects to study.
- The Sectorial Operational Plan for Human Resources Development (SOP HRD) 2007 – 2013, financed from the European Social Fund, and from national public and private funds, created, to a certain extent, the framework for the integration of the concerns regarding education and school dropout. SOP – HRD has a number of priority axes and major areas of intervention managed by the Ministry of Education to support the education of vulnerable students and their families and prevent school dropout (poor families, Roma families, people from isolated and remote communities).
- Ministry of Education policies included measures focused both on the education of parents and children alike, on creating prerequisites for pre-school education for a greater number of children, and on adapting the structure of a school year to the specifics of each community (rural areas, climate, terrain, etc.)
- Aware of the effects of poverty on children's access to school, and of the need to offer them equal chances, the government has added various other incentives, one of them being a free meal at school.
- Other measures have rendered the educational system more flexible, such as: introducing evening and extra classes for secondary courses (from 5 to 8); adjusting curricula to the needs of the attendants and of the labour market; introducing the concept of school-designed curriculum;
- Other practical initiatives related to school dropout prevention have been implemented in recent years by EU funded projects. Some interventions through European projects have aimed to lower dropout rates through: increasing school attendance, increasing student school engagement and learning, building student self-esteem, helping students cope with the challenges and problems that contribute to the likelihood of dropping out, enabling the teachers to prevent school leaving and to motivate students to attend classes. Some examples: projects acting against violence which have introduced theater as an education method for young people facing violence, in order to prevent the effects leading





to quick changes of attitude or conflict situations. To achieve their main target, the programs offer training courses for young people teaching them in the art of communication, negotiation and conflict management. Another project FACE IT! offered a practical approach and tools to effectively stimulate Active Citizenship within families and communities through non-formal and informal LLL reaching across generations.

Several projects have focused on enhancing the social inclusion of the Roma children in Romanian schools by organising activities meant to develop the following key competences: Communication in Romanian, Social and civic competencies, Competence of cultural expressions, Competence of learning, Planning one's own activities, Enforcement the security and health procedure and in emergency situations, Informing the community members etc.

6.3. Validation of non-formal and informal learning: the European perspective

6.3.1. Current state for recognition and validation on non-formal and informal learning in partner countries – legal framework

The Governmental Ordinance 76/2004 laid down the foundation for the validation centres as institutions accredited by the CNFPA (merged in 2010 under the new institutional framework of National Authority for Qualification) to conduct assessments for the recognition of a professional competence based on occupational standards. The Ordinance also made reference to the importance of evaluating and recognising competences gained through non-formal and informal learning. The Order No. 4543/468 of 23 August 2004 of the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family (completed and Amended by Order No. 3329/81 of 23 February 2005) finally laid down the procedures for the assessment and certification of informal and non-formal learning.

The new Law of National Education no.1/2011 explicitly promoted the importance of lifelong learning and provided a focus on the validation of formal and non-formal learning and lifelong learning counselling at all levels of education. The chapter on LLL of the new National Law of Education reaffirmed the importance of validation of prior learning; it created the legal framework for developing LLL Community Centres with a specific role in increasing the access to validation for disadvantaged communities and also emphasised the use of LLL portfolios in formal education.



Moreover, the law specified that certain individuals should benefit from lifelong learning services in Romania. Priority groups include young people and adults who have not finished their compulsory education, early school leavers, graduates with formal qualifications that are no longer relevant on the labour market, people with special education needs, young people and adults returning in the country after a working period abroad, low skilled adults aged 40 and over, and children at risk of dropping out.

Based on the general framework of the new law of education, a set of specific methodologies related to the system of validation of informal and non-formal learning were drafted. Although these are the subject of public debate, they are not yet approved:

- Methodology on the criteria and procedures for evaluation/certification of assessors, for assessors of the assessors and external evaluators and authorisation/ accreditation of the Assessment Centres for professional skills in non-formal and informal contexts;
- The methodology for the identification, assessment and recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal contexts;
- Methodology for establishing Community Lifelong Learning Centres – a community service that can, in addition, provide the opportunity for validation of informal and non-formal learning.

However, little progress has been made in this respect in spite of a growing interest from civil society in informal and non-formal learning, partly promoted by the EU projects in Romania such as the Youth in Action initiative. In particular there is a growing number of non-governmental organisations interested in mobility and non-formal learning activities projects that are linked to YouthPass and Europass. Romania is also one of the top EU countries making use of Europass and Youth Pass certificates.

The validation services in Romania are still focused on qualifications. There are only limited specific examples of validating other types of learning outcomes, such as those gained through participation in voluntary work.

According to the new Law of National Education, the former National Council for Adult Training (CNFPA), in charge of coordinating the validation of professional/vocational skills acquired in informal and non-formal learning contexts, was reorganised under the new National Authority for Qualifications (NAQ) in 2011. The National Authority for Qualifications took over the responsibilities for coordinating the validation of adult's professional skills acquired in non-formal learning contexts, thus being the body accrediting the assessment centres. It was also appointed as National Reference Point for implementing the National Qualification Framework. This institutional change provided some benefits in terms of a more coherent approach between



the validation system and the National Qualification Framework, but at the same time, it weakened the focus for a more systematic coordination of the validation system. In general, the National Authority for Qualifications splits its responsibilities between many other issues, such as the adult training authorisation process, the involvement of sector committees in drafting new qualifications, quality assurance in continuous training, etc

In December 2013, Romania adopted the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) by the Government Decision no. 918/2013. The NQF has 8 levels of qualifications that can be acquired through the formal education and training system in Romania and by recognition of learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning. At the moment, the methodology allows the validation only for level 4 or lower to obtain a qualification through the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Validation is still linked with occupational standards and is not yet operational with regards to formal education.

The law of education no.1/2011 also proposes the establishment of a new local institution called Community Lifelong Learning Centre, as a community centre that might also provide validation and counselling services, according to specific local needs. However, the methodology for establishing the Community Lifelong Learning Centre is not yet in place although many stakeholders see the proposal as a solution for an increased access to validation services.

6.3.2. Validation of non-formal and informal learning in formal education

The new law of education no.1/2011 defines a set of related concepts about the validation of non-formal and informal learning, such as: learning outcomes, identification of learning outcomes, validation of learning outcomes, recognition of learning outcomes and certification of learning outcomes. Validation of informal and non-formal learning is seen as a lifelong learning service offered to individuals in order for them to become aware of their own skills and competences and to receive a certification linked to a specific qualification. Although the section of the law devoted to lifelong learning makes specific references to counselling and guidance, there is no direct link between validation and counselling. As mentioned in the previous section, the new methodology for validation of informal and non-formal skills is not yet in place, and therefore, the practical procedure for skills audits in the Romanian system is based on a former regulation drafted in 2004 and no other changes have been implemented in the system in this regard.

Validation has not been implemented to support access to the formal education system, even though the outcomes of some pilot projects demonstrate positive feedback in relation to the use of the portfolio



approach. More generally, quality assurance remains a concern and also the professional development of validation practitioners needs to be further supported by future policies in Romania.

Since the 2010 update was carried out, little progress has been made in relation to research studies and the publication of research evidence on validation.

Although the new law of education has some specific references to students' lifelong learning portfolios as a mean for the validation of skills acquired outside the educational system, there are not yet specific procedures in place in terms of implementing this measure. Moreover, validation in the formal system is also challenged by the lack of coherence and permeability between the IVET (initial education and training), CVET (continuing education and training) and HE systems. The new National Qualification Framework is taking into account validation in the case of CVT, but not in the case of formal education.

Interest in validation has been stimulated by the Lifelong Learning Programme in Romania in recent years. In particular there is a growing number of non-governmental organisations interested in mobility and non-formal learning activities projects that are linked to YouthPass and Europass.

The law on national education also provides some regulation on using the lifelong learning portfolio for all students in pre-university education. The lifelong learning portfolio contains evidence of learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. This evidence helps facilitate the individual school pathway of all students and creates better prospects for entering the labour market. Since 2011, some schools have taken into account the lifelong learning portfolio of students as an additional evaluation tool in order to decide on the most suitable candidates when the school has more enrolment applications than available places. However, using the lifelong learning portfolio is not yet a common practice in most of the schools in Romania and is not yet embedded in schools as a tool for learning assessment.

Since 2011 the Ministry of Education runs the programme, "Another type of school", involving students and teachers in non-formal activities which aim is meeting students' interests and developing their skills in non-formal contexts and environments (museums, parks, football pitches, banks, libraries, cinemas, auditoriums, bookshops etc.). Students participate in such events according to their interests and talents. The programme helps students discover, identify and develop their talents, their extracurricular interests and skills in a wide range of fields through non-formal activities (interviews, trips, festivals, contests, visits, exchanges of experiences and ideas between generations or schools, debates, talks, exhibitions, carnivals, project presentations, volunteer work). The programme takes place in every school for a week every April. The events are well prepared in advance and are suggested by students themselves. In fact, the school



programme is based on a selection of the suggestions students made at the beginning of the school year. Such events enjoy popularity among students. At the end of the week students and teachers are asked to fill in a feedback form with their comments on the events. There is not any other form of evaluation and students do not get any credits/ grades for their participation.

6.4. Students' assessment procedures

6.4.1. Official assessment policies used in secondary schools: formative and summative

There are many types of assessments used in Romanian schools:

- diagnostic (initial tests) which assesses students' weaknesses, strengths and skills prior to instruction; they are not scored: students find out about their weaknesses and strengths.
- formative: assesses students' performance during instruction, it occurs regularly throughout the entire process. Formative assessments are the means teachers use to find out how things are going so that they can decide how to proceed. Its purpose is to improve the quality of student learning, not to provide evidence for evaluating or grading students. It provides faculty with feedback about their effectiveness as teachers, and it gives students a measure of their progress as learners.

Formative assessment is frequently used for its impact on students' learning process:

- it allows students to make adjustment to what and how they are learning;
- it enhances motivation to learn;
- it helps students identify gaps in knowledge;
- it fosters self-study;
- it clarifies desired outcomes;
- it diagnoses specific misunderstandings.
- summative**: measures the students' achievement at the end of the instruction. Summative assessment is intended specifically for the purpose of assigning a grade. The teacher considers the instruction for the particular topic to be complete: students are assessed and evaluated for their mastery of the material, and then the class moves on to the next topic (term written papers).
- norm-referenced**: compares a students' performance against a national norm (final exam at the end of the eighth grade, Bacalaureate)
- criterion-referenced**: measures a student's performance against a goal, objectives (tests, oral examinations)
- interim/benchmarked**: evaluates student's performance at periodic intervals, frequently at the end of a grading period (term written papers).



The students' assessment and evaluation system includes two milestones that determine transitions into upper levels: **a national grade 8 exit exam, and the Bacalaureate at grade 12.**

In kindergarten testing or giving grades or marks to children is not allowed. That way the system promotes the idea of encouraging and developing a positive self-image and self-confidence of the children allowing them to progress at their own pace.

During the primary education, student evaluation for each discipline is materialized in a rating of: 'insufficient' meaning failed, 'sufficient' or 'satisfactory' meaning barely passing 'good' and 'very good' meaning passing.

Lower secondary school ends up with the taking of a *"national test examination"*. The examination tests pupils' knowledge in the fields of Romanian language and literature and Mathematics. The degree obtained in the national test examination counts for admission to high-school. There is also for students the option to attend a vocational school in order to obtain a professional qualification that prepares them for the labor market.

Enrollment in high school is made on the basis of the results in the national test exam and the average grade obtained in the lower secondary school. High school studies end up with a *"bacalaureate examination"*. After passing this examination, the graduates get the *"bacalaureate diploma."* Only students in the technological and vocational branches must take in addition to the bacalaureate examination a *"qualification examination"* and get a *"qualification certificate"*.

The bacalaureate exam is organized every year in June. Students who do not pass the bacalaureate exam may repeat it in the fall session (September). The average high-school grade and the average bacalaureate grade count for admission to the university.

6.4.2. Alternative ways of student assessment

Alternative ways of assessing students take into account students' needs, interests, and learning styles; and they attempt to integrate assessment and learning activities. Also, they indicate successful performance, highlight positive traits, and provide formative rather than summative evaluation. Until recently the assessment scene was dominated by summative evaluation of learner achievement.



Nowadays alternative means of evaluation (which are students' favourites) are more and more used in Romania:

The portfolio is used as a systematic collection of the student's work and other information about the student in order to determine whether they have maintained progress in accomplishing their learning goals. It is focused and efficient; visible and accessible. Grading portfolios is problematic since they are personal and unique. Scoring is criterion-referenced and individual referenced. Norm referenced does not apply here.

The Romanian law on national education is also providing some regulations on using the lifelong learning portfolio for all students in pre-university education. The lifelong portfolio contains evidence of learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. This evidence helps to facilitate the individual school pathway of all students and creates better prospects for entering the labour market. Since 2011, some schools have taken into account the lifelong learning portfolio of students as an additional evaluation tool in order to decide when the school is having more enrolment applications than available places. However, using the lifelong learning portfolio is not yet a common practice in most of the schools in Romania and is not yet embedded in schools as a tool for learning assessment.

Role-play This informal assessment technique combines oral performance and physical activity. Teachers often admit that students of all ages, when assessed through this technique, feel comfortable and motivated, especially when the activity lends itself to cooperative learning; it is seen as a fun way of learning.

Written Narratives Assessment of the written communicative abilities of students could be achieved through purposeful, authentic tasks, such as writing letters to friends, writing letters to favorite television program characters, and writing and responding to invitations. Young learners enjoy story telling and are usually motivated to listen to stories as well as to tell them.

Presentations: Presentations are important for assessment because they can provide a comprehensive record of students' abilities in both oral and written performance. Furthermore, presentations give the teacher some insights into student's interests, work habits, and organizational abilities. Presentations cover a widerange of meaningful activities, including readings, plays, role-plays, dramatizations, and interviews. Classroom presentations are nowadays becoming more sophisticated as a result of increasing access to educational technology.

Student-Teacher Conferences: Student-teacher conferences, including structured interviews, can be an effective informal way of assessing a student's progress in learning. Conferences and interviews provide



opportunities for one-on-one interactions where the teacher can learn about a student's communicative abilities, emotional and social well-being, attention span, attitudes, pace of learning, and strengths and weaknesses. Conferences can be most effective when they follow focused observations.

Self-Assessment: students may participate in self-assessment. It can yield accurate judgments of students' abilities, weaknesses and strengths, and improvement.

Peer and Group Assessment: Recent trends in teaching methodology have stressed the need to develop students' ability to work cooperatively with others in groups. For assessment, for example, students can write evaluative, encouraging notes for each member of their team emphasizing their positive contribution to team work. The role of the teacher would be to provide guidance, to explain to the students what they have to evaluate in one another's work, and to help them identify and apply properly the evaluation criteria.

Projects start in the classroom, move out in the real world and return to the classroom. The process implies revision, recycling, learning from the others and from the materials they use. One way of grading the oral presentation of the project is by using marking scales for testing oral speaking to which you can add descriptors for oral presentations.

In learning centres focused on informal learning (clubs, children's houses/ palaces) children get a certificate which evaluates their performance at the end of the instruction. The evaluation is done by qualifications, and not by grades. The qualifications rely on the teachers' direct observation of the students' behaviour, attitudes and performance throughout the instruction. The certificates are not validated by the Ministry of Education. However, when the student applies for a scholarship or wants to participate in a project against other candidates the certificates he/she gets from informal education will make the difference if the candidates have similar school grades.

6.5. Survey based analysis: from theory to school practice

The two questionnaires were distributed to 44 students aged 12-15+ and 10 teachers in Romania. EuroEd partner carried out the empirical study regarding the attitude on school leaving, focusing on identifying the benefits of recognising and validating the students' non-formal learning in school assessment.

Each questionnaire has been translated in Romanian and distributed to a number of 44 students and 10 teachers. Respondents were informed about the NON FOR LESL project, the importance of their involvement



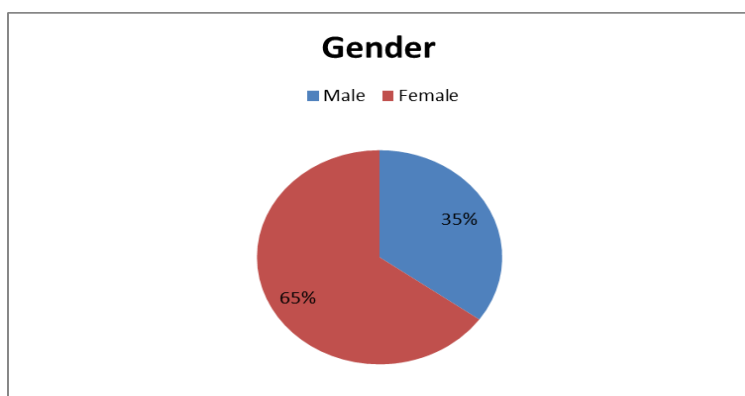
in this survey and assured of the guarantee of confidentiality; EuroEd staff assisted the respondents during the study.

6.5.1. STUDENTS' VIEWS

Part I': Personal characteristics

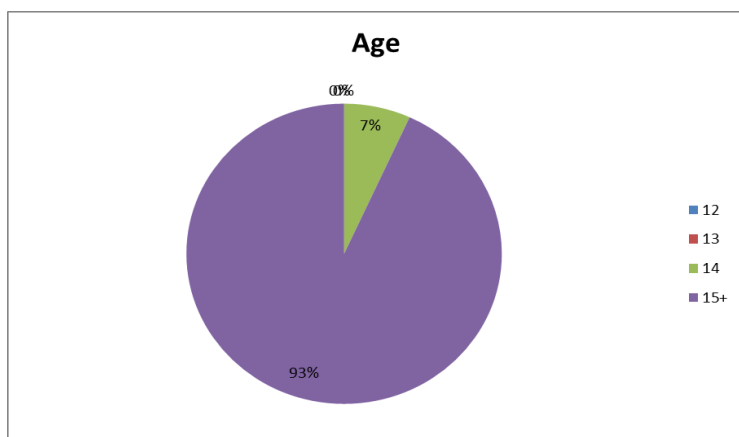
Gender

65% of the respondents were Female and 35% Male



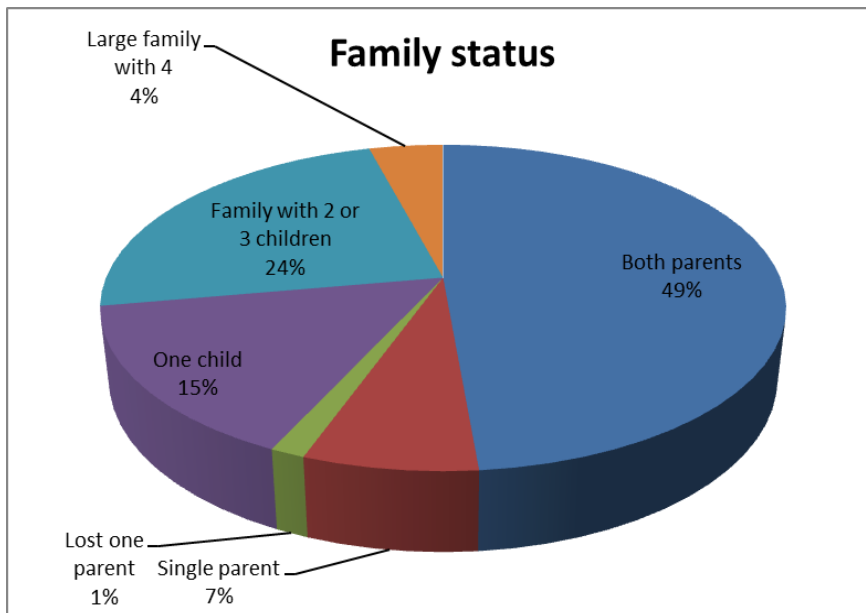
Age

93% were aged 15+ and 7% 14 years old



Family status

49% of students come from 2 parents families, 24% from families with 2 or 3 children, 15% from one child families, 7% from a monoparental family , 4% from a larger family and 1% lost one of parents.



6.5.1.1 What are the most important factors that influence students to leave school early?

23% of the students fully agreed that the most important factor that influences students to dropout is **bullying**,

15% of the students fully agreed that the **lack of usefulness** of school subject influences early school leaving,

14 % of the students fully agreed that **not having a happy relation student –teacher** influences early school leaving,

14% of the students fully agreed that **personal problems** influence early school leaving,

10% of the students fully agreed that **stressful school formal assessment** contributes to early school leaving,

8% of the students fully agreed the **family problems** influence early school leaving

6% of the students fully agreed **other problems** influence early school leaving,

3% of the students fully agreed that **their weakness** in main subject influence early school leaving,

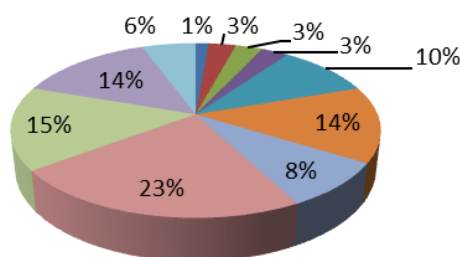
3% of the students fully agreed to the fact that not **liking some schools subject** influence early school leaving,

3% fully agreed that problems with **national language** influence early school leaving,

1% of the students fully agreed that **low grades** at school influence early school leaving.

Why students leave school early

- Low grades at school
- Weakness in main subjects of school
- Problems with national/country language
- Do not like the school subjects
- Do not like the school's formal assessment (test, grades...), creates pressure/ stress to me
- Not happy/ satisfied with the relation between student-teacher
- Family problems (economic, social etc)
- Bullying
- School subjects do not seem to be useful to me
- Personal Problems
- Other reason(s) Please specify



14% of the students agreed that **stressful school formal assessment** contributes to early school leaving

12% of the students agreed that **lack of usefulness of school subject** influences early school leaving,

12% of the students agreed the **personal problems** influence early school leaving

12% of the students agreed to the fact that **not liking some school subjects influences** early school leaving,

10% of the students agreed the **family problems** influence early school leaving

9% of students agreed that **bullying** influences students to dropout,

8% agreed that the **problems with national language** influences early school leaving,

7% of the students agreed that **weakness in main subjects** influences early school leaving,

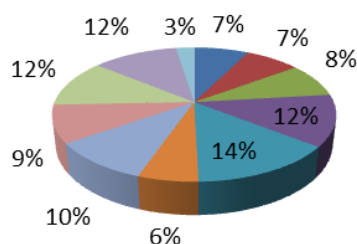
7% of the students agreed that **low grades** at school influence early school leaving,

6% of the students agreed that **not having a happy relation student –teacher** influences early school leaving

3% of the students agreed that **other problems** influence early school leaving,

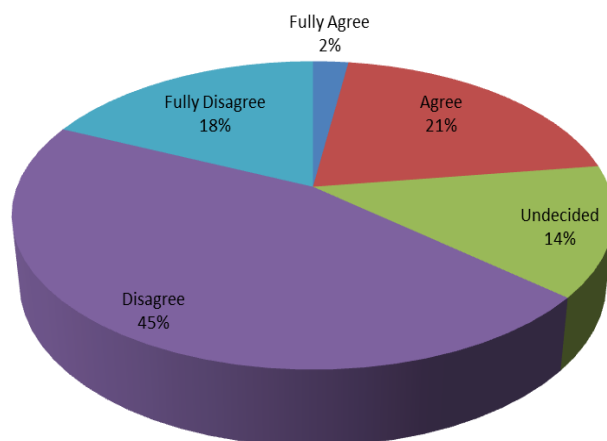
Why students leave school early

- Low grades at school
- Weakness in main subjects of school
- Problems with national/country language
- Do not like the school subjects
- Do not like the school's formal assessment (test, grades...), creates pressure/ stress to me
- Not happy/ satisfied with the relation between student-teacher
- Family problems (economic, social etc)
- Bullying
- School subjects do not seem to be useful to me
- Personal Problems
- Other reason(s) Please specify

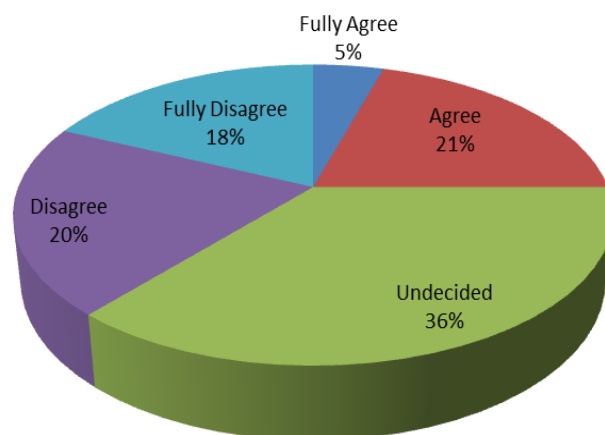


For a more indeph analysis, the importance of each factor to the early school leaving as perceived by students is illustrated below:

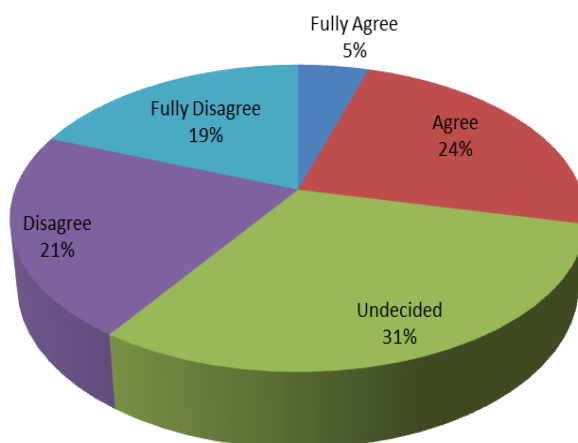
Low grades at school



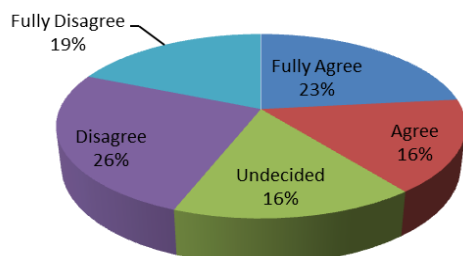
Weakness in main subjects of school



Problems with national/country language

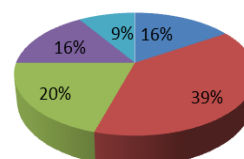


Not happy/ satisfied with the relation between student-teacher



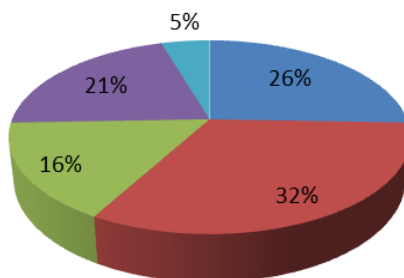
Do not like the school's formal assessment (test, grades...), creates pressure/ stress to me

■ Fully Agree ■ Agree ■ Undecided ■ Disagree ■ Fully Disagree



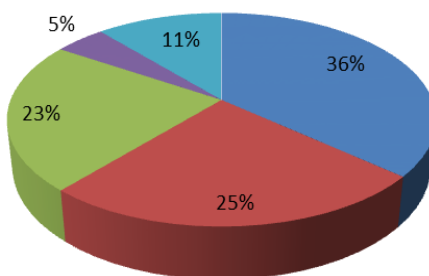
School subjects do not seem to be useful to me

■ Fully Agree ■ Agree ■ Undecided ■ Disagree ■ Fully Disagree



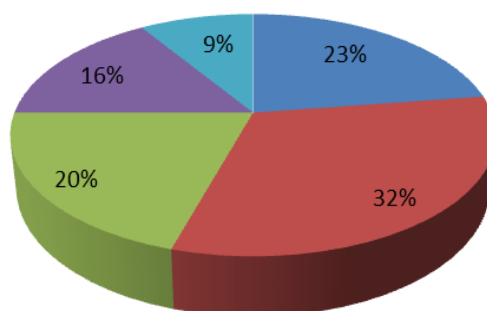
Bullying

■ Fully Agree ■ Agree ■ Undecided ■ Disagree ■ Fully Disagree



Personal Problems

■ Fully Agree ■ Agree ■ Undecided ■ Disagree ■ Fully Disagree

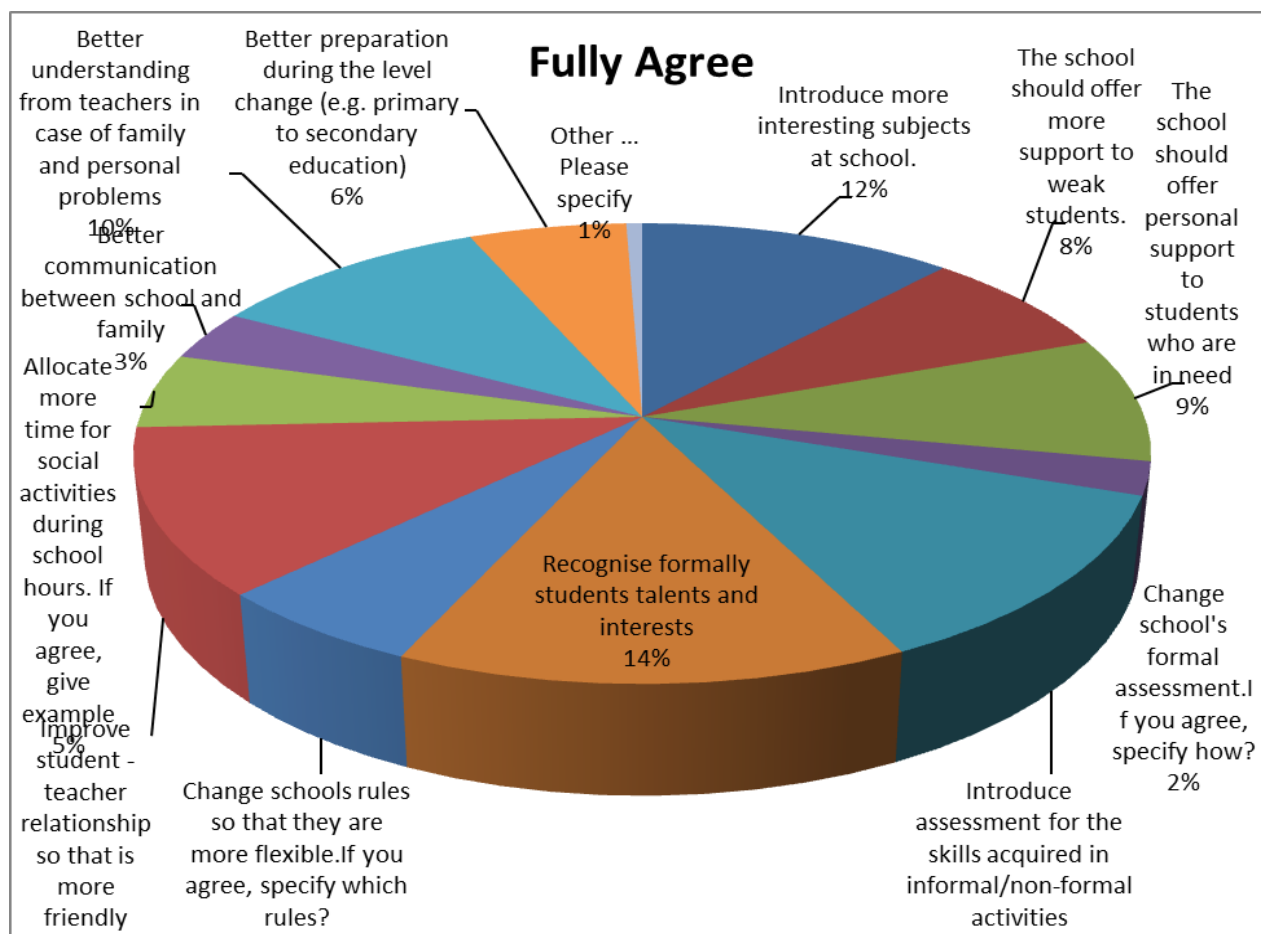




6.5.1.2. What are the possible changes that can be introduced in schools that could help/encourage students to complete their schooling?

The students **fully** agreed with the following changes:

- 14 % - Formal recognition of students' talents and interests
- 12 % - Introduction of more interesting subjects at school
- 12 % - Introduction of assessment for the skills acquired in informal/non-formal activities
- 12 % - Improvement of student - teacher relationship so that it is more friendly
- 10 % - Teachers' better understanding of students' family and personal problems
- 9 % - The school should offer personal support to students who are in need
- 8 % - The school should offer more support to weak students
- 6 % - Change school rules so that they are more flexible.
- 6 % - Students' better preparation for transition school stages (e.g. primary to secondary education)
- 5 % - Allocate more time for social activities during school classes.
- 3 % - Better communication between school and family
- 2 % - Change school's formal assessment.





The students **agreed**, as follows:

12% Students' better preparation for school transition stages (e.g. primary to secondary education)

10% - Introduce more interesting subjects at school

10% - Teachers' better understanding of students' family and personal problems

10% - Better communication between school and family

9% - The school should offer personal support to students who are in need

9% - The school should offer more support to weak students

8% - Recognise Formal recognition of students' talents and interests

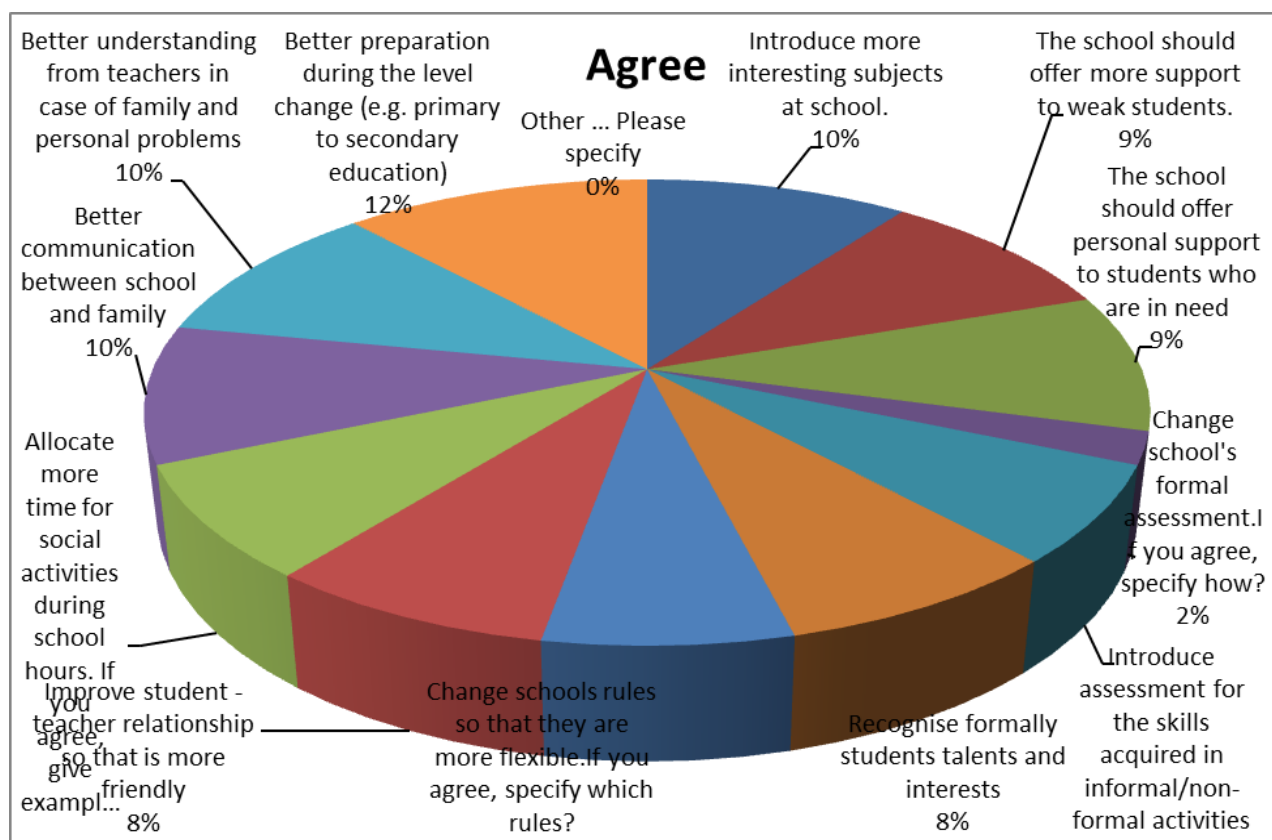
8% - Improvement of student - teacher relationship so that is more friendly

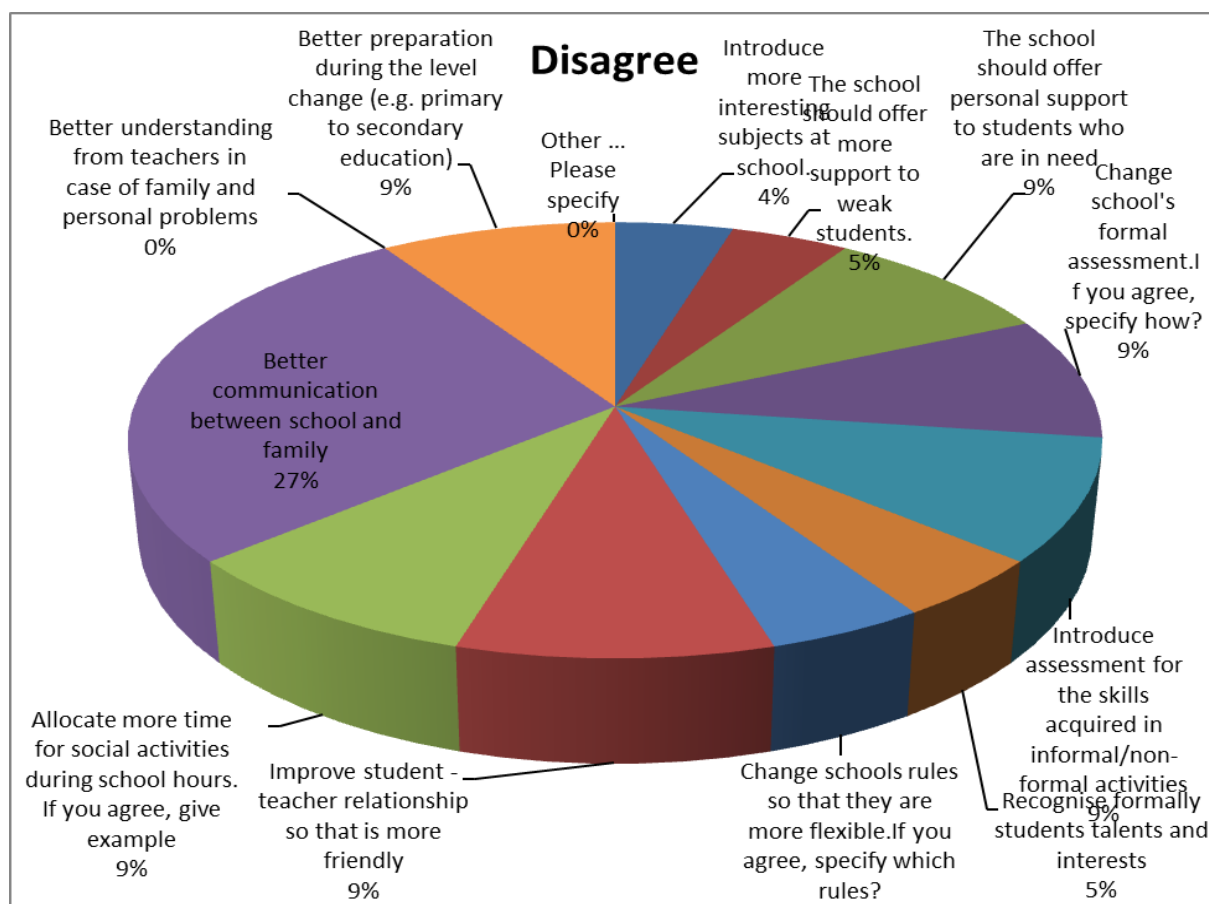
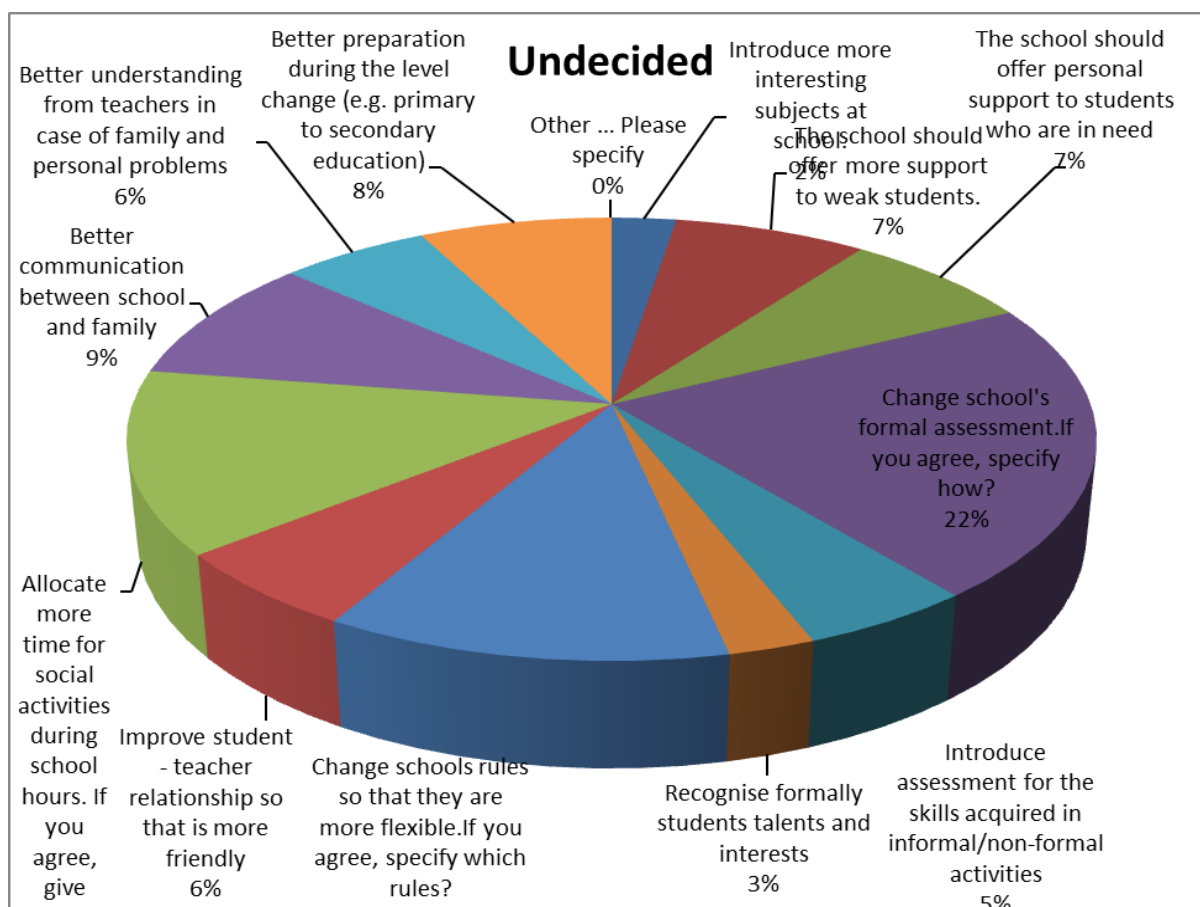
8% - Allocate more time for social activities during school classes.

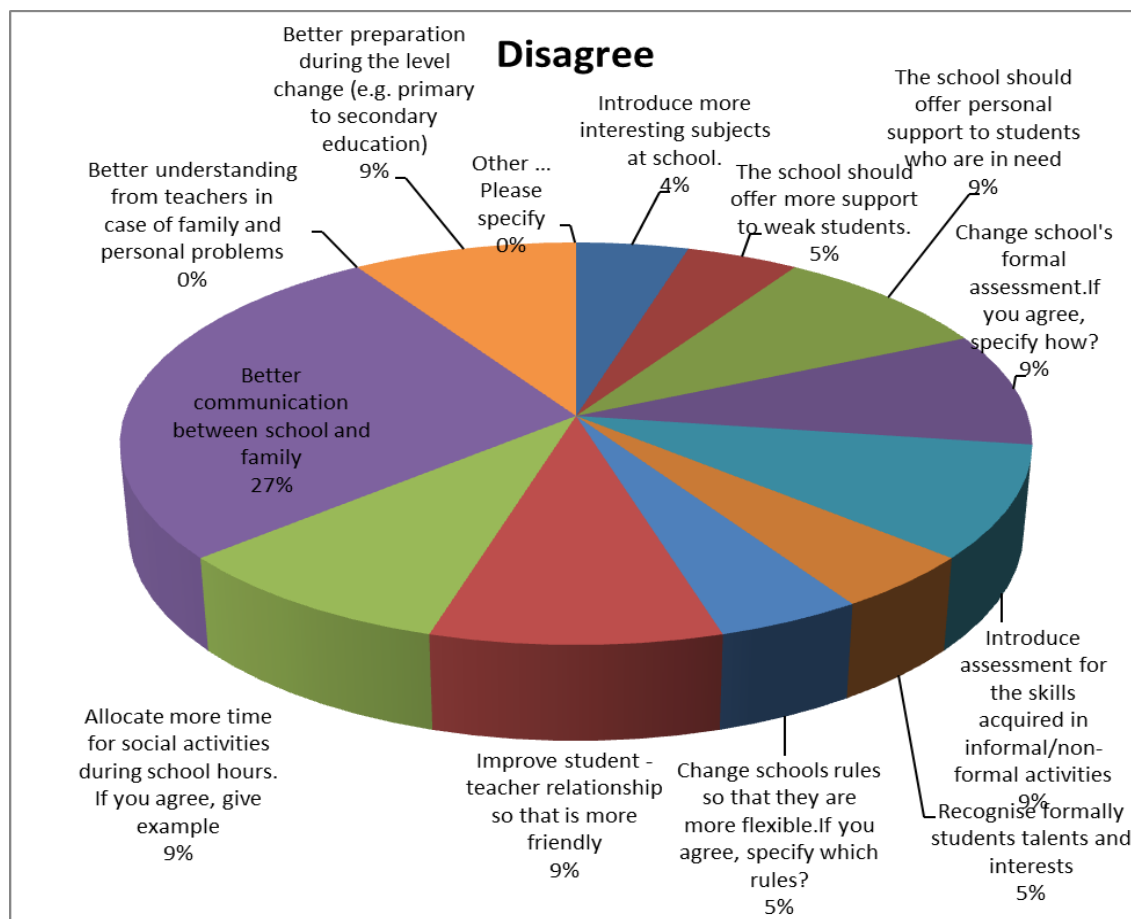
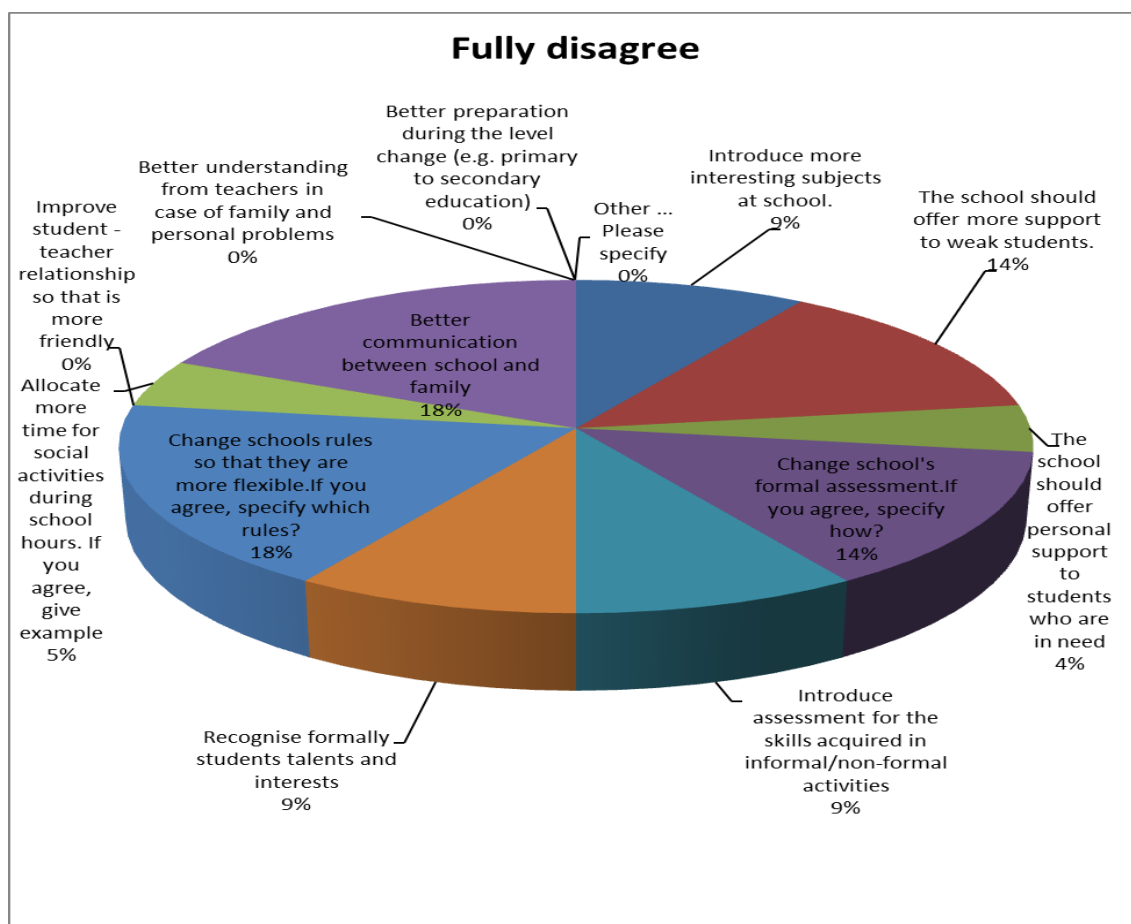
7% - Introduce assessment for the skills acquired in informal/non-formal activities

7% - Change schools rules so that they are more flexible.

2% - Change school's formal assessment.



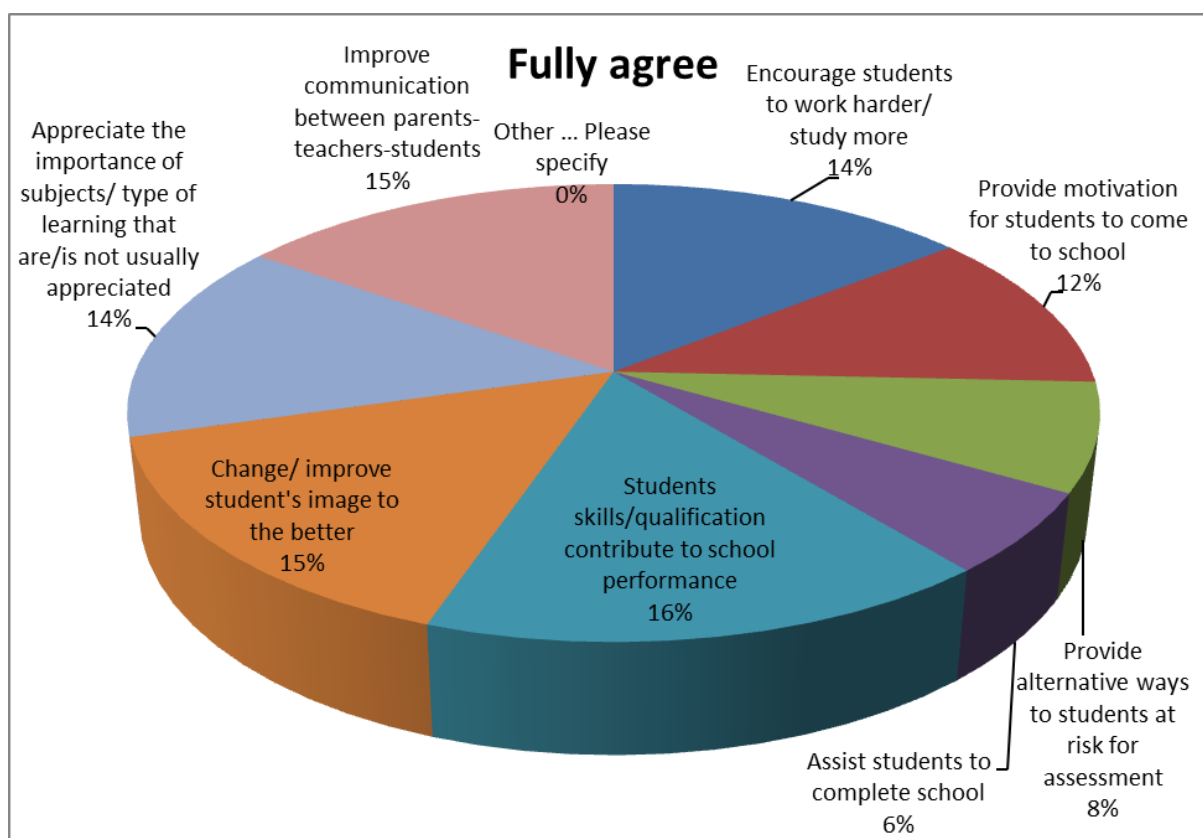




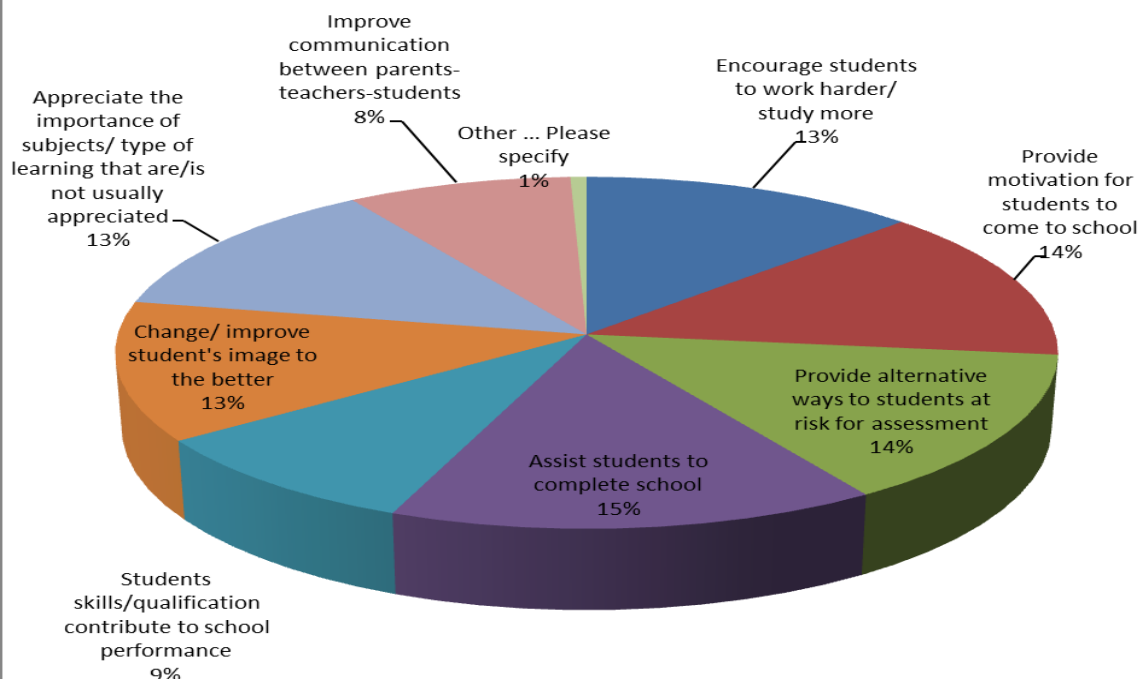
6.5.1.3. What are the benefits for students, if the non-formal learning is recognized and validated in school?

The students **fully agreed**, as follows:

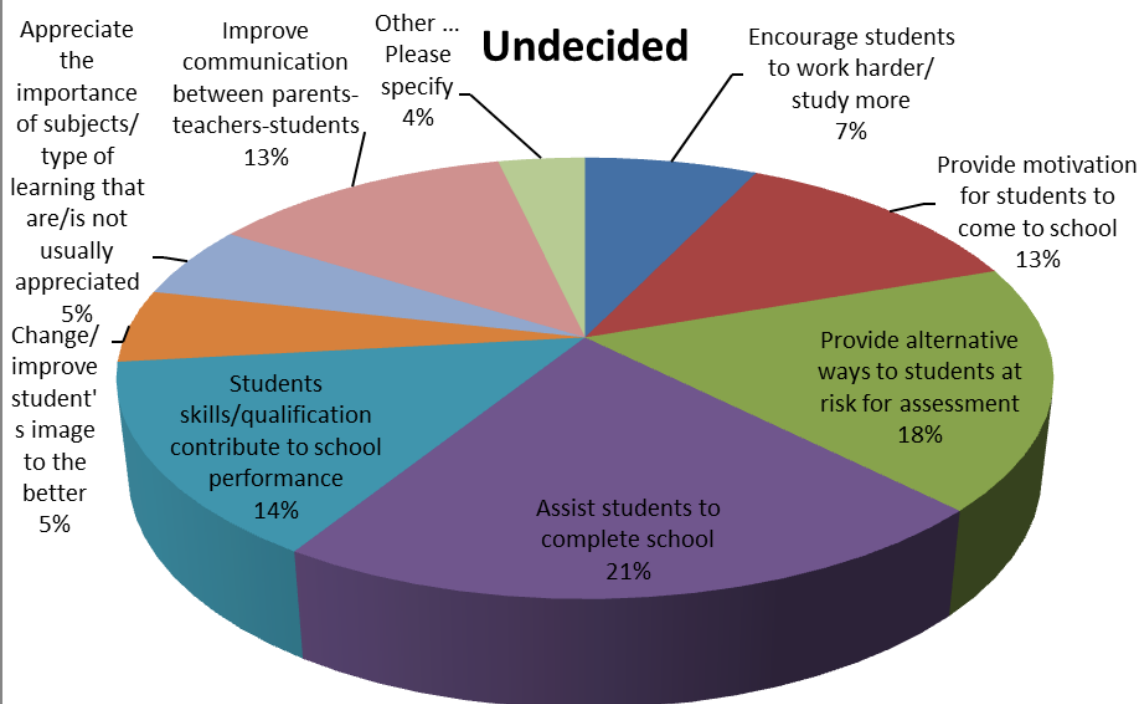
- 16% - Students' skills/qualification contribute to school performance
- 15% - Change/ improve student's image for the better
- 15% - Improve communication between parents-teachers-students
- 14% - Appreciate the importance of subjects/ type of learning that are/is not usually appreciated
- 14% - Encourage students to work harder/ study more
- 12% - Provide motivation for students to come to school
- 8 % - Provide alternative ways to students at risk for assessment
- 6 % - Assist students to complete school

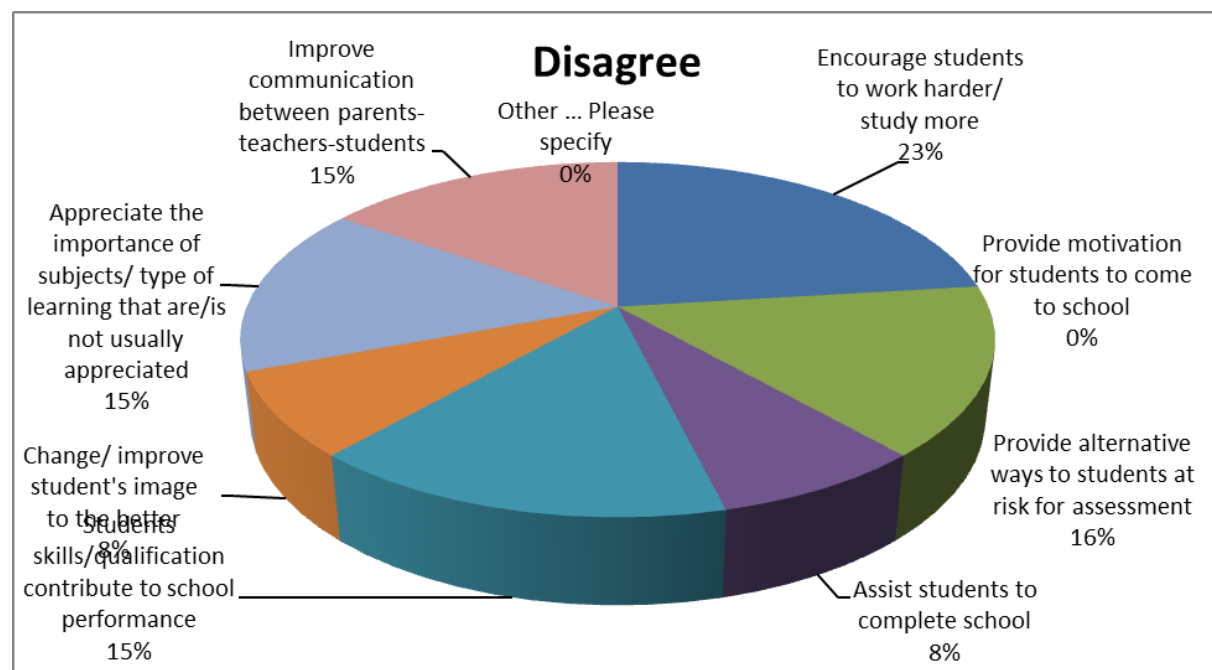
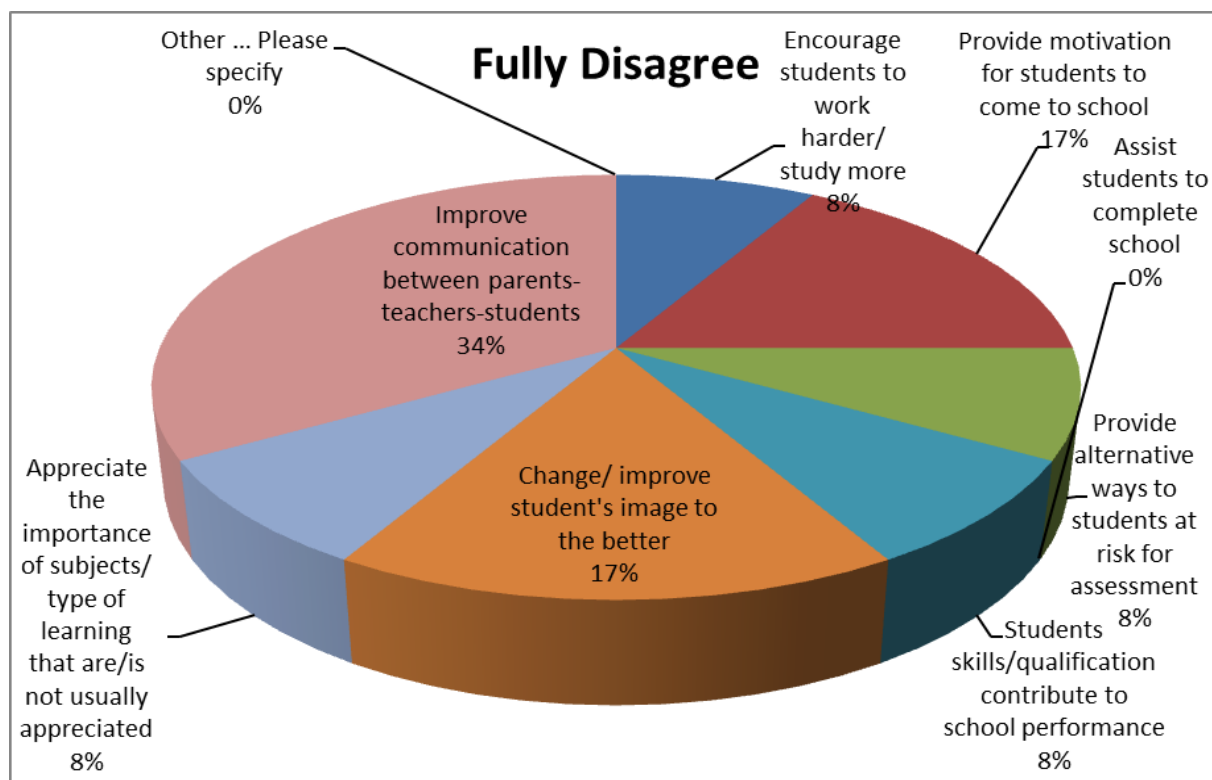


Agree



Undecided







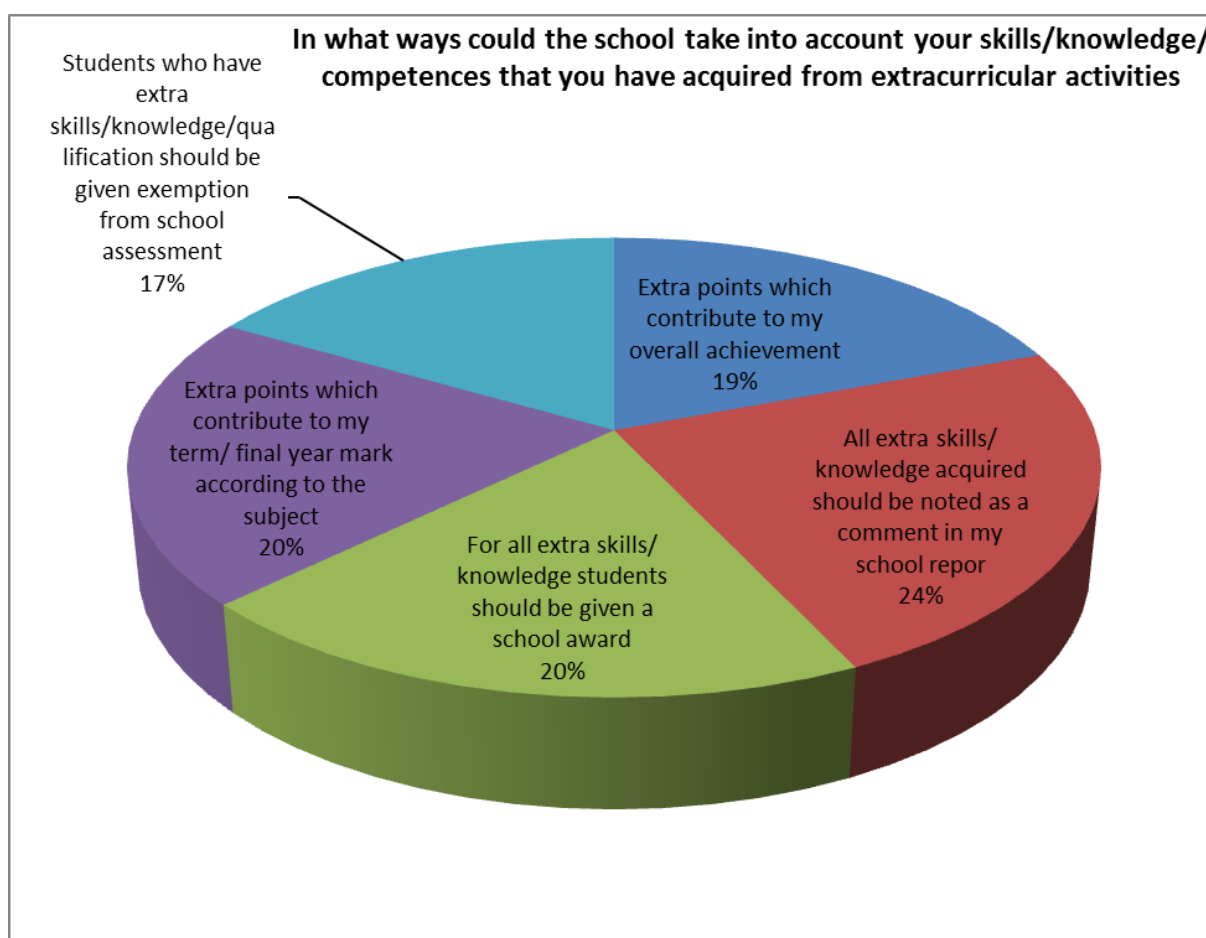
6.5.1.4. What are the ways that the school could take into account students' skills/knowledge gained in non-formal learning/extra-curricular activities?

24% of the students consider all extra skills/ knowledge acquired should be recorded /have a comment in their school report

20% % of the students consider that students should be given a school award for all extra skills/ knowledge

20% of the students consider that they should be given extra points which can contribute to their term/ final year mark according to the subject

17 % of the students consider that students who have extra skills/knowledge/qualification in a field should be given exemption from school assessment for that subject

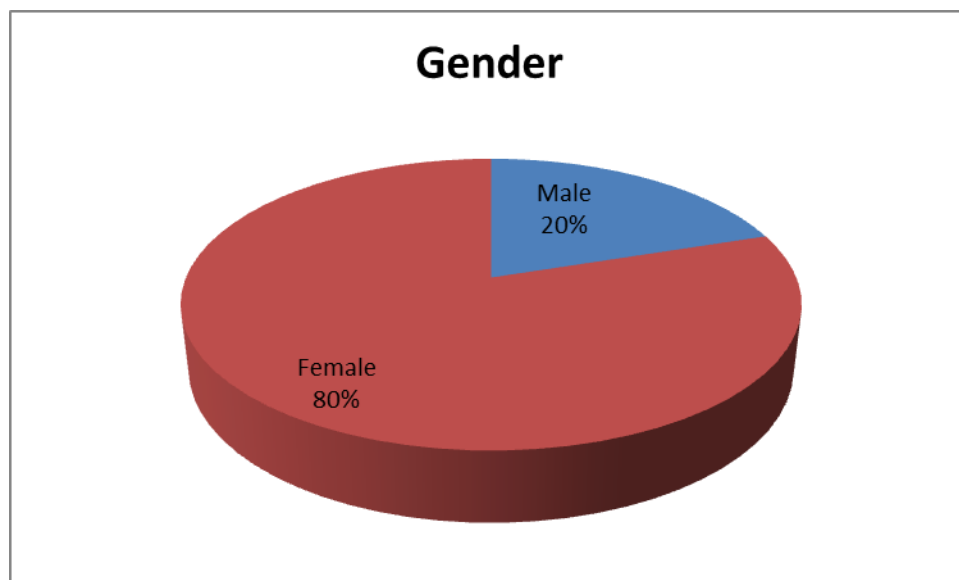




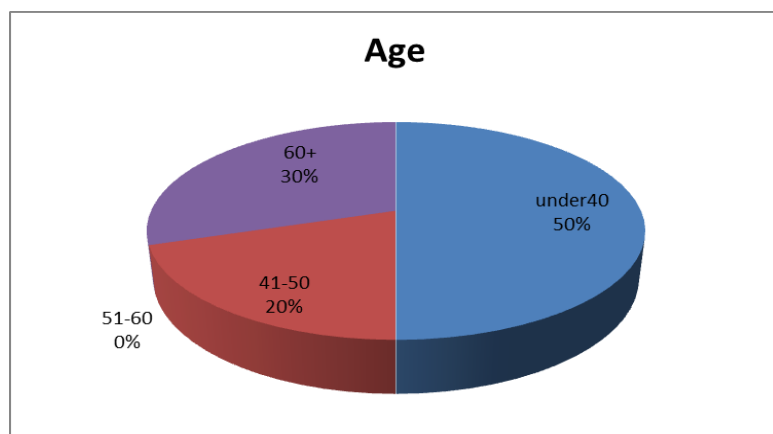
6.5.2. TEACHERS' VIEWS

Personal characteristics

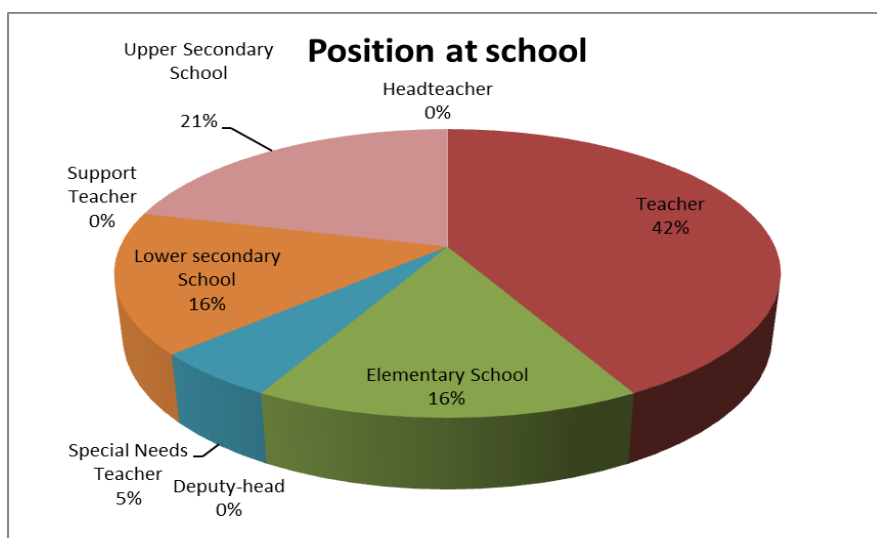
Gender:



Age



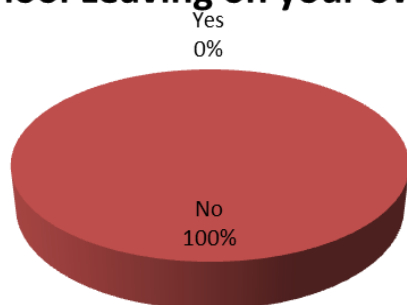
Position at school



Early School Leaving training & seminars



Have you participated in any in-service training/ seminar on Early School Leaving on your own?



6.5.2.1. What are the most important factors that influence students to leave school early?

The teachers **fully** agreed as follows:

38%	Family problems (economic, social etc)
31%	Personal Problems
12%	Not happy/ satisfied with the relation between student-teacher
13%	School subjects do not seem to be useful to students
6%	Weakness in main subjects of school

In teachers' opinion the following factors do not influence early school leaving:

Bullying,

Low grades at school

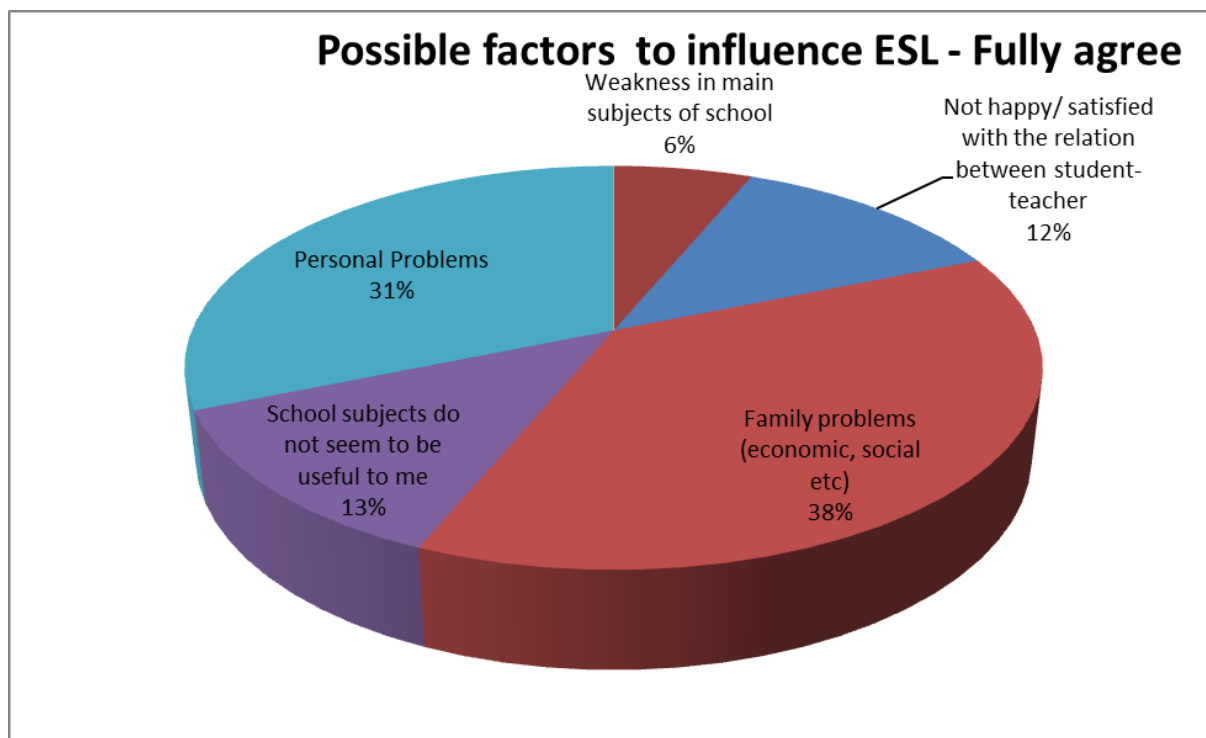
Students cannot obey/follow school rules

Students do not like school subjects

Students do not like the school's formal assessment (test, grades...)and think it creates pressure/ stress them

Other reasons

Problems with national/country language



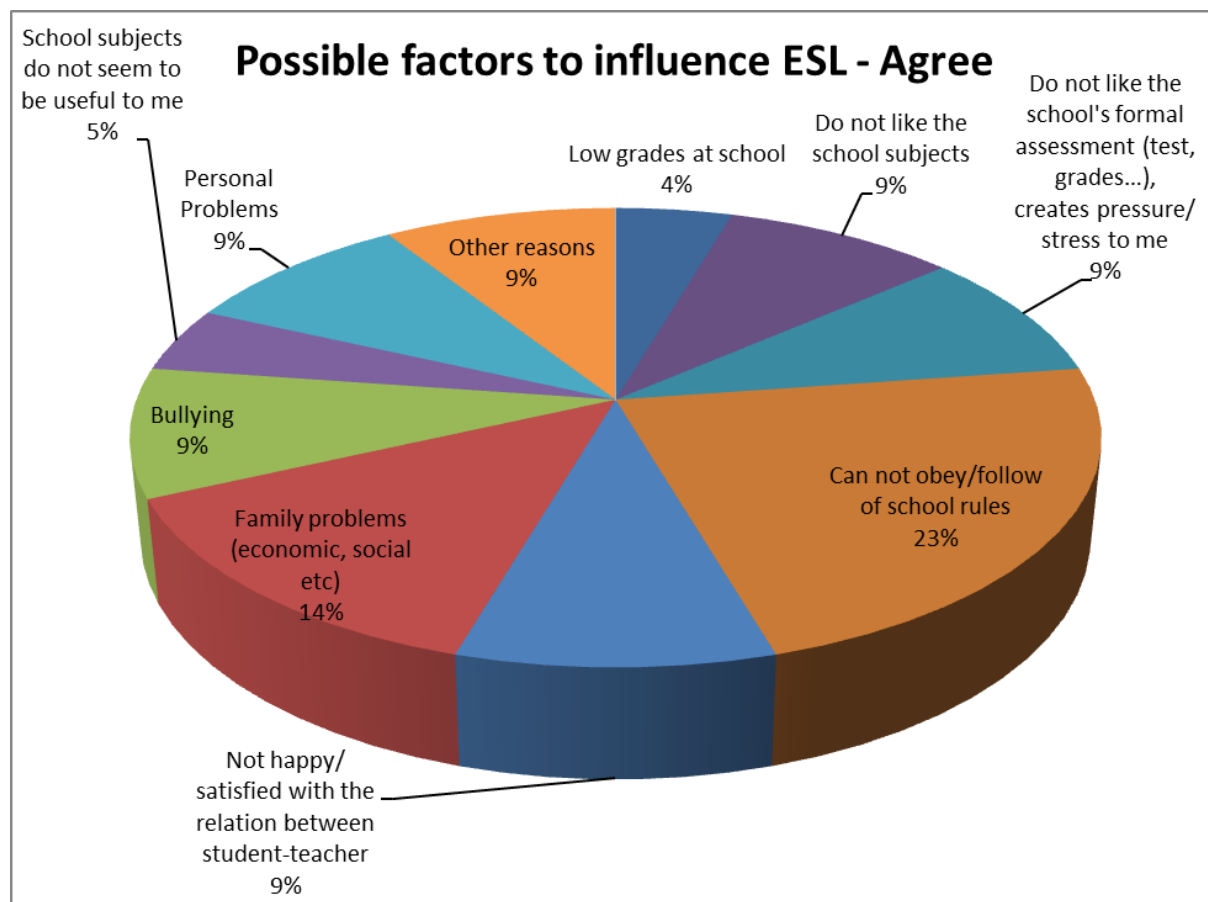
The teachers **agreed** as follows:

23%	Can not obey/follow of school rules
14%	Family problems (economic, social etc)
9%	Do not like the school subjects
9%	Do not like the school's formal assessment (test, grades...), creates pressure/ stress them
9%	Not happy/ satisfied with the relation between student-teacher
9%	Bullying
9%	Personal Problems
9%	Other reasons
5%	School subjects do not seem to be useful to them
4%	Low grades at school

In teachers' opinion the following factors do not influence early school leaving:

Weakness in main subjects of school

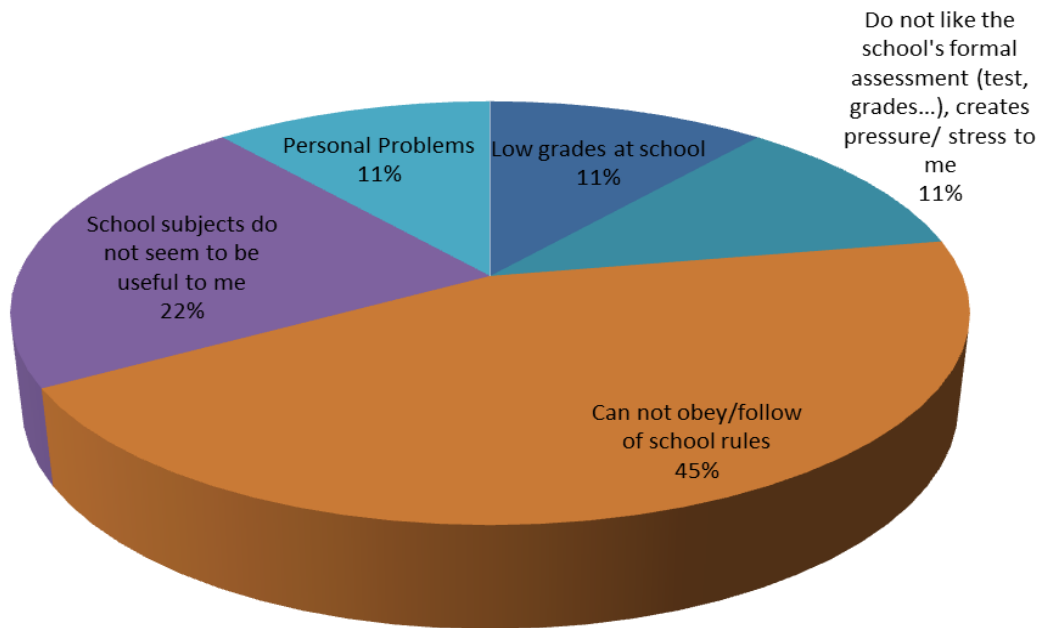
Problems with national/country language



Teachers are **not decided** when it comes to the contribution of the following factors on ESL:

45%	Can not obey/follow of school rules
22%	School subjects do not seem to be useful to them
11%	Do not like the school's formal assessment (test, grades...), creates pressure/ stress students
11%	Personal Problems
11%	Low grades at school
0%	Weakness in main subjects of school
0%	Problems with national/country language
0%	Do not like school subjects
0%	Not happy/ satisfied with the relation between student-teacher
0%	Family problems (economic, social etc)
0%	Bullying
0%	Other reasons

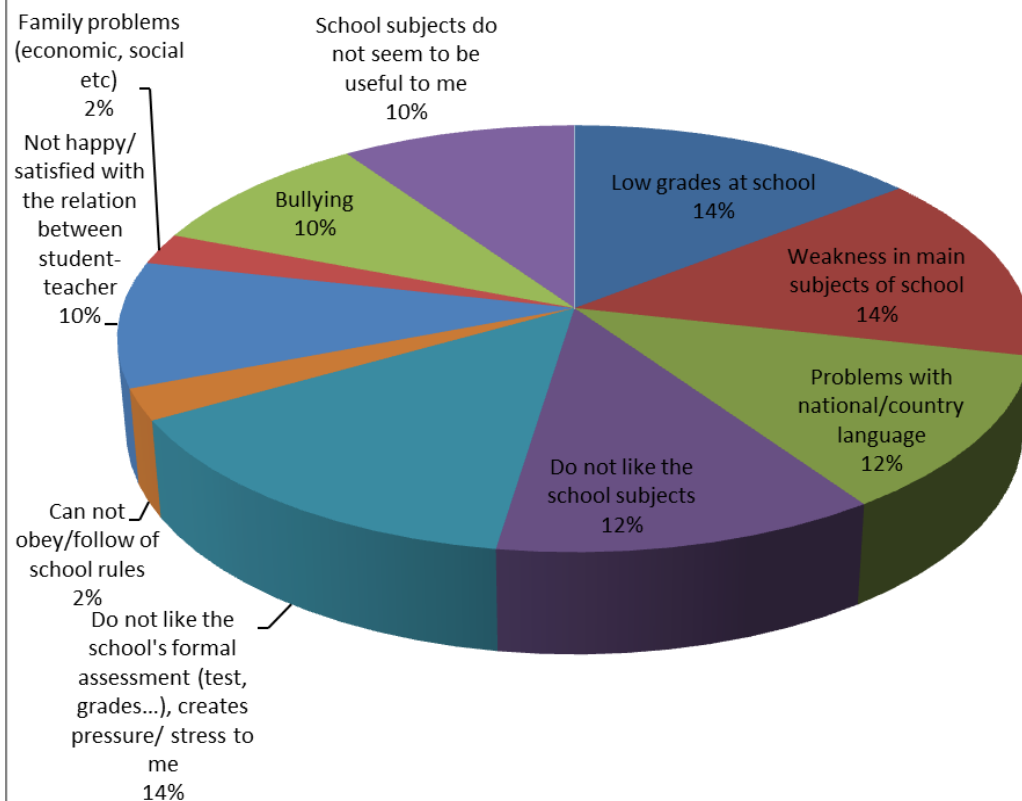
Possible factors to influence ESL - Undecided



Teachers **disagree** that the following factors influence ESL

14%	Low grades at school
14%	Weakness in main subjects of school
14%	Do not like the school's formal assessment (test, grades...), creates pressure/ stress students
12%	Problems with national/country language
12%	Do not like school subjects
10%	Not happy/ satisfied with the relation between student-teacher
10%	Bullying
10%	School subjects do not seem to be useful to students
2%	Cannot obey/follow of school rules
2%	Family problems (economic, social etc)
0%	Personal Problems
0%	Other reasons

Possible factors to influence ESL - Disagree

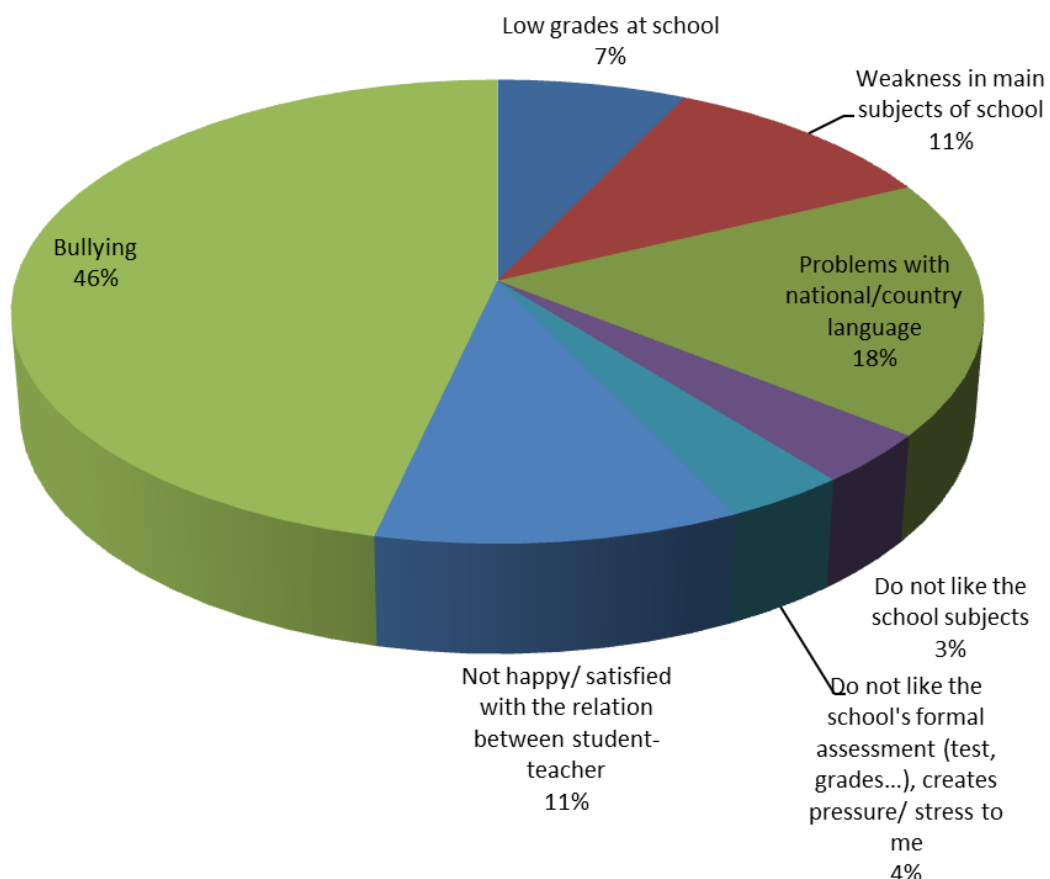


Teachers **fully disagree** that the following factors influence ESL:

- 46% Bullying
- 18% Problems with national/country language
- 11% Weakness in main subjects of school
- 11% Not happy/ satisfied with the relation between student-teacher
- 7% Low grades at school
- 4% Do not like school subjects
- Do not like the school's formal assessment (test, grades...), creates pressure/ stress students
- 3%
- 0 Can not obey/follow of school rules
- 0 Family problems (economic, social etc)
- School subjects do not seem to be useful to students
- 0
- 0 Personal Problems
- 0 Other reasons



Possible factors to influence ESL - Fully disagree

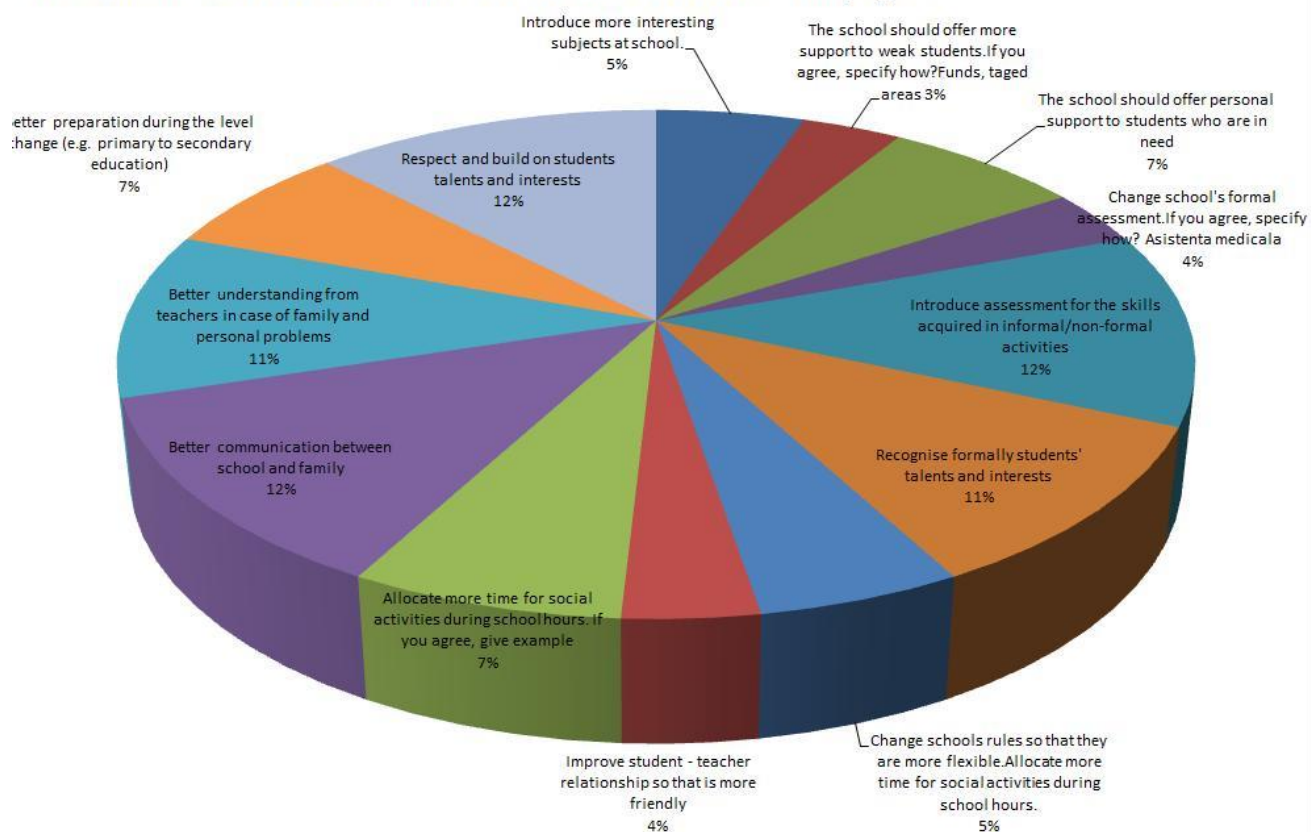


6.5.2.2. What are the possible changes that can be introduced in schools that could help/encourage students to complete their schooling?

Teachers **fully agreed** that the following possible changes can be introduced in schools to encourage students to complete their schooling:

12%	Introduce assessment for the skills acquired in informal/non-formal activities
12%	Better communication between school and family
12%	Respect and build on students talents and interests
11%	Recognise formally students' talents and interests
11%	Better understanding from teachers in case of family and personal problems
7%	The school should offer personal support to students who are in need
7%	Allocate more time for social activities during school hours. If you agree, give example
7%	Better preparation during the level change (e.g. primary to secondary education)
5%	Change schools rules so that they are more flexible. Allocate more time for social activities during school hours.
5%	Introduce more interesting subjects at school.
4%	The school should offer more support to weak students. If you agree, specify how? Funds, tagged areas
4%	Change school's formal assessment. If you agree, specify how? Asistentă medicală
4%	Improve student - teacher relationship so that is more friendly
0%	Other reasons

POSSIBLE CHANGES THAT CAN BE MADE IN SCHOOLS IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO COMPLETE THEIR SCHOOLING - Fully agree

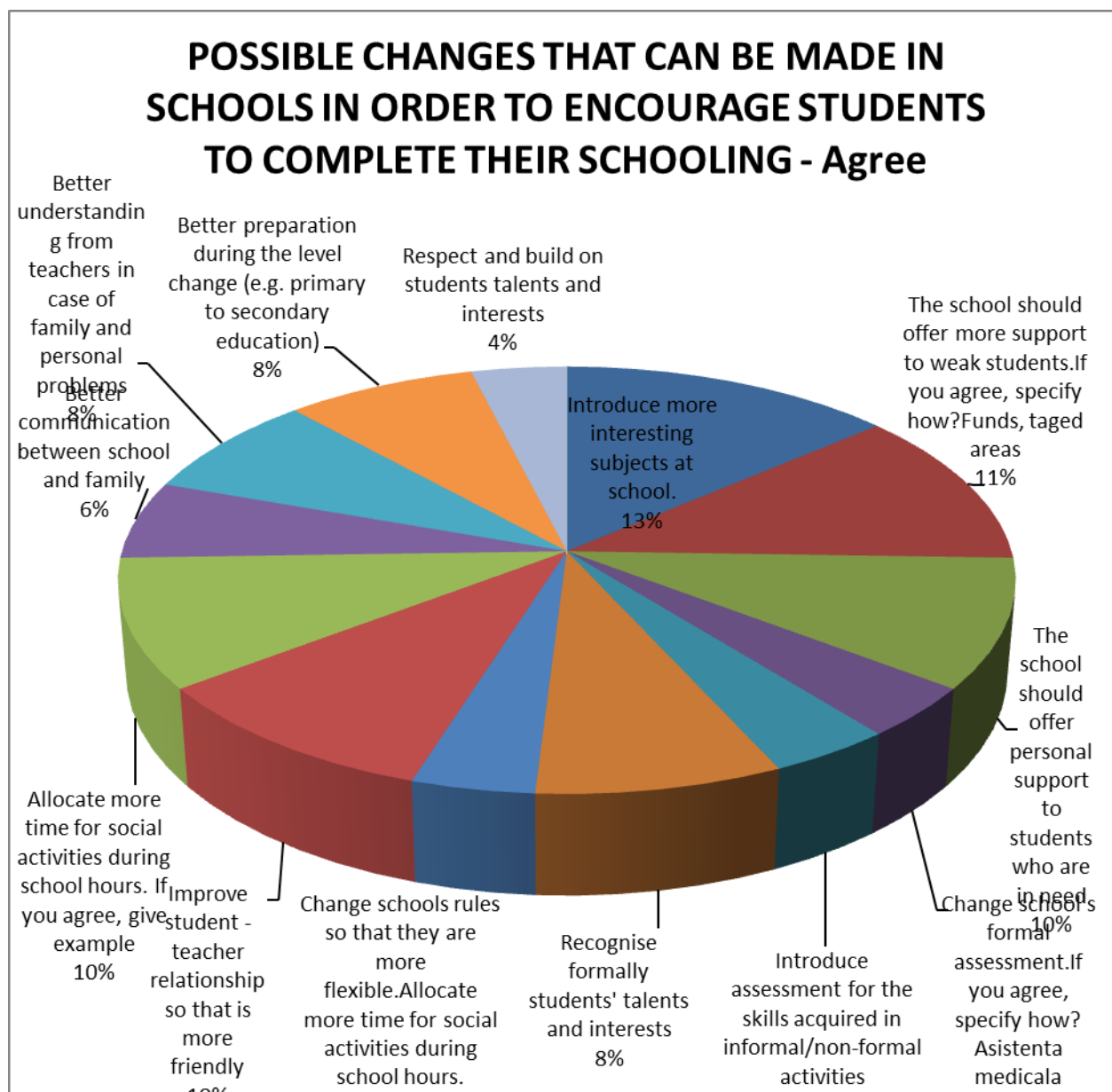


Teachers **agreed** that the following possible changes can be introduced in schools to encourage students to complete their schooling:

- 13% Introduce more interesting subjects at school.
- 11% The school should offer more support to weak students. If you agree, specify how? Funds, tagged areas
- 10% The school should offer personal support to students who are in need
- 10% Improve student - teacher relationship so that is more friendly
- 10% Allocate more time for social activities during school hours. If you agree, give example
- 8% Recognise formally students' talents and interests
- 8% Better understanding from teachers in case of family and personal problems
- 8% Better preparation during the level change (e.g. primary to secondary education)
- 6% Better communication between school and family



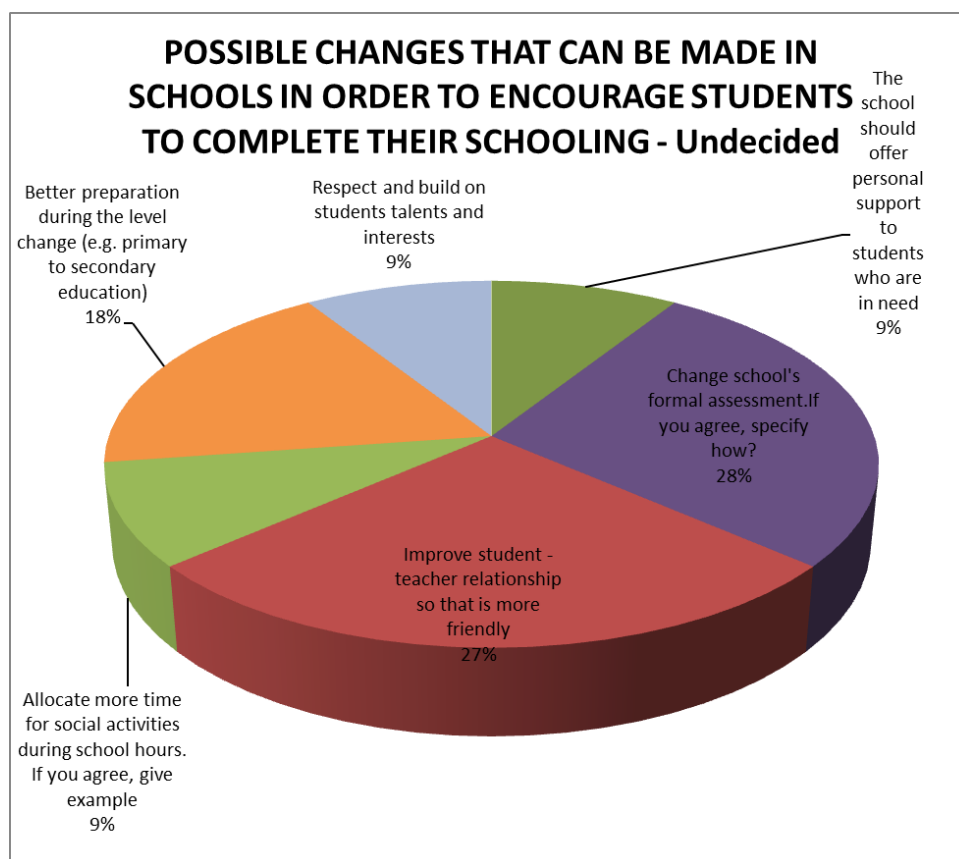
4%	Change school's formal assessment.If you agree, specify how? Asistenta medicala
4%	Introduce assessment for the skills acquired in informal/non-formal activities
4%	Change schools rules so that they are more flexible.Allocate more time for social activities during school hours.
4%	Respect and build on students talents and interests
0%	Other reasons





Teachers **were undecided** that the following possible changes can be introduced in schools to encourage students to complete their schooling:

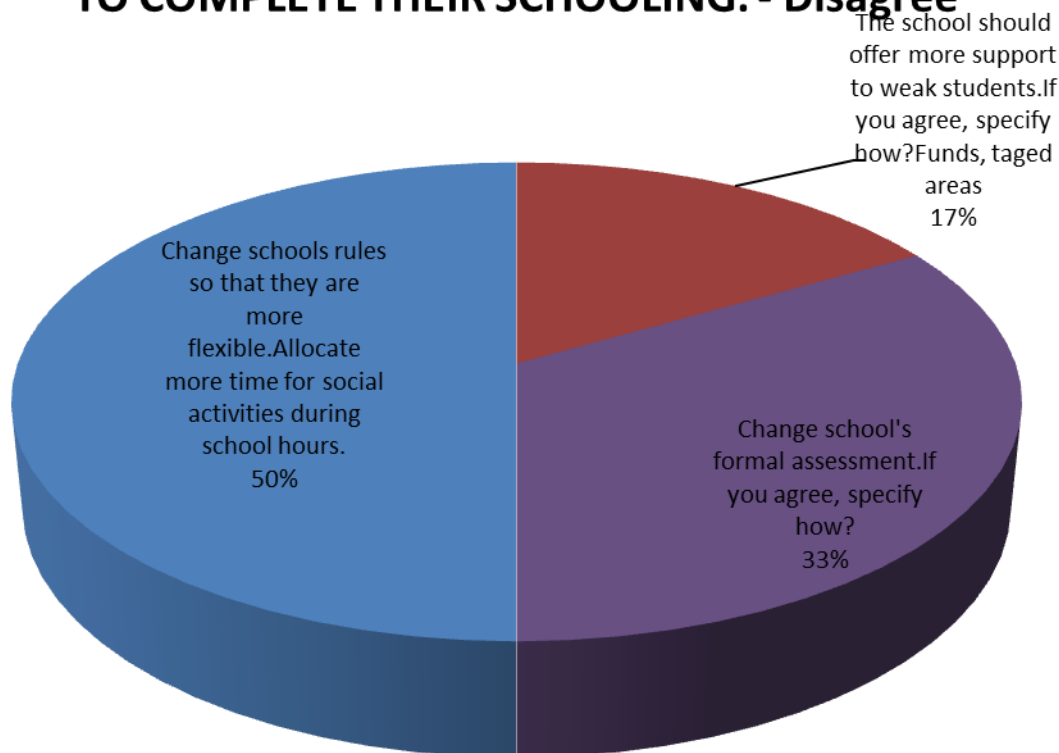
28%	Change school's formal assessment.If you agree, specify how?
27%	Improve student - teacher relationship so that is more friendly
18%	Better preparation during the level change (e.g. primary to secondary education)
9%	The school should offer personal support to students who are in need
9%	Allocate more time for social activities during school hours. If you agree, give example
9%	Respect and build on students talents and interests
0%	The school should offer more support to weak students.If you agree, specify how?Funds, tagged areas
0%	Introduce assessment for the skills acquired in informal/non-formal activities
0%	Recognise formally students' talents and interests
0%	Change schools rules so that they are more flexible.Allocate more time for social activities during school hours.
0%	Better communication between school and family
0%	Introduce more interesting subjects at school
0%	Other reasons



Teachers **disagreed** that the following possible changes can be introduced in schools to encourage students to complete their schooling:

- 50% Change schools rules so that they are more flexible. Allocate more time for social activities during school hours.
- 33% Change school's formal assessment. If you agree, specify how?
- 17% The school should offer more support to weak students. If you agree, specify how? Funds, tagged areas
- 0% The school should offer personal support to students who are in need
- 0% Introduce assessment for the skills acquired in informal/non-formal activities
- 0% Recognise formally students' talents and interests
- 0% Improve student - teacher relationship so that is more friendly
- 0% Allocate more time for social activities during school hours. If you agree, give example
- 0% Better communication between school and family
- 0% Better understanding from teachers in case of family and personal problems
- 0% Better preparation during the level change (e.g. primary to secondary education)
- 0% Respect and build on students talents and interests
- 0% Introduce more interesting subjects at school.
- 0% Other reasons

POSSIBLE CHANGES THAT CAN BE MADE IN SCHOOLS IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO COMPLETE THEIR SCHOOLING. - Disagree



6.5.2.3. What are the benefits for students, if the non-formal learning is recognized and validated in school?

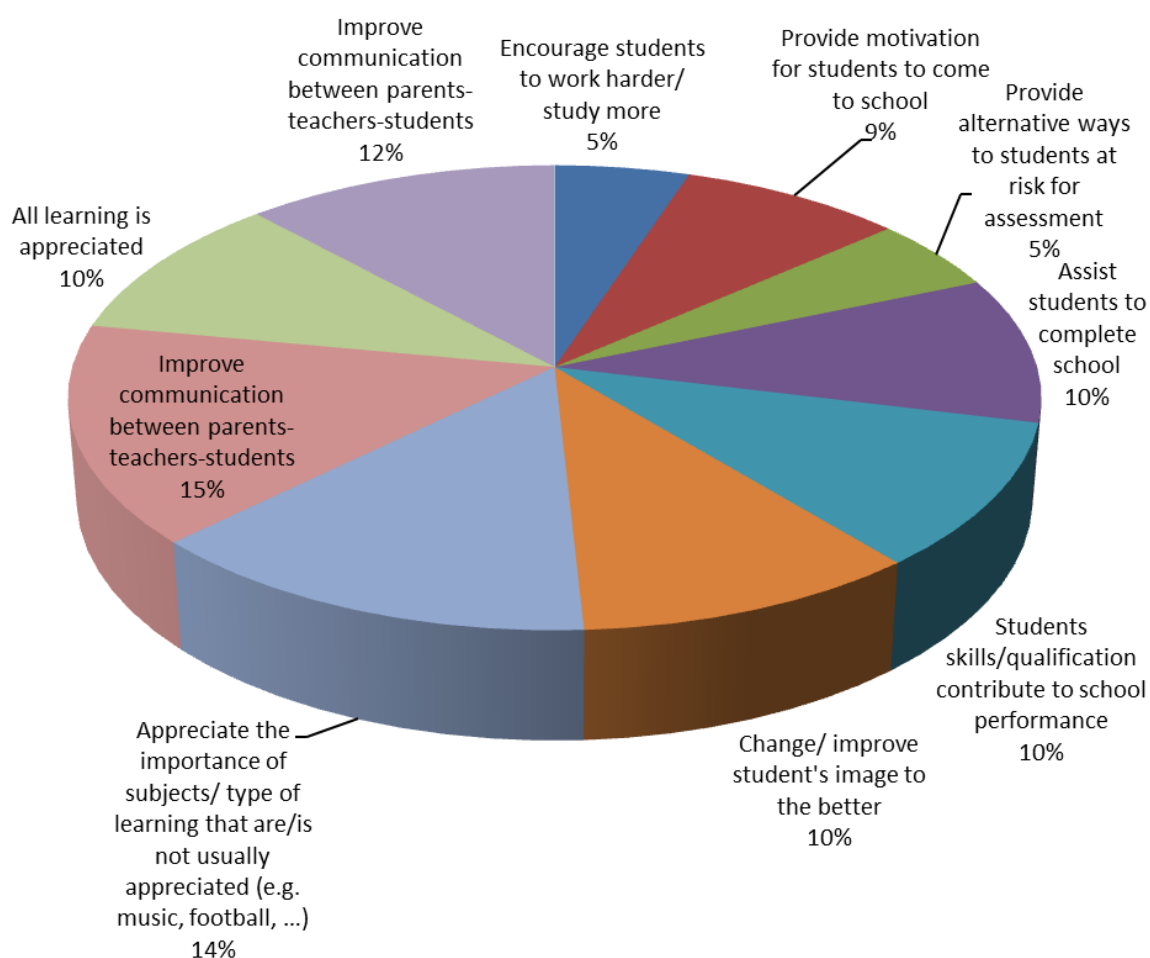
Teachers fully agreed the following benefits for students if the non-formal learning is recognized and validated in school:

- 15% Improve communication between parents-teachers-students
- 14% Appreciate the importance of subjects/ type of learning that are/is not usually appreciated (e.g. music, football, ...)
- 12% Improve communication between parents-teachers-students
- 10% Assist students to complete school



- 10% Students skills/qualification contribute to school performance
- 10% Change/ improve student's image for the better
- 10% All learning is appreciated
- 9% Develop/ enhance students' motivation to come to school
- 5% Provide alternative ways of assessment for students at risk
- 5% Encourage students to work harder/ study more

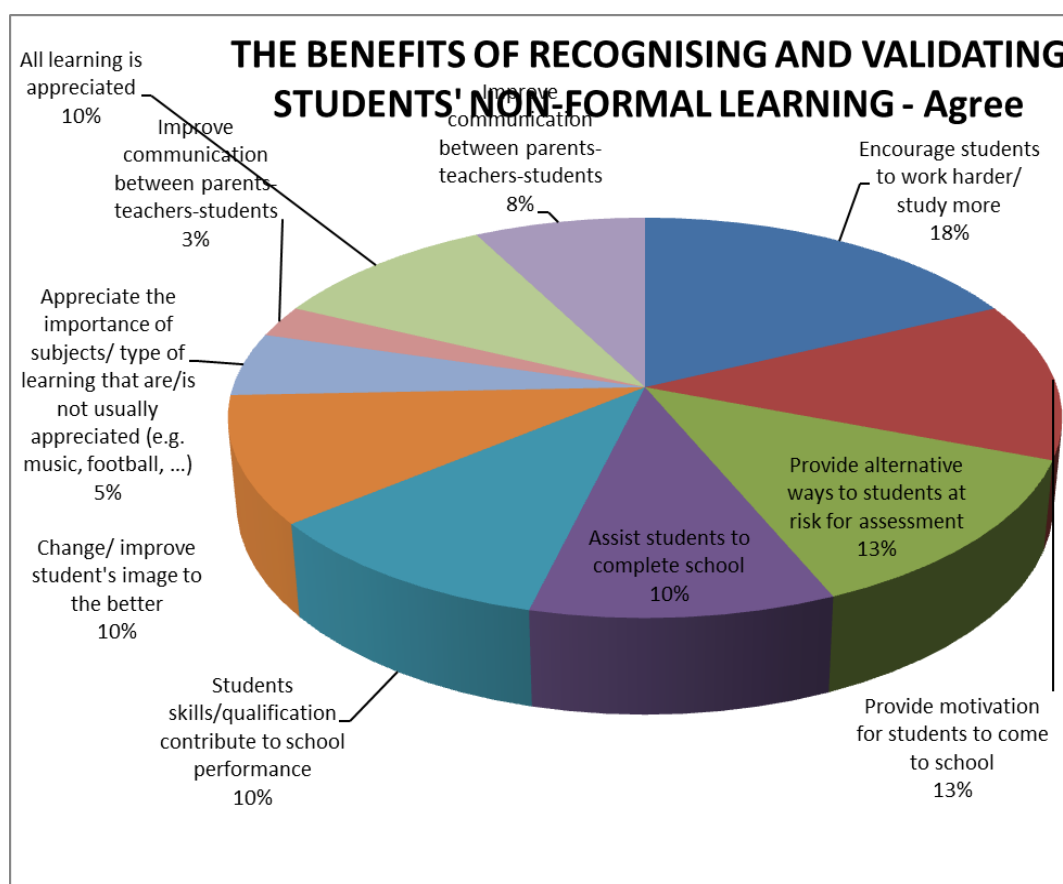
THE BENEFITS OF RECOGNISING AND VALIDATING STUDENTS' NON-FORMAL LEARNING - Fully agree





Teachers agreed the following benefits for students if the non-formal learning is recognized and validated in school:

- 18% Encourage students to work harder/ study more
- 13% Develop/ enhance students' motivation to come to school
- 13% Provide alternative ways of assessment for students at risk
- 10% Assist students to complete school
- 10% Students skills/qualification contribute to school performance
- 10% Change/ improve student's image for the better
- 10% All learning is appreciated
- 8% Improve communication between parents-teachers-students
- 5% Appreciate the importance of subjects/ type of learning that are/is not usually appreciated (e.g. music, football, ...)
- 3% Improve communication between parents-teachers-students





6.5.3. What are the measures that teachers have taken to prevent ESL?

The teachers stated that the following measures had already brought about the best results: individual and family counseling, permanent contact with family, regular meetings with parents, recognition of students' work and time and attracting students in interesting activities.

Teachers valued the following measures: better understanding of students ("speak with the students, find their interests and hobbies"), contacts with students' families, attracting students to interesting school activities or extra- curricular activities. They also expressed the necessity to enrich and use a wider range of assessment in all areas, which should also cover nonformal and informal learning.

All respondents agreed with the importance of nonformal and informal learning in the development of individuals.

6.5.2.4. What are the problems within the educational system/forma school that have been identified to influence students to leave school early?

The teachers identified the following factors that influence students to leave school early :

- The children have no hope for the future offered by the society
- We do not have a formal assessment to evaluate students' skills competences acquired in extracurricular activities
- Economic and social problems
- Family problems
- Inappropriate communication between school and parents;
- Too many subjects in the school curricula
- The school subjects are not interesting enough
- Lack of models
- Poverty



6.5.2.5. How can the recognition and validation for non-formal learning be introduced (practically) into the school procedures?

The teachers participating in the survey proposed the following possible ways to introduce the recognition and validation for non-formal learning into school procedures:

- The development of assessment tools for the competences acquired in non formal and informal activities
- Official recognition of the participation in extracurricular activities
- Official recognition of the abilities / skills acquired through non-formal activities
- Encouraging the voluntary work
- Organizing school festivals, which can increase the students' self esteem
- Creating flexible assessment tools
- Formal accreditation of the non-formal activities and skills acquired
- Develop a system of credits for extracurricular activities
- Including the credits gained in non-formal activities in their general assessment scheme

6.6. Conclusion

School drop out rate in Romania has increased during past years, being one of the highest rates in the European Union. In the current research we have investigated students' and teachers' perception on dropout phenomenon in connection with the use of extracurricular activities in the school assessment of students

The purpose of the study is to analyze both students' and teachers' views on the issue, as to better understand the real causes of the phenomenon and to better adapt the interventions according to the real existing needs. All respondents agreed with the factors highlighted in the questionnaire as being responsible for early school leaving although their hierarchy is different depending on the perspective (teachers: students cannot obey school rules/ family problems/ students do not like some school subjects; students: stressful school formal assessment; lack of usefulness of some school subjects; personal problems). The questionnaire carried out on students and teachers identified common benefits singled out by both groups: improvement in students' general performance and change in students' image. Teachers also gave a



high score to benefits such as encouraging students to study more and enhancing their motivation to learn. Generally speaking students seemed to be more pragmatic in relation to the way informal and nonformal learning contributes to their school performance and the necessity to recognise and validate such gains and introduce them in their school report. Teachers went for more general benefits such as its contribution to make students work harder and enhance their motivation to learn.

Findings have highlighted that local factors that may have a stronger effect on the dropout phenomenon in Romanian schools and need to be further investigated

As for the possible changes that can be introduced in schools that could help/encourage students to complete their schooling students agreed on: students' better preparation for school transition stages/ introduction of more interesting subjects at school/ teachers' better understanding of students' family and personal problems. The teachers stated that the following measures could bring the best results: individual and family counseling, permanent contact with family, regular meetings with parents, recognition of students' work and time and attracting students in interesting activities. Teachers valued the following measures: better understanding of students ("speak with the students, find their interests and hobbies"), contacts with students' families, attracting students to interesting school activities or extra- curricular activities. They also expressed the necessity to enrich and use a wider range of assessment in all areas, which should also cover nonformal and informal learning.

All respondents agreed with the importance of nonformal and informal learning in the development of individuals. Nonformal and informal learning is personal, personalized and capitalizes on students' aptitudes; it helps students find their place and their way in a changing world by showing them their strengths. It gives students the unique feeling of satisfaction that everybody needs when learning. It is closely related to students' personal talents and interests relying on intrinsic motivation.

All respondents, teachers and students alike, agreed that nonformal and informal learning has a high impact on students' general knowledge, development and image and, therefore, given its contribution, it must be taken in consideration when assessing students at the end of a school year.



7. Current Scene in Italy

Comparative Study Analysis Report: Preventing Early School Leaving through the recognition and validation of non-formal learning, within formal education – from theory to school practice

Proposed Content:

1. Introduction

The education system in Italy is organised according to the principles of subsidiarity and of autonomy of schools. The State has exclusive legislative competence on general issues on education, on minimum standards to be guaranteed throughout the country and on the fundamental principles that Regions should comply with within their competences. Regions share their legislative competences with the State on all education issues except for vocational education and training on which they have exclusive legislative competence. Schools are autonomous as for didactic, organisation and research and development activities.

Education is compulsory for 10 years, from 6 to 16 years of age, and covers the eight-year first cycle of education (5 years of primary school and 3 years of lower secondary school) and the first two years of the secondary education cycle. After completion of the first cycle of education, the last two years of compulsory education (from 14 to 16 years of age) can be accomplished either in the State-administered upper secondary schools (*licei*, technical institutes and vocational institutes) - whose courses last for five years - or through the vocational education and training courses falling under the competence of the Regions – that can last three or four years¹. 15-year olds can attend the last year of compulsory education also through the apprenticeship, previous specific agreement signed by the Regions, the Ministry of labour, the Ministry of education and trade unions².

Compulsory education refers to both enrolment and attendance. It can be accomplished either in a State and a *paritaria* (administered by private owners) school; regional three-year vocational training courses are offered by the relevant training agencies. Parents or caregivers are responsible for the accomplishment of compulsory education, while supervision on the fulfilment of compulsory education falls under the responsibilities of local authorities where pupils reside, and school heads of the schools pupils are enrolled in. Once compulsory schooling has been accomplished, pupils who do not carry on their studies receive a certification attesting compulsory education fulfilment and competencies acquired; these latter constitute formative credits for the attainment of any professional qualification. Rules applied to Italian citizens and citizens of member States of the European Union apply also to foreigner minors from non-European countries.

2. Current scene in Italy

2.1. Early School Leaving

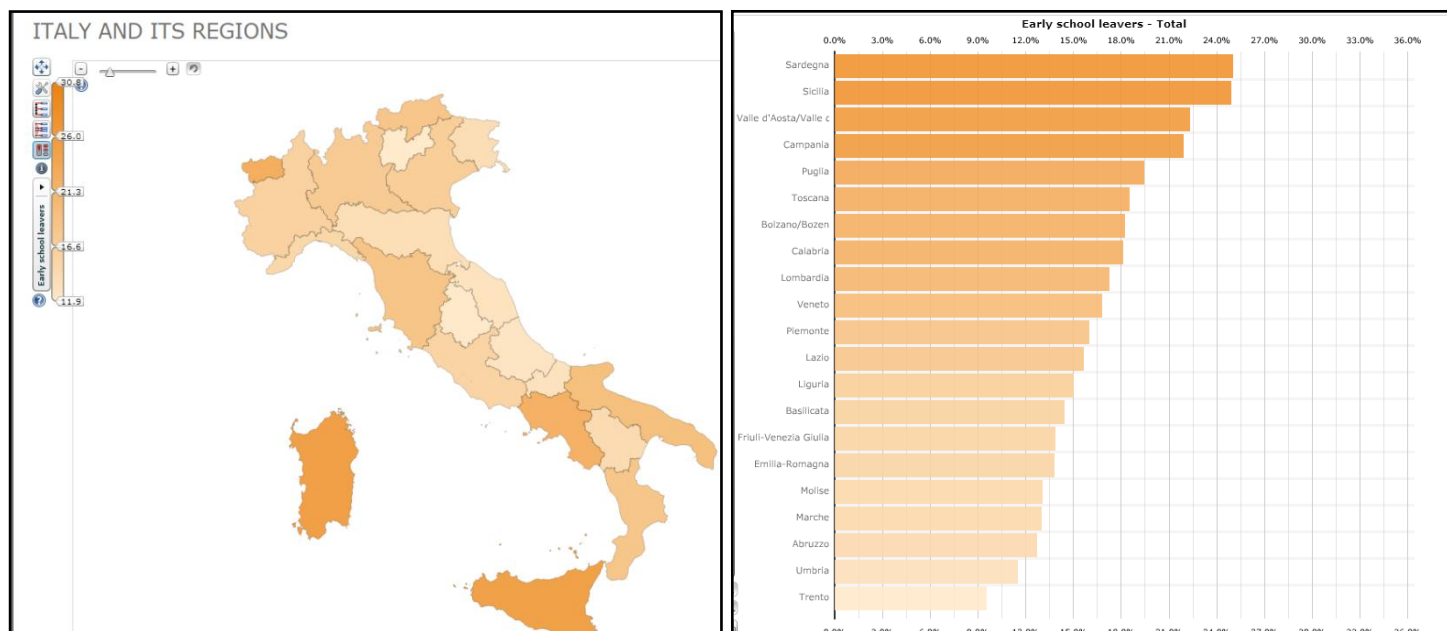
2.1.1. Extent of the ESL in partner country: statistics, reasons, policies

As one of the five targets to be reached by 2010 in the field of education and training, the Lisbon Strategy set a goal of 10 percent of young people leaving school without an adequate qualification. In Italy this target had not been achieved by 2010. The target of reducing the early school leaving rate by the end of the decade to below 10 percent has nevertheless been set once again in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In general, the decision not to complete the studies, often an indicator of social hardship concentrated in less developed areas, is common even in most prosperous regions, where high labour demand exerts an undeniable attraction on young people, dissuading them from completing their studies in favour of relatively easy access to employment. Although the phenomenon is steadily decreasing in Italy, it is still a long way

¹ law 133/2008.

² law 183/2010.

from the European targets: in 2011 the percentage of young people who gave up their studies early was 18.2 percent. The incidence of early school leavers was higher for the male component than for the female one³.



The reduction in the number of young people leaving school and training is also one of the targets considered by the single regional policy of the National strategic framework 2007-13 (Nsf). Despite the progress made in recent years in most regions and in particular in the South and Islands area, the target of reducing numbers of early school leavers to below 10 percent is a long way off. In 2011 the phenomenon of early school leaving still involved 21.2 percent of young people in the South and Islands area and 16.0 percent of their peers in the Centre and North. The highest incidence was in Sardegna and in Sicilia, where at least one young person out of four did not complete any studies/training beyond the lower-secondary school. High values were recorded also in, Campania (22.0 percent), Puglia (19.5 percent) and Calabria (18.2 percent). High early leaving rates however were observed in a number of areas in the North (mainly in in Valle d'Aosta and in the autonomous province of Bolzano, but also in Toscana and Lombardia). In addition, in the period from 2004-2011, the contraction of the phenomenon was particularly sharp in the southern regions, where the incidence of young people leaving school early fell by 6.4 percentage points, compared with a decrease of 3.2 percentage points in the regions of the Centre and North. The greatest progress in terms of reducing the phenomenon of early school leavers was achieved by the province of Bolzano and Puglia.

The exam of early school leaving in different types of schools (see table below) highlights great differences between general education and technical and vocational institutes, where the dropout rates are much higher.

The table below also shows that the first year of upper education, compared to the followings, reports a higher level of dropout rates in all types of school. The issue is particularly serious as far as Vocational Institutes are concerned, where a dropout rate of 11.6% is reported during the first year, as opposed to the almost irrelevant 1.6% of general education schools (Licei).

³ Source: Istat, Rilevazione continua sulle forze di lavoro
Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

[http://noi-](http://noi-italia2013en.istat.it/index.php?id=55&no_cache=1&user_100ind_pi1%5Bid_pagina%5D=727&cHash=7daaf905148684dbb1702830344d5f82)

[italia2013en.istat.it/index.php?id=55&no_cache=1&user_100ind_pi1%5Bid_pagina%5D=727&cHash=7daaf905148684dbb1702830344d5f82](http://noi-italia2013en.istat.it/index.php?id=55&no_cache=1&user_100ind_pi1%5Bid_pagina%5D=727&cHash=7daaf905148684dbb1702830344d5f82)

Type of School	General Rates	Dropout rates during First year
Italy	3.7	6.0
Licei - classical, scientific, linguistic upper education	1.1	1.6
Licei - socio-psycho-pedagogical upper education	2.4	4.4
Technical institutes	4.2	6.5
Vocational institutes	7.2	11.6
Arts institutes	4.2	6.8

According to these data, we can see that Dropout rates during first year of school is higher in Vocational institutes (11.6), although its general dropout rate is already high (7.2, the highest among the other type of school), and very high compared to Licei - classical, scientific, linguistic upper education (1.6) - the average in Italy is 6.0.

The table below shows how many students out of one hundred attend their final examination (esame di stato) in different types of schools, proving how usually girls have better performances than boys.

Type of School	Percentage of Males attending final examination	Percentage of Females attending final examination
Italy	67.1	78.1
Licei - classical, scientific, linguistic upper education	84.7	86.3
Licei - socio-psycho-pedagogical upper education	87.5	81.5
Technical institutes	74.5	87.6
Vocational institutes	41.5	56.5
Arts institutes	56.7	66.0

These data show that girls have better performance than boys especially in Technical institutes and Vocational institutes, whilst in the “Licei” the gap is small.

In general, the majority of students who manage to attend final examination are Licei students. Many students from Vocational institutes and Art Institutes find difficulties in getting all through their school path. The particularly bad figures for Vocational Institutes may derive from their two tier system, which provides the students with a first qualification at the end of the third year which may mark the transition from school to work, as well as from the concentration of students going through difficult, unpleasant conditions and discomfort. The research done by the 7th Parliamentary Commission in 2000 considered the social, economic background as the main cause of high dropout rates.

The Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 on new skills for new jobs has stated the need to raise the overall level of competence, giving priority to education and training of people at risk of social and economic exclusion, including young people who drop out school early. It also stressed the need to offer people looking for work a vocational guidance and a personal training plan and to develop the validation of learning outcomes acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning⁴.

2.1.2. Good practices for prevention and intervention

The strategies identified refer to students in the age of compulsory education, including the right/duty to get a qualification by 18 years of age; most of the examples come from Vocational Institutes but there are some from *Licei*, Socio-pedagogical or Technical Institutes.

⁴ http://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/buongiorno_europa/allegati/abbandono_scolastico.pdf.



Many are integrated projects, introduced with the 2003 agreement between Regions and the Ministry of Education, others have been financed by ESF, project period 2000-2006, on the specific measure C2, devoted to prevent early school leaving.

Most experiences come from Tuscany, others from Sardinia, Veneto and Liguria.

Some activities covered the entire first, and/or second class groups of a school, others provided students with more individualized interventions. Some schools have worked on an autonomous project, others in a network of schools and educational organizations.

Students' project activities integrate with the curricula, cover 20% class timetable (there are a few extra curricular activities), and meet both the cognitive and personal/relational needs:

- enhancement of basic knowledge
- listening centres
- mini placements
- guided visits in the area
- renewed guidance
- laboratory, practical activities
- e-learning

The starting situations showed 20-23% dropout rate, caused by different factors. The areas are often deprived, with larger and larger immigrant communities, juvenile offenders and general discomfort. Such backgrounds make students feel estranged from school and undermine their confidence in school as an instrument to climb the social ladder.

Motivation is low as students do not see a real connection between study and work and have low self-esteem, mainly after repeated failures.

The first signs that a student is at risk are the intolerance of the system of social rules and targets involved in school work, truancy, disruptive class behaviour, evident intolerance of traditional lessons, no power of concentration. The steady increasing number of foreign students makes living together with Italian students problematic, as well as with second generation students (inclusion and integration problems, families to be reunited, families unable to tackle difficult educational needs).

The experiences aim at supporting the recovery of basic learning and cross-curricular competences, at preventing early school leaving, reducing failures, having back to school students who had quitted, and most of all creating a sense of "well-being" at school in a systemic view which includes synergy in actions, which implies a different idea both of the learning/teaching process and of the student/teacher relationship.

Most experiences begin with a phase of teachers' training in order to make them master innovative teaching methods and stressful situations: coaching for teachers to train their relational competences and prevent burnout.

The teaching methods used with students at risk are varied, but they generally insist on strategies to make them welcome, on the development of learning-by-doing techniques, on tutoring and mentoring often personalized to the needs of the individual.

Among the favourite methods we see: active listening, small group work, narrative guidance, problem solving, practical activities, cooperative learning, exercises in a context of role play, individual and group support. Particular results were achieved with the method of life skills and peer education. They allow to obtain direct involvement of monitors (students with good learning performances) chosen and supported by teachers/supervisors, which emphasizes the value of peers' relationship in facing difficulties and focuses on the relational dimension together with the deinstitutionalization of learning support.

Co-teaching and working with teachers from other class boards is frequent.

In all the experiences we have seen schools cooperating with external institutions, professionals and vocational agencies in order to plan integrated projects. Actions carried out with the counsellors from Job Centres appeared to be quite significant: as they provided students with services of new guidance to make them attend courses of vocational agencies in order to get a qualification at regional level. Also actions implemented by the local offices of the National Health Service were of great interests with their listening centres run by psychologists. Furthermore some local administrations have often made the educational offer richer and varied by financing such activities as theatre, film clubs, competitions, sports events...).



Employers from the workplace, who can witness the social, economic area where a school is located, have often played an important role and have accepted students' placements, both to make them observe the activities or get trained.

The Provincial Offices of the Ministry of Education, which generally support the fight against early school leaving, favour and coordinate networks of school and project specific teachers' training on intercultural and guidance issues. Teachers' training is also organized in cooperation with University structures with blended methodologies. Certain experiences have planned initiatives to make families fully involved in their kids' recovery process.

The projects examined have shown a high percentage of successful results, an average around 5% decrease in dropout rate, more active participation, lower truancy, increase of self-esteem thanks to the enhancement of personal potentialities, greater awareness of the choices made, stress reduction, new motivation, making a habit of continuing education, development of cross-curricular, as well as learning, communicative, social, planning skills, together with a greater participation of families in the educational process.

2.2. Validation of non-formal and informal learning: the European perspective

2.2.1. Current state for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in Italy – legal framework

The recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in Italy is an ancient issue. Stakeholders and policy makers tried many paths in order to find a common and nationally valid solution. Unfortunately, until 2012 every attempt crashed against the rigidity of national rules (legal value of national qualifications) and the difficulties due to multilevel organisation of the Italian education system management (national level for school and university, regional level for vocational training with overlapping responsibilities, see the introduction).

Nevertheless, many experiments and proposals come from the regional and sectorial level causing the co-existence of many validation systems with only local recognition. Among these the most successful and widely used solution is the “Libretto formativo personale” (Personal Training Portfolio), introduced by the Emilia-Romagna Regional Government and largely imitated by other authorities. This tool foresees the collection of the professional and training history of the individual, by one hand, and the gathering of the certifications, by the other hand.

“The degree of development of regional validation systems is heterogeneous. In a nutshell, Regions can be classified into three groups:

- Seven Regions are in an exploratory phase (Abruzzo, Calabria, Campania, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Molise, Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Sicilia). In these Regions a strategy for validation is emerging (experience in projects, programmes, types and training sectors) but is not yet publically formalised and institutionalised;
- Seven Regions are in a formalisation phase (Basilicata, Lazio, Liguria, Marche, Puglia, Sardegna, Autonomous province of Trento). In these Regions the strategy for validation has been formalised and /or have resulted in a regional system of certification (not implemented yet);
- Seven Regions are in an implementation phase (Emilia Romagna, Lombardia, Piemonte, Toscana, Veneto, Umbria, and Valle d'Aosta). In these Regions the strategy of validation has been fully formalised and institutionalised within a regional system; the services are currently in development or offered (to all citizens or specific target groups).

The general approach to validation in Italy until 2012 can be considered mostly bottom-up but, as a new trend in the last two years, the bottom-up experiences started to methodologically converge. The points of convergence are absolutely consistent to the indications suggested by the CEDEFOP Guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning, even if this consistency is not always explicit but often due to a spontaneous imitation effect”⁵.

⁵ E. Petrulli, European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014. Country report Itali, (CEDEFOP)





The following efforts aiming to create a national common framework for this issue did not waste the previous experiences exploiting the existing process of spontaneous imitation among regional authorities. The legislation introduced since 2012 at central level confirms this tendency:

- The National Law 92/2012 (reform of the Labour market) allowed the institution of a national system of competence certification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.
- The national Legislative Decree 13/2013⁶ established the “Definition of general rules and basic level of performance for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and minimum service standards of the national system of competences certification”. This Decree foresees an implementation phase of 18 months and that every qualification, fully or partially, can be accessible by formal training or validation of non-formal or informal learning.
- Still on 2012 Italy approved the EQF National Referencing Report that has been presented to EQF AG on May 2013. This is the starting point for the creation of a National Qualification Network to which all the authorities must refer.

2.2.2. Validation on non-formal and informal learning in formal education

In such an undefined and in progress framework, it is advisable exploit as much as possible those few reference provided by the legislation. Indeed, at the moment in Italy a concrete validation of non-formal and informal learning in formal education is possible only theoretically due to the lack of a national system of validation. Nevertheless, some public authorities and stakeholders of the labour market experienced some pilot practices from which started to be informally spread a common way to act.

The legislation comes fixing this methodology and giving the basis for future development

The validation of credits between different education and training pathways is something theoretically possible in Italy and it has sometimes also been practiced with different approaches in various contexts.

The lack of national standards regarding qualifications and competences is felt by various stakeholders as the main obstacle and may represent the main hindrance to the development of a national validation system.

“With reference to the process of identification, validation and certification, the public entitling body will ensure the following minimum standards:

a) the articulation into the following phases:

1. Identification: phase aimed to identify and bring transparency to the individual’s competences relating them to one or more qualifications. In case of non-formal and informal learning this step involves a specific support in the analysis and documentation of the experience of learning and in correlating the results to one or more qualifications.
2. Assessment: phase to ascertain the mastery of the competences related to one or more qualifications. In the case of non-formal and informal learning this stage involves the adoption of specific assessment methods and evidences as proof of the competences actually possessed.
3. Attestation: step aimed at issuing validation documents or certificates, standardised in accordance with this decree, documenting the competences identified and validated or certified related to one or more qualifications.

b) the adoption of customised measures for information and guidance addressed to the beneficiaries of the services of identification, validation and certification of competences”.⁷

Even if they are partial, in progress or overcome by new provisions, it is noteworthy to mention some tools and solutions that can be seen as milestones in the process of creation of a national system of validation of non-formal and informal learning in formal education. They are three, namely the IFTS system, the University

⁶ http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/02/15/13G00043/sg;jsessionid=QtVQDnVhW+1EjOvvz7l8GA__.ntc-as1-guri2b

⁷ Decree 13/2013



system and the “Libretto formativo del cittadino” (Citizen’s training portfolio), and they are all connected with the assignment of credits.

Decree No. 436 of 31 October 2000 signed by the Ministers of Education, Labour and the University envisages the regulations concerning IFTS (Higher Technical Training and Education). Starting from this decree, the IFTS system has contributed to build a national system of competence-based standards over the 2002-2005 period.

The IFTS System⁸

Structured in	Units of competence: a structured set of competences easily readable from all VET sectors, labour market, social actors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collectable · - Certification object · - Clusterable in qualification profiles
Centred on	Competences · <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - basic · - technical-vocational · - transversal
Referring to	Basic requirements for employability Fields of action and organisational processes Behaviour of the individual in the job context
Perspectives	In the future, the Standard will also contain learning and training indicators (a range of contents, durations and training methods). (Training Units)

The IFTS system foresees a first step of identification of individuals’ training needs and a following stage of assessment of the declared competences and of gathering of acquired certifications. The process ends with the releasing of a new certification and with the assignment of credits.

At the beginning of the current century, Italian Ministry of Education reformed the university system. It has been one of the most radical modifications the world of education passed through. “The fundamental characteristics of the new university training may be briefly identified as:

- Replacement of the teaching approach with a learning approach;
- Reorganisation of the curricula for the achievement of training objectives connected with specific scientific and job profiles;
- Rationalisation of teaching through modular curricula;
- Greater active participation of students;
- Greater consistency between initial cultural preparation and expected final objectives;
- The universities may recognise as university training credits vocational skills and knowledge certified in conformity with the standards and regulations in force (Decree N. 509 of 3 November 1999)”⁹.

The third element mentioned above (“Libretto formativo del cittadino”) maybe is the most relevant innovation introduced in Italy in the field of the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Its structure and its operation are similar to those of the Europass portfolio. The following scheme, taken from the report “The Italian validation of non-formal and informal learning” published by ISFOL, is useful to have an idea on how it looks like:

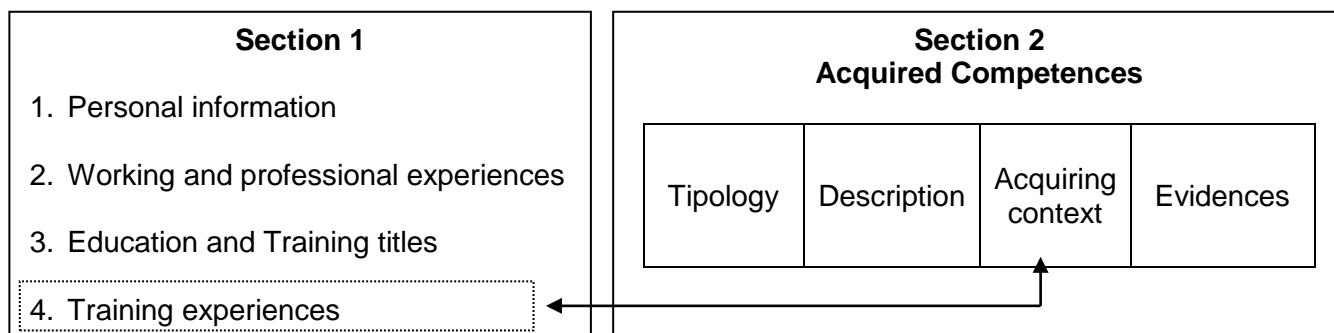
- inspired by a general legislative recommendation (in Law 30 and Decree 276, both from 2003);
- defined operationally at the State-Regions Conference;

⁸ <http://isfoloa.isfol.it/xmlui/handle/123456789/175>

⁹ Ib.

- currently in the experimental phase in roughly half of the Regions of Italy.

It is a document divided into two sections. One section contains a record of the professional and training history of the individual, while the other section lists those competences, legitimising these qualifications through certification, with a logic similar to that of the Europass portfolio.



Section 1 refers to personal data and provides a description of the curriculum, education, work and training experiences.

Section 2 describes and document the competences acquired by the individual through his several learning experiences

The *Citizen training portfolio* is not merely a document or a repository of information with a format, but it is also a real device: a process that defines, in addition to the document itself, relevant stakeholders, roles, settings, procedures, competences, behaviours and relationships.

2.3. Students' assessment procedures

2.3.1. Official assessment policies used in secondary schools: formative and summative

Students' assessment takes place twice a year and progress is expressed using a decimal score system with positive marks from 6 to 10. Assessment criteria are defined in the yearly educational planning (POF) of each school but national standards of competences for each level have recently been introduced by the Ministry of Education. To be promoted to higher classes students must obtain an assessment of 6 out of 10 in each subject but promotion can be "suspended", if failing in one or more subjects is not serious and does not limit global education. In this case students should be offered extra support activities "to pay their debts", that is to be able to reach a positive assessment and be admitted to the next year.

At the end of the upper secondary education students take their final examination (esame di stato). The examination board is made up of external and internal members which assess all the tests, even the two written ones, coming directly from the Ministry of Education, are not centrally examined. The exam has a multidisciplinary approach and takes into account the student's career in a system of credits. A final mark in hundredths is assigned to each student and all students can attend any University course after passing the final examination.

Freely translating from the DPR 22/06/2009, n. 122, the latest legislative intervention on this subject, we can read as follows:

"Art. 1 – Object of the regulation: aims and characteristic of the assessment

3. The object of the assessment is the students' learning process, behaviour and overall educational performance. Through its formative aim and the detection of students' strengths and weakness, the assessment concur to improve the learning level and to a successful training, even in accordance with the objective of long life learning expressed by the "Lisbon strategy in the field of education and training" adopted by the European Council with the recommendation on 23 and 24 March 2000.

Art. 4. – Secondary schools students' assessment



1. In progress and final assessment is made by the board of the class [composed by teachers and leaded by the headmaster...]
2. In progress and final behavioural assessment of the students is expressed on a scale of 10. [...] Behavioural assessment concurs to the average on which the educational credits are given [...].
4. Periods of educational training and of working experiences are part of the educational path. [...]
5. Students pass the class when they reach at least 6 up to 10 on the behavioural assessment and [...] a minimum mark of 6 up to 10 in each subject or group of subjects [...] Students' final learning and behavioural assessment covers each year.
6. During the final grading meeting, the class board suspends the judgement for those students who do not achieve the passing mark in one or more subjects, avoiding to express a judgement of school failure. After the final grading meeting, the result related to all the subjects is transmitted to the families. The class board, in occasion of integration of the grading meeting, after ending all educational intervention for recovering the learning lacks, before the new year starts, assess again the learning results of the "suspended" student. In the positive case, the student is admitted to the following class with the assignment of the corresponding educational credit"¹⁰.

Overall considered, the assessment process has many functions. To be successful, the assessment must be felt as a concrete possibility that allows to change educational and learning paths. Indeed, during the educational path, teachers check how the learning process is going through many detection tools. They gather various information which serve also to validate the training and didactical strategy adopted. Under this point of view the assessment becomes integrally part of the teaching method. According the results and the students' training needs coming from the assessment, teachers can design again the formative strategy. The summative function of the assessment is related to the concept of final balance of an educational path. Through this kind of assessment teachers evaluate the level of knowledge reached by students using an organic set of learning tests. The main feature of the summative assessment takes the shape of the in progress or final balance of the educational and training path. Following this perspective, we are lead to put the summative assessment apart from the teaching process properly considered. Nevertheless, also the summative assessment serves the fostering the students' development and, in such a way, carries out a formative function.

3. Survey based analysis: from theory to school practice

The previous parts of this report presented the current national context of the secondary education through the legislative framework, think-tanks' official point of view and the mechanisms established by the policy makers. For the sake of completeness and to provide a bottom up perspective about early school leaving and non-formal and informal learning issues, 20 teachers' and 28 students' opinions have been investigated through two different surveys. Since the size of the sample does not always allow to make statistically relevant comments, the current report will show the results in an as much aggregate as possible way. Otherwise the report would be exposed to the risk of rushed deductions or fake inferences.

The following paragraphs provide the statistical processing of the data collected with the surveys. When possible, the data coming from the two samples are presented simultaneously, allowing interesting comparisons and comments. Otherwise, when the two samples' answers are not comparable, the analysis focuses on students' and teachers' features separately.

Together with the quantitative analysis, the current report hosts also some useful comments directly from students and teachers.

¹⁰ DPR 22 June 2009, n. 122 (available at http://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/rn/odis/doc/dm122_2009.pdf).





3.1. Students' and teachers' views

The main focus of the current section is on the parts the two questionnaires have in common. Both teachers and students expressed their degree of agreement about many aspects of three main areas:

- Factors influencing students for early leaving the school;
- Changes that can be made in schools in order to encourage students to complete their schooling;
- Benefits of recognising and validating students' non-formal learning.

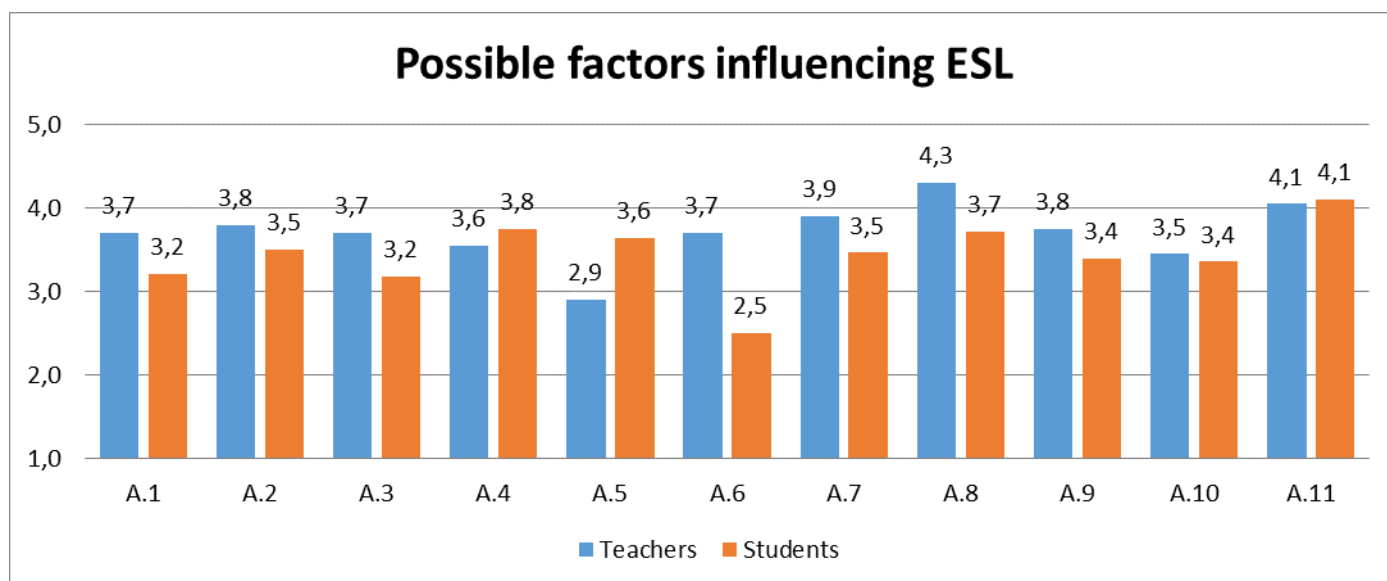
According to the different areas, those who attended the survey expressed their degree of agreement to the proposed sentences following the scale "Fully Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Fully Disagree". When necessary, these qualitative expressions have been changed in quantitative answers according Statistics method and by assigning them respectively the following values: 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1.

3.1.1. What are the most important factors that influence students to leave school early?

Both teachers and students were asked to provide their opinion on 11 possible reasons that can influence students to leave school early. Being the same sentences for both the samples is interesting make a direct comparison between the two points of view: students' and teachers' one. The factors under investigation are the following:

1. Low grades at school
2. Weakness in main subjects of school
3. Problems with national/country language
4. Do not like the school subjects
5. Do not like the school's formal assessment (test, grades...), creates pressure/ stress to me
6. Cannot obey/follow of school rules
7. Not happy/ satisfied with the relation between student-teacher
8. Family problems (economic, social etc)
9. Bullying
10. School subjects do not seem to be useful to me
11. Personal Problems

The graph below shows the average performances of each sentence both for the teachers' (in blue) and students' (in red) series. The displayed values are those of the weighted means that have been built by assigning a numerical meaning to the qualitative scale as said above. Following this reasoning, the values on the vertical axe can be read also as 1=Fully Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree and 5=Fully Agree. The fact that almost all the scores are over the "undecided" value means that all the majority of the participants to the survey agree that all factors influence students to leave the school early.



From teachers' point of view, the most relevant factors in case of early school leaving are family problems (4.3), personal problem (4.1), weakness in many subjects and bullying (3.8). As far as students' opinion is concerned, the most relevant factors are personal problems (4.1), do not like the school subjects (3.8), family problems (3.7) and do not like the school's formal assessment (3.6). According to these initial considerations, it seems that teachers and students agree that personal problems and those arising from families are the main causes of ESL.

The greatest differences are on the lowest scores. While for the teachers the assessment process (2.9) is the least influencing factor, it is among the most considered among students. Reversing the order of the categories this trend is confirmed: the least important factor for the students is the respecting of school rules (2.5) which is highly estimated by teachers (3.7).

Teachers and students were free to add comments. The formers focused the attention on students' lack of motivation, boredom and other aspects strictly related to the students. Nevertheless there is also a comment more self-critical taking into account the appropriateness of the teaching methods.

3.1.2. What are the possible changes that can be introduced in schools that could help/encourage students to complete their schooling?

After the analysis of the reasons potentially causing the early school leaving phenomenon, teachers and students have been involved in a more proactive way. The sample was asked to express the level of agreement with possible changes in order to enhance school inclusion and to encourage students to complete their studies. The participants had also many opportunities to better specify their choice by commenting with free text. Hereafter there is the list of the possible changes investigated:

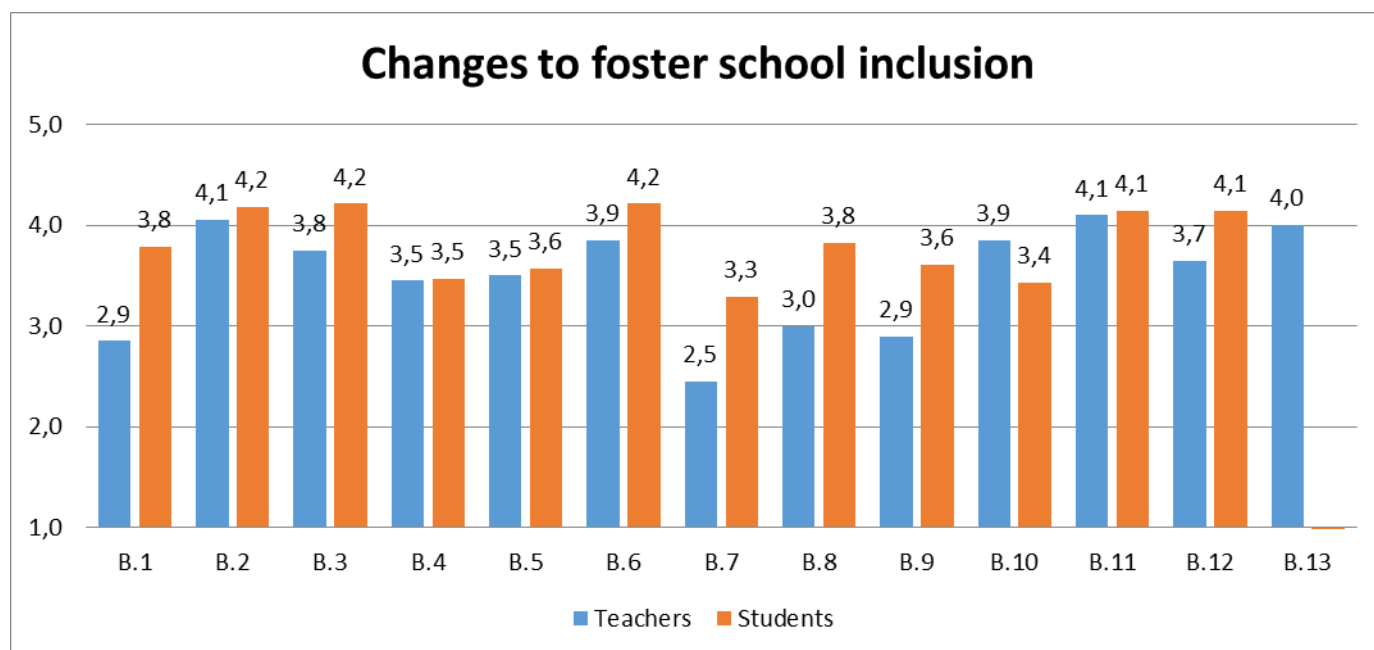
1. Introduce more interesting subjects at school. (If you agree specify these subjects)
2. The school should offer more support to weak students. (If you agree, specify how?)
3. The school should offer personal support to students who are in need
4. Change school's formal assessment. (If you agree, specify how?)
5. Introduce assessment for the skills acquired in informal/non-formal activities (e.g. music, social activities, voluntary work, sports, dance etc)
6. Recognise formally students' talents and interests
7. Change schools rules so that they are more flexible. (If you agree, specify which rules?)
8. Improve student - teacher relationship so that is more friendly
9. Allocate more time for social activities during school hours. (If you agree, give example)
10. Better communication between school and family
11. Better understanding from teachers in case of family and personal problems

12. Better preparation during the level change (e.g. primary to secondary education)
13. Respect and build on students talents and interests (only in teachers' questionnaire)

With the exception of the last question, teachers and students answered to the same set of questions. Thus, also in this case, we are able to reproduce the same approach of the previous paragraph.

A first glance to the graph below give the overall impression that students' bars are higher than teachers' ones and this can mean they are more mind opened to the changes.

Once again, with very few exceptions, the most part of the possible changes proposed have been welcome as potential factors encouraging students to complete their studies.



Combining the points of view of the two categories of people participating to the survey, the most expected changes are the following: to offer more support to weak students (4.1 for teacher and 4.2 for students), to improve guidance and preparation during the level change (4.1 for the entire sample) and to recognise formally students' talents and interests (3.9 for teachers and 4.2 for students).

Especially the latter is noteworthy with regard to the aim of the current report and the scope of NON.FOR.LESL project. Being among the most wanted changes, it is the confirmation of the necessity of a formal recognition of students' informal and non-formal learning.

Unlike the students who appreciate more or less all the possible proposed changes, the teachers are more critics about some aspect under investigation. These are the cases of: change schools rules so that they are more flexible (2.5), introduce more interesting subjects at school and allocate more time for social activities during school hours (2.9) and improve student-teacher relationship so that is more friendly (3.0).

Teachers and students had the opportunity to suggest which subjects they would like to add beside the existing one. Hereafter their suggestion grouped by sample categories:

- Teachers: Cinema, Theatre, Music, More practical subjects, Improve the hours for laboratory lessons, Legality, Use of IWB and other IT tools.
- Students: Citizenship, Ecology, Current politics events, Advanced computer, Study of innovative materials, Robotics, Music, Students' hobbies.

In case of weak students, the sample proposes common solution that can be grouped as follows depending also on the causes/types of the weakness:



- Recovering lessons in the afternoon (or even during the morning) held by teachers;
- Practical and group work and additional activities
- Psychological and guidance counselling

In addition to the above listed ones, students propose other solutions like:

- Financial resources for students in need;
- Peer learning with the cooperation of the most capable classmates;
- To innovate the assessment system.

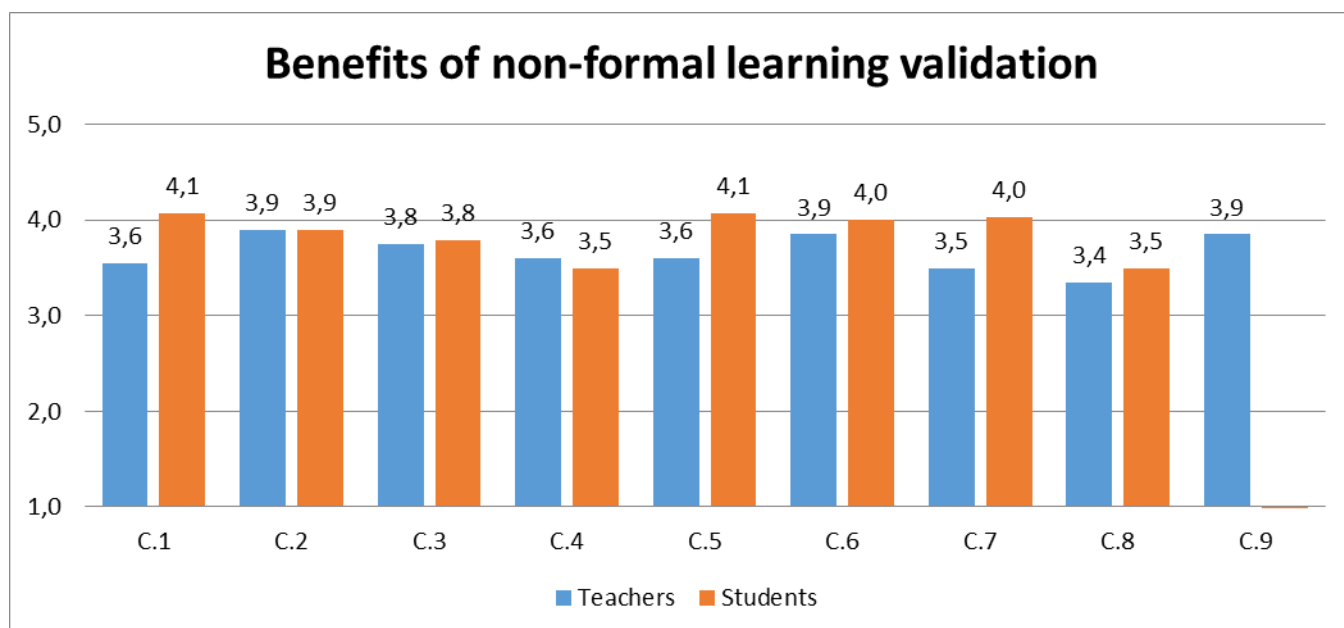
According to the latter point, teachers' views are focused on changing the current assessment system in order to give more importance to the learning process than to the knowledge itself. On the contrary, students' opinions are more focused on the marks and, in some ways, this can be interpreted as a mirror for the meaning they confer to the marks and the pressure that the marks put on them.

3.1.3. What are the benefits for students, if the non-formal learning is recognized and validated in school?

A third part of the questionnaires investigates the benefits coming from recognising and validating students' non-formal learning. The benefits taken into account by the current survey are the following:

1. Encourage students to work harder/ study more
2. Provide motivation for students to come to school
3. Provide alternative ways to students at risk for assessment
4. Assist students to complete school
5. Students skills/qualification contribute to school performance
6. Change/ improve student's image to the better
7. Appreciate the importance of subjects/ type of learning that are/is not usually appreciated (e.g. music, football, ...)
8. Improve communication between parents-teachers-students
9. All learning is appreciated (only on teachers' questionnaire)

Comparing the graph below with the two ones above, this section is the most homogenous one. Indeed, there are no bars under the value corresponding with the "undecided" choice. This is the reason why we can assume that both teachers and students consider all factors listed above as beneficial consequences of the recognition and validation of students' non-formal learning.



As on the previous graph, also in the current case students averagely demonstrate a higher level of agreement with the benefits of non-formal learning validation in comparison with teachers. Despite of the overall homogeneity, only the item “Students skills/qualification contribute to school performance” (3.9 for teachers and 4.0 for students) appears among the most appreciated beneficial factors in both the categories of the sample. Otherwise, teachers consider the validation of students’ non-formal learning as mostly beneficial because it would provide motivation for students to come to school (3.9), have positive repercussion on the learning generally considered (3.9) and provide alternative ways to students at risk for assessment (3.8). From their different perspective, students focus their greatest agreement on the encouragement for students to work harder/study more (4.1), change/improvement of student's image to the better and appreciation of the importance of subjects/type of learning that are/is not usually appreciated (4.0).

On the contrary, teachers and students think that the least aspects to benefit from the validation of students’ non-formal learning are the communication between parents-teachers-students (3.4 for teachers and 3.5 for students) and “assist students to complete school” (3.6 for teachers and 3.5 for students).

3.2. Teachers’ views

3.2.1. What are the measures that teachers have taken to prevent ESL?

With regard to the prevention of early school leaving phenomenon, teachers were asked to answer two questions in order to collect the measures that their schools or they as teachers have implemented.

Being in the framework of such a complex issue, also the measures undertaken by different professionals for its prevention are various.

The first difference arises from the type of school origin. Indeed, it seems that teachers coming from Lyceum feel the ESL differently due to the fact that here the school leavers look at the VET system as a second opportunity when the first one was not successful. This one is not properly felt as an ESL case but as just a change from a school to another one.

Teachers dealing with students at risk of dropout take many actions in order to avoid their exit from the school system. For instance, they tried to take into consideration non-formal skills when the students present weakness in common subjects. They focused more on the assessing of competences acquisition than on the knowledge learning process itself. Another channel used by teachers in order to win back students at school is to work on their motivation. The action taken to fulfil this purpose run on different directions: teachers try both to modulate teaching methods and contents according students interests and to improve the relation

with students in a more empathic way. At this regard, teachers enlarge their range of action on the communication floor by enforcing the cooperation and the level of involvement of parents. In the case of circumstance exceeding their role and competences, teachers involve external experts or suggest students and their parents to consult them for counselling or psychological assistance.

3.2.2. What are the problems within the educational system/formal school that have been identified to influence students to leave school early?

As seen above, the complexity of early school leaving issue leads to a variety of actions that can be taken in order to tackle or prevent it. Similarly, also the features of educational system/formal school influencing student to leave school early are various as well. The results of the questionnaires confirm this logical sequence when teachers were requested to answer to the question “Do you identify any problems within in the EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM and the FORMAL SCHOOLING that influence students to leave school early?”.

The answers can be grouped in two macro-areas: that one affecting the school environment which the policy makers are in charge of and the other one more closely related to the students in which the teachers play the main role.

Within the first class we can find some claims against the number of students attending overcrowded classes, impeding any attempts to work individually with the students in difficulty. The unavailability of supporting teachers (and sometimes even of experts) due to poor financial resources does not allow to personally follow neither the most risky cases. The inappropriateness of financial resource affects also the equipment of school premises. Indeed, teaching opportunities are diminished when laboratories are missing ore bad equipped and the IT facilities are not up with times and exigencies.

With regard to the latter class, some of teachers’ complaints sound as self-critics. Indeed, some of them disapprove the assessment system because it is too much focused on knowledge in spite of on students’ competences and skills. Others complain against too much theoretical teaching approach and not centred on real life experiences.

Actually, never forgetting a poor supporting environment, teachers have a high degree of autonomy and they can potentially innovate and adapt their methods in order to reach their objectives, to meet students’ needs and to deal with their lack of motivation/interest.

3.2.3. How can the recognition and validation for non-formal learning be introduced (practically) into the school procedures?

Almost all the teachers filling in the questionnaire are agree with the usefulness of the validation of non-formal learning within the formal educational system. This statement is even more right for the VET professionals.

However, participants have different ideas on how the recognition and validation of non-formal learning can be introduced into the school procedure. Their proposals can be grouped in three categories:

- additional evaluation;
- partial evaluation;
- internal evaluation.

The first type of proposals foresees the collection of certificates released by extracurricular activities providers. These certifications can be used to complete students’ personal portfolio but keeping separated the duality of the educational systems: the formal school assessment and qualification and the non-formal one.

The proposals aiming to consider non-formal learning within the school procedures belong to the other two groups and they differ each other by the degree of influence they are able to have on the final assessment. The “partial evaluation” group considers the non-formal skills only affecting the behavioural mark while the “internal evaluation” foresees either the provision of specific marks for non-formal learning or the combination of the competences acquired with extracurricular activities and the formal knowledge



assessment. For both these latter cases students are asked to demonstrate their skills in front of internal evaluators in order to establish their reached level in specific disciplines or field of activities. In the most innovative proposals these assessment stages can become the opportunity for peer learning: students with non-formal abilities make a presentation/exhibition in front of the classmates transferring them acquired knowledge and technics.

Regardless the group they belong to, all the proposals consider the validation of these kinds of competences as useful in the perspective of future working opportunities.

3.3. Participation of students' on extra-curricular activities: mapping out in relation to the 8 competence skills

A specific section of the survey was dedicated to investigate the concrete participation of the students in extra-curricular activities. As it sometime succeeds, real life overcomes imagination or forecasts. Indeed, we frequently speak about poorly motivate or unwilling students, but they declare to be involved in a total number of 40 extra-curricular activities. By dividing this result by 28 interviewed, it means that each student carries out activities besides the educational ones and 1 out of 2 of them is involved on more than one activity. This result maybe suggests us that in spite of a matter of motivation, students' commitment in educational or training activities depends by how much interesting is the discipline itself for them and how much they feel it important for their future.

As it was predictable, the area of sport gathers the greatest number of activities, but deepening the zoom of the analysis and considering the detail of the kind of these activities we can notice that this is not completely true.

The sport records are 22 (more than 50% upon the whole) but they represent 11 different disciplines. The most commonly attended type of lesson is the language one and specifically 5 students declare to participate at English language lessons beside school.

As far as the key competences acquired thanks to these extra-curricular activities are concerned, the most common is the "Cultural awareness and expression" one. For the sake of clarity, who is writing the current report has filled in the last two columns of the table below and only a deeper interview with the students could provide a more veritable framework of how students intend and practice these activities. Indeed, for instance, it is reducing to consider riding or other sport activities only generally providing cultural awareness and expression or only related to physical education. Following the example, riding gives also social and civic competence and it is also related to other subjects as Ecology, Biology and Physics. By the same way, Computer lessons can provide also mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, being, by consequence, related with many of scientific subject taught at school and so on. The table below collects the activities carried out by 28 students participating to the survey according they declarations with the exception of the last two columns filled in matching the information available with the subjects commonly taught at school and the following 8 key competences:

1. Communication in the mother tongue.
2. Communication in foreign languages.
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology.
4. Digital competence. (P5)
5. Learning to learn.
6. Social and civic competence.
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship.
8. Cultural awareness and expression.

ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

NO	TYPE OF ACTIVITY / LESSON	DETAILS/TYPE	OFFICIAL LEVEL (IF KNOWN)	EXAMINATION BOARD	OTHER INFORMATION	KEY COMPETENCES	RELATED SCHOOL SUBJECT
1	LANGUAGE	ENGLISH	GRADE 3	Cambridge examination		2. Communication in foreign languages.	ENGLISH
2	LANGUAGE	ENGLISH	GRADE 4	Cambridge Examinations		2. Communication in foreign languages.	ENGLISH
3	LANGUAGE	ENGLISH	GRADE 1	British Institute		2. Communication in foreign languages.	ENGLISH
4	LANGUAGE	ENGLISH	GRADE 6	cambridge examinations		2. Communication in foreign languages.	ENGLISH
5	LANGUAGE	ENGLISH	GRADE 5		PRIVATE LESSONS AT HOME	2. Communication in foreign languages.	ENGLISH
6	MUSIC	PIANO	GRADE 4	scuola di musica santa caterina (sesto fiorentino)	THIRD YEAR OF STUDY	8. Cultural awareness and expression.	MUSIC
7	MUSIC	PIANO	GRADE 5	scuola di musica		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	MUSIC
8	MUSIC	PIANO	GRADE 3			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	MUSIC
9	MUSIC	PIANO	GRADE 3			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	MUSIC
10	COMPUTER	PC	UNKNOWN	ECDL		4. Digital competence. (P5)	COMPUTER
11	COMPUTER	PC	GRADE 6	ECDL		4. Digital competence. (P5)	COMPUTER
12	COMPUTER	PC	GRADE 3	ECDL		4. Digital competence. (P5)	COMPUTER
13	DANCE	SALSA	GRADE 2	Unofficial school of dance		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION



14	DANCE	MODERN	GRADE 6			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
15	DANCE	GENERIC	GRADE 4	School of dance "In punta di piedi" by Fabrizia Robbiano		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
16	SPORT	SOCCER	GRADE 4			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
17	SPORT	FITNESS AND BODY BUILDING	GRADE 4	Palestra Planet Gym		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
18	SPORT	SPINNING	GRADE 1			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
19	SPORT	SOFTBALL	GRADE 6	Sestese Softall Club		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
20	SPORT	WUSHU	GRADE 5	associazionismo sestese		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
21	SPORT	FITNESS AND BODY BUILDING	UNKNOWN			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
22	SPORT	SWIMMING	GRADE 4			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
23	SPORT	TENNIS	GRADE 4	Tennis club limonaia		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
24	SPORT	FITNESS AND BODY BUILDING	GRADE 3			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
25	SPORT	SWIMMING	GRADE 4	amici del nuoto		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
26	SPORT	SKIING	GRADE 6	sci club pragelato		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
27	SPORT	SWIMMING	UNKNOWN			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
28	SPORT	FITNESS AND BODY BUILDING	GRADE 4			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION

29	SPORT	SOCCER	GRADE 5			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
30	SPORT	RIDING	GRADE 3			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
31	SPORT	ATHLETICS	GRADE 5			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
32	SPORT	RHYTHMN GYMNASTICS	GRADE 6	A.S.D. Iris Firenze		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
33	SPORT	KRAV MAGA	GRADE 2	Free Combat		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
34	SPORT	ATHLETICS	GRADE 6	Fidal Italia		8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
35	SPORT	SWIMMING	GRADE 4			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
36	SPORT	RIDING	GRADE 4			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
37	SPORT	KARATE	GRADE 5			8. Cultural awareness and expression.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION
38	VOLUNTARIS M	CROCE VIOLA	GRADE 2		FIRST AID	6. Social and civic competence.	CIVIC EDUCATION
39	CATECHISM	CATHOLICISM	GRADE 6	Parish		6. Social and civic competence.	RELIGION

4. Conclusion

Looking back to the structure of the current report, we have analysed:

- The state of the art of Italian education and dropout phenomenon through statistics;
- The official perspective on the recognition of the non-formal learning through the newest legislation
- The strategy on the future challenges of this issue through the point of view of the policy makers and of the most popular think-tanks
- The opinion of the most important stakeholders in this field - teachers and students.

At this stage of the current report, we can conclude that, with due exceptions, the expectations of teachers and students are very high as far as recognition and validation of non-formal learning in the official school system is concerned. The world of education, as it is today, is not still able to receive this demand although the efforts made especially during last years. However, some changes are likely to bring good results. Indeed,

last legislative interventions seem to be led by a more systemic vision and a more centralised direction. On this basis we are allowed to rely on positive forthcoming developments.

In conclusion, we display again, but under another shape, the results of the three main questions of the survey already commented above. The aim of the tables below (three for the teachers and three for the students) is to summarise the points of view of the sample participating into the survey and to make simpler the reconciliation at transnational level of the results of the questionnaire.

The following statements outline POSSIBLE FACTORS FOR STUDENTS TO LEAVE SCHOOL EARLY . Please read them and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with them by placing X at the appropriate box.							
TEACHERS	A.	Possible factors influencing students to leave school early	Fully Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Fully Disagree
	1	Low grades at school	10%	60%	20%	10%	0%
	2	Weakness in main subjects of school	0%	90%	0%	10%	0%
	3	Problems with national/country language	10%	55%	30%	5%	0%
	4	Do not like the school subjects	10%	45%	35%	10%	0%
	5	Do not like the school's formal assessment (test, grades...), creates pressure/ stress to me	0%	25%	40%	35%	0%
	6	Can not obey/follow of school rules	15%	50%	25%	10%	0%
	7	Not happy/ satisfied with the relation between student-teacher	20%	50%	30%	0%	0%
	8	Family problems (economic, social etc)	45%	45%	5%	5%	0%
	9	Bullying	25%	45%	10%	20%	0%
	10	School subjects do not seem to be useful to me	10%	40%	35%	15%	0%
	11	Personal Problems	30%	50%	15%	5%	0%

TEACHERS	POSSIBLE CHANGES THAT CAN BE MADE IN SCHOOLS IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO COMPLETE THEIR SCHOOLING. Please read them and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with them by placing X at the appropriate box.						
	B.	Changes to encourage students to complete their schooling	Fully Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Fully Disagree
	1	Introduce more interesting subjects at school.	5%	20%	35%	35%	5%
	2	The school should offer more support to weak students.	30%	55%	5%	10%	0%
	3	The school should offer personal support to students who are in need	25%	40%	20%	15%	0%

4	Change school's formal assessment.	25%	25%	25%	20%	5%
5	Introduce assessment for the skills acquired in informal/non-formal activities (e.g. music, social activities, voluntary work, sports, dance etc)	20%	40%	15%	20%	5%
6	Recognise formally students' talents and interests	15%	65%	10%	10%	0%
7	Change schools rules so that they are more flexible.	5%	5%	35%	40%	15%
8	Improve student - teacher relationship so that is more friendly	15%	25%	10%	45%	5%
9	Allocate more time for social activities during school hours.	5%	30%	25%	30%	10%
10	Better communication between school and family	15%	70%	5%	5%	5%
11	Better understanding from teachers in case of family and personal problems	30%	55%	10%	5%	0%
12	Better preparation during the level change (e.g. primary to secondary education)	15%	55%	20%	0%	10%
13	Respect and build on students talents and interests	35%	45%	10%	5%	5%

TEACHERS	The following statements outline THE BENEFITS OF RECOGNISING AND VALIDATING STUDENTS' NON-FORMAL LEARNING Please read them and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with them by placing X at the appropriate box.						
	C.	Benefits for recognising and validating student's learning in non-formal activities	Fully Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Fully Disagree
	1	Encourage students to work harder/ study more	10%	45%	35%	10%	0%
	2	Provide motivation for students to come to school	25%	50%	15%	10%	10%
	3	Provide alternative ways to students at risk for assessment	20%	45%	25%	10%	0%
	4	Assist students to complete school	10%	50%	30%	10%	0%
	5	Students skills/qualification contribute to school performance	5%	60%	25%	10%	0%
	6	Change/ improve student's image to the better	15%	65%	10%	10%	0%
	7	Appreciate the importance of subjects/ type of learning that are/is not usually appreciated (e.g. music, football, ...)	10%	50%	25%	10%	5%
	8	Improve communication between parents-teachers-students	15%	30%	35%	15%	5%



	9	All learning is appreciated	20%	60%	10%	5%	5%
STUDENTS	The following statements outline <u>POSSIBLE REASONS FOR STUDENTS TO LEAVE SCHOOL EARLY</u>. Please read them and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with them by placing X at the appropriate box.						
	A.	<u>WHY STUDENTS LEAVE SCHOOL EARLY?</u>	Fully Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Fully Disagree
	1	Low grades at school	7%	36%	36%	14%	7%
	2	Weakness in main subjects of school	14%	43%	25%	14%	4%
	3	Problems with national/country language	7%	36%	36%	11%	11%
	4	Do not like the school subjects	25%	43%	18%	11%	4%
	5	Do not like the school's formal assessment (test, grades...), creates pressure/ stress to me	25%	36%	21%	14%	4%
	6	Can not obey/follow of school rules	4%	14%	36%	21%	25%
	7	Not happy/ satisfied with the relation between student-teacher	14%	43%	21%	18%	4%
	8	Family problems (economic, social etc)	25%	36%	29%	7%	4%
	9	Bullying	18%	39%	21%	11%	7%
	10	School subjects do not seem to be useful to me	18%	32%	21%	25%	4%
	11	Personal Problems	32%	46%	21%	0%	0%

STUDENTS	The following statements outline <u>POSSIBLE REASONS FOR STUDENTS TO LEAVE SCHOOL EARLY</u>. Please read them and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with them by placing X at the appropriate box.						
	A.	<u>WHAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED FOR STUDENTS IN ORDER TO STAY AT SCHOOL?</u>	Fully Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Fully Disagree
	1	Introduce more interesting subjects at school.	21%	46%	25%	4%	4%
	2	The school should offer more support to weak students.	29%	61%	11%	0%	0%
	3	The school should offer personal support to students who are in need	43%	43%	7%	7%	0%
	4	Change school's formal assessment.	18%	32%	29%	21%	0%
	5	Introduce assessment for the skills acquired in informal/non-formal activities (e.g. music, social activities, voluntary work, sports, dance etc)	32%	25%	18%	18%	7%
	6	Recognise formally students talents and interests	39%	46%	11%	4%	0%



7	Change schools rules so that they are more flexible.	21%	14%	43%	14%	7%
8	Improve student - teacher relationship so that is more friendly	25%	50%	14%	4%	7%
9	Allocate more time for social activities during school hours.	18%	39%	29%	14%	0%
10	Better communication between school and family	4%	43%	46%	7%	0%
11	Better understanding from teachers in case of family and personal problems	39%	39%	18%	4%	0%
12	Better preparation during the level change (e.g. primary to secondary education)	39%	39%	18%	4%	0%

STUDENTS	<i>The following statements outline THE BENEFITS FOR RECOGNISING AND VALIDATING STUDENTS' NON-FORMAL LEARNING Please read them and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with them by placing X at the appropriate box.</i>						
	<u>C.</u>	Benefits for recognising and validating student's learning in non-formal activities	Fully Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Fully Disagree
	1	Encourage students to work harder/ study more	46%	25%	21%	4%	4%
	2	Provide motivation for students to come to school	25%	46%	25%	0%	4%
	3	Provide alternative ways to students at risk for assessment	21%	46%	21%	11%	0%
	4	Assist students to complete school	21%	25%	36%	18%	0%
	5	Students skills/qualification contribute to school performance	29%	57%	7%	7%	0%
	6	Change/ improve student's image to the better	43%	25%	25%	4%	4%
	7	Appreciate the importance of subjects/ type of learning that are/is not usually appreciated (e.g. music, football, ...)	39%	29%	29%	4%	0%
	8	Improve communication between parents-teachers-students	25%	25%	36%	4%	11%



8. Current Scene in Greece

8.1. Introduction

In this study I will provide information about the current situation for the Early School Leaving in Greece. I will talk about the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Greece and about Greek student's assessment procedures. Finally, through a questionnaire that Greek students and teachers have filled in, I will be able to give their view on the issue of ESL

8.2. Early School Leaving

According to statistical data released on April 11 2014 by Eurostat, an improvement has been recorded in Greece about early leavers from education and training. Specifically, in 2012 the percentage of early school leavers in the country declined to 11.4% from 13.1% in 2011, while the average in the EU declined from 13.5% to 12.8%. The target rate set for Greece is 9.7%, while in the EU it is under 10%. (1)

In Greece compulsory education is up to 15years old and traditionally, leaks from the school system were directed to agricultural and livestock activities in rural areas, to services of tourism in the island and to technical jobs through apprenticeship alongside a skilled artisan in cities. But today things are even more complicated if we take into account the high degree of multiculturalism in large urban centers, and the economic recession. As a result elements such as poverty, deprivation, economic coercion, lack of basic means for a dignified life create a negative background for school attendance. At the same time, ESL is affected by a number of factors such as school failure, poor performance and the insurmountable learning difficulties, the impersonal and cold reality of the education system, the educational capital of the family, the social environment, the level of cultural and spiritual development of a region, manners and habits that characterize specific groups, social stereotypes, and even discrimination based on gender.

The Ministry of Education and some NGO's are the major players in combating ESL. The actions to reduce ESL that are taken from the Directories of the Ministry of Education as well as from its regulated entities and institutions are concentrated into solutions such as Day School (for Kindergarten and Primary school), reinforcing teaching for "weak" students and teaching support for specific population groups such as Muslim children, the Roma children, foreigners and repatriates. Regarding the actions of NGOs they provide services in the context of combating school dropouts mainly using programs for advising parents and children on issues that have to do with family and health policy and they also organize remedial teaching programs as well as programs for teaching the Greek language to groups of people that their education level is rather low



or who lack knowledge of the Greek language. Social activities, professional skills and creative programs that aim at the empowerment of target groups and their social inclusion are often developed by NGO's as well.

8.3. Validation of non-formal and informal learning in Greece

According to the latest CEDEFOP report published in November 2014, in Europe “only seven national systems have no legal framework for validation (Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania and the UK - England, Wales and Scotland), and some of them (Greece, Croatia) are working to establish such a framework.

In Greece, the certification system of formal and non-formal learning is supervised and managed by the state and especially by the Greek Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education is the entity which undertook the creation of a National Qualifications Framework and the creation of a National Network for Life Long Learning pursuing qualitative upgrading of Lifelong Learning in Greece, rationalizing the system of recognition and certification of qualifications and the establishment of a general "culture of learning having in the center the citizen and his needs" (2)

With the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework all forms of formal, non-formal and informal learning “at all levels are interrelated, their results are recognized and are classified at levels taking into account the levels of the European Framework.” (3)

With the enactment of the law 3879/2010 on "Development of Lifelong Learning", the National Qualifications Framework is being instituted for the first time in Greece. Specifically, the new law provides for the establishment of an entity in the Ministry of Education that oversees the whole process. This entity is called (E.O.P.P.E.P.) and its main purpose is the creation and development of NQF and the referencing of it with the EQF (European Qualifications Framework-EQF). In the responsibilities of (E.O.P.P.E.P.) it is to undertake the assignment of qualifications, ie the knowledge, skills and abilities that citizens acquire through formal education, non-formal education (IEK-Vocational Training Institutes, KEK-Vocational Training Centers, Centers KEME-Post-secondary Education, CSP-Free Workshops Studies, etc.) and informal learning (work experience, experiential learning), at the levels of NQF.

For Greece, this is a new concept since the “hitherto anarchic and unstructured system with its production of certificates of attendance for seminars, certificates and diplomas that were not recognized and which could not promote the professional development of the citizens.”(4) The ultimate goal is the identification and certification of these qualifications in a uniform manner and in connection with the European Qualifications Framework.



The National Qualifications Framework includes eight reference levels, covering the entire range of qualifications from compulsory education up to higher education. The novelty is that beyond the classical educational path, qualifications that have been acquired by non-formal education (eg initial and continuing vocational training) and informal learning (eg professional experience) are recognized as well.

8.4. Students' assessment procedures in Greece

According to the Presidential Decree 409/1994

Par.1. Assessment is the process that aims to identify, in a systematic and objective way, the result of a specified activity in relation to the objectives which it pursues and the appropriateness of the means and methods used to achieve them. In the area of education, assessment is the systematic process for control of the degree of achieving the objectives and targets that the educational system pursues.

Par.2. The assessment of the student is an ongoing pedagogical process, based on which the course of the student's learning is monitored, the final results are identified and assessed, together with several features of the personality of the student which are related to the school's work. The assessment is part of the teaching - learning process, which begins with setting objectives and ends by checking if they have been attained. Its primary aim is the continuous improvement of the teaching and the general operation of the school, as well as to inform teachers and learners about the results of their efforts, so as to achieve the best possible learning outcomes.

Par.3. The assessment, as individual evaluation of the student's performance, is not an end in itself and does not constitute in any case a competitive or selective grade for the student. It does not refer only to the performance in various subjects, but also to other features, such as effort, interest, initiatives, creativity, cooperation with other persons and respect to the school rules.

The evaluation of the student during his studies in secondary school results from:

- a. The daily oral examination and the pupil's total participation in the teaching - learning process
- b. Quizzes
- c. Hourly written tests, which are conducted without any prior notice in each of the first two trimesters and they cover the material of a broader teaching unit under the condition that in a preceded lesson a relevant summary was conducted
- d. The work that is done by the pupils at school or at home, in the context of the daily didactic work
- e. The synthetic creative projects
- f. The written review examinations in June

All evaluation procedures take into account the intended teaching objectives and are harmonized with them.



The formative assessment (oral examination, quizzes, hourly tests, trimester rating) should not be confused with the summative, which determines promotion to the next class or dismissal. In the formative assessment there is the option to be more or less demanding. On the other hand, as indicated by the legal framework, the summative assessment should be lenient. So lenient those students who are likely to improve if they continue to try should not be excluded from the continuation of their studies. We, as teachers, may be sure that their improvement will not be significant, but they should be kept in school. Let us not forget that the lessons we teach are not unique to the school or the most important ones but we should take into account that there are other courses that contribute to the literacy and the education of students. Let us also not forget that active involvement in school life, regardless of achieving cognitive objectives, contribute significantly to the achievement of objectives related to mental, social and cultural development.

Apart from the above assessment methods there are also contemporary alternative methods of assessment that relate not only to the evaluation of the cognitive domain, but also to the skills and attitudes sector. "Modern evaluation methods are: a) the self-assessment and the self-education of the student himself, b) the assessment of other classmates at the time of joint cooperation through the exchange of views, via the Internet, in the presentation of work etc., c) the qualitative assessment by the teacher at the time of work, through the synthetic creative projects, with the record sheets of the evaluation of skills or attitudes, with the material and work folders.

It is essential in the modern school that the student has an opportunity to be self-corrected so that he could get used to evaluating the same mental operations and processes. Many wrongdoings are corrected or avoided if the student has learned to be troubled during the solution of a problem or when it reaches the end result. The didactic importance of metacognitive activities is great, because it turns the student's attention from the answer to the process that leads to the answer. In this way the school overcomes the syndrome of the correct answer from which teachers and pupils suffer and students become masters of their own thinking." (5)

8.5. Survey based analysis: from theory to school practice

8.5.1. Students' views

31 students aged 13 and 14 years old and 10 teachers took part in the survey that we conducted in Platon Gymnasium.

The majority of the students 55% absolutely agree and another 32% agrees that school bullying is the most important reason that students leave school early. The second most important reason with about 70% to



either agree or strongly agree is family problems (economic, social). The majority of the teachers though and about 80% of them either agree or strongly agree that the most important reason for a student to drop out of school is family problems (economic, social).

According to our students, the most popular change that could encourage a student to complete their schooling is the improvement of the relationship between the teacher and the parents. 100% of the students believe exactly that and also that the relationship between students and teachers should improve and become more friendly. About 97% believe that schools should offer personal support to students who are in need of it, as well as to offer support to weaker students or even to have more understanding from the teachers in case the student has family or personal problems. The teachers' survey showed that the majority of the teachers believe that school should offer support to weaker students.

About 80% of the students questioned believe that if the non-formal learning is recognized and validated in schools the benefits for students would be to have motivation to come to school and to be encouraged to work harder and study more. At the same time the majority of the teachers think that students would benefit from offering chances so that their skills and their qualifications contribute to their school performance, from the guidance in order to complete their schooling and from the motivation to come to school.

74,2% of the students believe that for all the extra skills and knowledge that they have gained an award should be awarded to them by the school. Another 51,6% believe that an extra grade should be added to their overall grade or an extra grade should be counted towards the final grade in each GPA trimester. 48,4% of the students believe that all the skills and the knowledge that they have gained should be noted down as a statement in their grade report. Finally 22,6% percent of the students believe that if a student has extra skills, knowledge or qualifications should be given some exemption from the grades.

8.5.2. Teachers' views

The teachers in Platon School where the questionnaires were conducted do not basically face a great problem with early school leavers. When a couple of them though had the slightest suspicion that they might be facing with such a problem they tried to deal with it, in cooperation with the management of the school, by trying to communicate with the student and with his/her parents. Individualized teaching is a tool that has been used by a teacher, again with the approval of the school management, in order to successfully reverse the signs of early school leaving.

Negligence or indifference from the part of the teachers to deal with the problem of ESL is what 2 teachers believe is the problem within the educational system. Some other problems that the teachers mentioned have to do with the disappointment the students feel from the grades that they get, the lack of psychological support at the school level, monolingual curriculum, ethnocentric curriculum and mono-cultural curriculum.



According to the majority of the teachers who took part in this research believe that recognition and validation for non-formal learning could be introduced (practically) into the school procedures if lessons that highlight other skills and abilities that student might have such as project method, music, painting, theater, dance, etc. were to be taken into account and then evaluated.



9. Current Scene in Germany

The pupils who filled in the questionnaires were asked partly in the “Manage” which is the youth club of the Rütli Campus in Berlin (see below). Another part of the students were found in an elementary school and an secondary school (both in Berlin), those schools have a lower share of pupils of a so called migratory background than the Rütli Campus.

60% of the teachers who took part in the survey teach the subject “Lebenskunde”, similar to Ethics in elementary schools in Berlin. The other teachers teach in different schools in different parts of Germany.

Sample

20 students filled in the questionnaires, 12 girls and 8 boys. The majority is 12 years old (8 students), 3 are 13 years and also 3 are 14 years old. Two students are aged 15 and four students are older than 14. All 12 year olds go to elementary school, 4 visit secondary schools and another 4 gymnasium. 7 children do not have a so called migratory background. The family of 9 children lives more than 11 years in Germany, the other families live less than 11 years here. Lebanon is the former home country of 7 families; three used to live, at some time, in Turkey. The family of two other students originally came from Poland, one came from Serbia.

8.2. Early School Leaving

8.2.1. Extent of the ESL in partner country: statistics, reasons, policies (1 page)

Early school leaving refers to ‘those young people who leave education and training with only lower secondary education or less, and who are no longer in education and training’. In statistical terms, European ESL rates are measured as the percentage of 18-24 year olds with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education or training.¹¹

The share of early school leavers amounts 10,4% in Germany in 2012. The target value of the EU is to lower the rate of early school leavers until 2020 under 10%. Thus Germany exceeds this objective by 0,4 %.¹²

¹¹ European Commission: Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support. Final report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving. November 2013, p. 8

¹² Statistisches Bundesamt:

https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/BildungForschungKultur/Bildungsstand/Aktuell_Bildungsin_dikatoren.html, last access 28.02.2015.





Pupils without any graduation

According to the German Federal Statistical office the rate of pupils who did not graduate from the lowest level of secondary school (Hauptschule) is 5,2%. Here one can differentiate between pupils with German nationality, 4,6%, and those with other nationalities: 10,7%. In 2013 this was a total number of 46.295 pupils.¹³

Reasons:

The Council Recommendation (2011/C 191/01) states the following reasons for early school leaving:

“Early school leaving processes have complex and varied causes, but are often linked to socio-economic disadvantage, to low education backgrounds, to alienation from or poor achievement in education and training, to pull factors from the labour market, and/or to a combination of social, emotional and educational problems putting individuals at risk of dropping out.” (2011/C 191/04)

For Germany the selective school system was a special feature which contributed to early school leaving. After the elementary school (depending on the resp. Land after the 4th or 6th grade) each pupil got a recommendation for one of three different kinds of high schools (Hauptschule, Realschule or Gymnasium) – according to the respective ability of the student. Thus this recommendation determined the career of each pupil since it was rather difficult to change to a “higher” school type. In 2007 Vernor Muñoz Villalobos, the UN's Special Rapporteur on the right to education, criticized this system. Mr Villalobos warned of disadvantages for pupils from low income backgrounds and students with a so called migratory background.¹⁴

Long before that - German educational scientists came to the same conclusions. Gomolla and Radtke showed that pupils with a so called migratory background got disproportionately more often a recommendation for Hauptschule. Often teachers justify this decision with the poor command of the German language.¹⁵

¹³ Statistisches Bundesamt:

https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/BildungForschungKultur/Schulen/Tabellen/AbsolventenAbgaenger_Abschlussart.html last access 28.02.2015.

¹⁴ Der Spiegel. <http://www.spiegel.de/schulspiegel/wissen/deutsche-bildungspolitik-uno-schulinspektor-uebt-harsche-kritik-a-468644.html>, last access 28.02.2015

¹⁵ Gomolla, Mechthild; Radtke, Frank Olaf (2002) Institutionelle Diskriminierung. Die Herstellung ethnischer Differenz in der Schule. Opladen. Leske und Budrich.



Policies:

One main policy was the abandoning of Haupt- and Realschule as two separate schools. In almost all German States (Länder) these school types were merged together to one school. The terms for this comprehensive schools vary between the 16 Länder (i.e. Mittelschule, Regelschule, Sekundarschule). Nowadays pupils stay together longer in one class, only in the 8th grade they have to decide which high school graduation they will face.

8.2.2. Good practices for prevention and intervention

Campus Rütli, Berlin, Germany

Campus Rütli – CR² is located in the district Neukölln in Berlin, where the unemployment rate is twice as high as the average rate, the rate of pupils with a so called migratory background is 80-100%. After serious problems in the Neuköllner Rütli school, which were an issue of discussion all over Germany, various stakeholders came together in order to find solutions.

A campus was planned and implemented which leads to a social space of almost 50.000 m². The former separated grounds/spaces of the following institutions were integrated: Kindergarten, elementary school, Haupt- and Realschule (similar to high school: secondary 1), Gymnasium and entities for vocational training, playgrounds, youth club as well job centre.¹⁶

From 2008 on the entire spectrum of care, guidance and educational institutions for young people collaborate and jointly shoulder responsibility. Extracurricular activities [sports, music (i.e. rap studio), handicraft, art etc.] and support offers (age mixed homework assistance; individualized learning) were enhanced and connected with external stakeholders/institutions [libraries, adult educational centre, theatres, cirques, initiatives of various topics (urban gardening; repairing and construction of bicycles, art projects etc.)].

As strong and institutionalized collaboration with parents was also implemented.¹⁷

¹⁶ Rütli: <http://campusruetli.de/cr2-uploads/2014.10/CR2Konzept%2805.2009%29.pdf>

¹⁷ European Commission: Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support. Final report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving. November 2013, p. 41





Community School “Theodor Storm”, Kiel, Germany¹⁸

Innovations in organizational structure

a) Students

Rooms for certain subjects (biology/chemistry etc.)

Class rooms and which is new

Learning studio:

Secondary I students can work on tasks the way they want: lie down, sit (table/cushion), stand – change positions; in big room, in a small niche etc.

However a kind of order is ensured by learning tasks the pupils get – they determine whether pupils work alone, in pairs, in groups with or without computer and with which material. The speed of learning is being decided by the pupils themselves. The teacher wanders through the studio, monitors the learning and answers questions.

b) Teachers

The teacher’s room provides quite areas for relaxing and individual preparations as well as space for group work. Right next to the teacher’s room is the library for teachers, another option for those who seek quietness and also a pool for new ideas to use in class.

c) Headmaster/steering committee

After the two formerly separated schools (elementary school and high school) merged into a community school the part of the elementary school considers itself as a “one-house” school. The headmaster coordinates the work together with four colleagues. The team shares one room and the agreements are made from table to table, means: face to face.

- Involvement of parents:

Parents with migration background support each other in a weekly group.

Parents have to sign the so called “dialog booklet” once a week, which is a summary of homework, learning planner and note book for students.

¹⁸ Ganztägig Lernen: <http://www.ganztægig-lernen.de/node/4615>, last access: 2.3.2015





In case of violent behavior the resp. student gets the order to stay away from school – until he/she approaches the teacher - accompanied with one parent/guardian, in order to settle the incident.

- Agreement Culture of co-operation

Each pupil is obliged to sign this agreement.

- Participation:

Pupils can choose out of 50 courses, extracurricular course leaders offer these courses, but also pupils themselves. As such they take responsibility for their school and their self-esteem is being fostered. An example: Baderkhan (grade 10) leads the project “sound studio” – he and 11 classmates produced a movie about the district.

In order to ensure that all pupils are able to be course leaders, the school finances a training.

8.3. Validation of non-formal and informal learning: the European perspective

In the coalition agreement between SPD, CDU and CSU from 2013 it is stated:

“For humans who acquired so called informal competences, which cannot be proved by certificates, we want to develop and test new ways, which lead to transparency and validation.”¹⁹

With regard to implementation Germany can show comparable little results. A working group prepares all relevant decisions for the development and implementation of the German Qualification Framework (DQR). Via this group all relevant stakeholders of general -, higher -, and vocational training, of social partners and economic organisations as well as experts of science and practice are involved. Until now they have not published recommendations for the classification of competences from non-formal and informal learning.²⁰ The conditions for the classification/allocation are currently being discussed by different working groups of experts. One condition is for example the validation of learning results from non-formal and informal

¹⁹ <https://www.cdu.de/sites/default/files/media/dokumente/koalitionsvertrag.pdf>

²⁰ Bopp, Franziska; Drews, Sibilla: Warum benötigen wir die Anerkennung von non-formalem und informellen Lernen? In: Bildung für Europa (Nov. 2014), Nr. 21, S. 6



settings. The DQR however was introduced in Mai 2013, until now only formal qualifications can be allocated, those which are regulated by the German federal law or by the law of the resp. State (Land).²¹

8.4. Students' assessment procedures

8.4.1. Official assessment policies used in secondary schools:

In Germany each of the 16 federal states is responsible for it's own education policy, the assessment of student's performance however can differ slightly within the countries. The assessment procedure according to the *Regulation of School Type and Educational Background of Secondary Schools in the Land Berlin* (*Verordnung über die Schularten und Bildungsgänge der Sekundarstufe in Berlin*) serves as an example here. The performance is being assessed by grades or at the integrated secondary school by grades and by points.

Grade	Points	Meaning
1	15,14,13	Very good (sehr gut)
2	12,11,10	Good (gut)
3	9,8,7	Satisfying (befriedigend)
4	6,5,4	Sufficient (ausreichend)
5	3,2,1	Insufficient (mangelhaft)
6	0	Fail (ungenügend)

Apart from school certificates the grades can be accompanied with tendencies (i.e. 2+; 2-) or they can be specified by other amendments. Grades or points in school certificates can be explicated in the field "notes". Especially the progress in learning can be stated here. The grades and points shall be explained and underpinned with reasons, in case the students and their legal guardian ask for that.

A grade for a school certificate can be composed if a student continuously took part in class for at least 6 weeks per term. In subjects in which written tests are required, the complete written performances will count approx. (sic!) 50% to the school certificate grade.²²

²¹ Deutscher Qualifikationsrahmen: <http://www.dqr.de/content/2445.php>, last access 2.3.2015.

²² (cf. § 20 <http://www.schulgesetz-berlin.de/berlin/sekundarstufe-i-verordnung/teil-i-allgemeine-bestimmungen/kapitel-5-lernerfolgskontrollen-und-zeugnisse/sect-20-leistungsbeurteilung.php>)



In addition to the grades in a specific subject most Länder also give so called “head grades”, which focus on work behavior (i.e. autonomy, endurance) and social behavior (conflict, communication, cooperation).

There are many scientists in the field of education in Germany who criticize the grade system, they state that pupils performance should rather described by detailed comments. Opponents of this system argue that the text modules are often similar or even the same and as such they do not display the individual performance either.

8.4.2. Alternative ways of student assessment

Individual learning process (Lernstandsanalyse)

Diagnostic instrument in written form to map the individual learning progress means also the competences of each pupil. The teacher analyses the initial learning position of each pupil at the beginning of each term, checks this with the demands of each term and creates tailor made learning plans for each pupil. Thus pupils can learn to orientate along their skills and not only along grades. Parents will be informed about the progress regularly – commonly parents, the teacher and the pupil define new learning objectives.

Portfolios

It is a collection of work of a student - on a specific topic/theme and on a specific (research) question.

It keeps record on what exactly a pupil chose from a huge amount of information, what he/she worked out (with which means) and what he/she learned. A portfolio is not intended to stay with the pupil only, but it will be published, i.e. in class, in the age-group, in school and/or in contexts out of school.

Findings on the use of a portfolio cannot be generalized for Germany, because it highly depends on the teacher and the school.

In some contexts portfolios (as the collection of work results from one school year) are the basis for conversations between the resp. pupil, a parent (guardian) and the teacher about the learning progress and hence the performance of the pupil. Whether this learning progress is displayed in form of grades or descriptions or a combination of both is also handled individually.

8.5. Survey based analysis: from theory to school practice

8.5.1. Students' views

8.5.1.1. What are the most important factors that influence students to leave school early?

80% of the students think the subjects are not useful, 10% disagree to this proposition.



65% of the students ticked respectively the three sentences: a) do not like formal assessment and b) Problems in family (economic etc.) and c) bullying. The rate of disagreement here lays between 10 and 15%. And with regard to the sentences d) cannot follow rules and e) not happy with relationship to the teacher 60% of the students fully agreed resp. agreed. The rate of disagreement is for d) 20% and 5% for e).

Subjects that students want:

- 8 of the students want the subject Arabic, three want Polish (here influence on friends can be seen), 2 students want horse riding, one wants more experiments in the subject “sciences”, and another one mentioned swimming.

Part B No.2: Which kind of support:

Six students think that support for learning will be needed and one student mentioned that students with low performance should be in an extra class

Part B No 4: Change assessment in school:

No more grades is the wish of two students, and one said, that she want many cancelled classes.

Part B No. 6: Change of school rules:

Cellphones should be allowed, this is the opinion of three students, two mentioned sandwich courses.

8.5.2. Teachers' views

All teachers, in total 10 fully agreed or agreed to these propositions a) weak grades, b) not happy with relationship to teacher, c) problems in family (economic etc.), d) bullying and e) personal problems.

For 80% of teachers the statements f) do not like formal assessment and g) subjects not useful are true (fully agree and agree), to f) 5% disagreed and 10% dismiss sentence g).

8.5.2.1. What are the possible changes that can be introduced in schools that could help/encourage students to complete their schooling?

STUDENTS

80% of the students would like to have a better preparation during level change. More support for weak students is relevant for 75% (5% disagree). Then there are three sentences to which 70% agree:



- a) more interesting subjects
- b) Improve relationship between teacher and pupils and
- c) Respect and build on students talents and personal interests. The disagreement rate lies between lies at the average at 10%.

TEACHERS

All teachers fully agree or agree to those propositions:

- a) more support for weak pupils and
- b) more personal support and
- c) Change school's formal assessment and
- d) Introduce assessment for the skills acquired in informal/non-formal activities and
- e) Improve relationship between teacher and pupils

90% of teachers teachers say that respect is necessary and to build on students talents and personal interests

And to the sentences “more time for social activities” and “better communication between school and family” 80% of the teachers agreed, whereas resp. 5% disagreed.

8.5.1.4. What are the ways that the school could take into account students’ skills/knowledge gained in non-formal learning/extra-curricular activities?

STUDENTS

Extra points which contribute to my overall achievement Yes=95% No=5%

All extra skills/ knowledge acquired should be noted as a comment in my school report Yes=95% No=5%

For all extra skills/ knowledge students should be given a school award

Yes=90% No=10%

Extra points which contribute to my term/ final year mark according to the subject

Yes=75% No=25%

Students who have extra skills/knowledge/qualification should be given exemption from school assessment

Yes=70% No=30%



8.6.2. Teachers' views

8.6.2.1 What are the measures that teachers have taken to prevent ESL?

2 of 10 teachers try to establish actively a contact to the class teacher and/or school social worker. Each of the 2 teachers do this once a week.

8.6.2.2. What are the problems within the educational system/formal school that have been identified to influence students to leave school early?

- Rigid system of classification/assessment
- Little freedom due to curriculum
- Extreme formalized graduations
- Lack of motivation due to the overriding believe in performance: selection between smart and dumb pupils is being made (pupils among each other and also from teachers); the sense of belonging (in the group) is fading therefore
- The system of assessment is too general: Individual talents and interests are not considered enough, neither the biographical background
- In this school system pupils of the 3rd and 4rd generation are still described as “pupils with migratory background” – and often they are considered as “problematic cases; also the abbreviation ndH (nicht deutscher Herkunft, means “of non German origin”) and the use of it shows the unequal (racist) structure of school. For some headmasters this abbreviation is of importance, since he_she will get more personnel if a certain rate of “ndH” is matched. Here only the last names of the pupils count, not their actual performance and/or behavior.
- Only few teachers differentiate the material and tasks according to the different abilities of pupils in their class. Therefore the speed of learning in for all pupils the same: for some this brings disadvantages, they cannot follow; whereas others are bored.

8.6.2.3. How can the recognition and validation for non-formal learning be introduced (practically) into the school procedures?

- Language skills could be mapped by portfolios, other skills: certificates from workshops.



- More project work (singing, dancing, drawing, football, skateboarding etc.), the organizational work of pupils can be assessed here as well as the working results, inviting experts from outside to lead those workshops, examples were given: Boxing and football for girls from trainers of a queer sports club – is expected to rise the self- esteem of the youngsters
- Taking positive results from working groups into the formal assessment, also participating in pupils' councils (rather describe and analyze the skills and qualifications than display this with grades), holding regularly pupils councils – giving enough time to practice democratic participation: social competences from those activities should also be assessed
- Orientate the assessment more on other school forms: free schools, Waldorf school, democratic schools – here instruments like self- and peer-evaluation play a bigger role

Other:

More focus on self-evaluation and peer-evaluation – taking this more seriously;

No more grades; more valuation/appraisal

8.7. Conclusion

In Germany the validation of non-formal and informal learning results is still in the stage of development. Until this very day the experts did not publish recommendations for the classification of competences from non-formal and informal learning. Therefore this topic has not officially arrived in schools yet. However most of the 10 teachers involved in this survey have ideas on how to measure students skills and competences gained in extra-curricular activities. They mention self- and peer evaluation as well as project work. The latter provides various possibilities to assess different kind of skills and competences. 50% of the teachers say that pupils councils are an useful instrument to develop democratic skills and competences, which again could be measured and then contribute to the overall certificate.

One striking result of the empirical part is: The majority of those pupils with a so called migratory background have ticked “undecided” with regard to the relation between early school leaving and command of the country’s language. Whereas the majority of those pupils who have no recent history of migration in their family mention that there is a relation between the two mentioned factors.

Six of the 10 teachers work at schools with a high amount with pupils with a recent migration history (70% to 90%), out of these 4 ticked also “undecided” with regard to the possible correlation between early school leaving and language command. Four colleagues teach in schools with a much lower rate of children with a so called migration background are rather convinced that there is a relation.



For the analysis of the theoretical findings are necessary. German educational scientist showed that pupils whose second language is German (and whose mother tongue is i.e. Arabic, Turkish, Russian etc.) are disadvantaged by the German school system. They gave evidence that pupils with a so called migratory background got more often a

low level high school, instead of i.e. gymnasium. Often the main reason is the poor command of the German language. In contrast to other European countries an official and early starting language support is still not common in Germany. Thus there are cases in which intelligent pupils are being sent to high schools where they cannot unfold their potential and as a consequence end up in lower paid professions and branches.

But: Within in the last years almost all Countries (Länder) in Germany established community schools. The early selection of pupils according to their abilities has therefore become much less – the way is paved for a more just interaction with pupils from disadvantages backgrounds.





9. Current Scene in Cyprus

9.1. Introduction

Cyprus has been working in the last decade towards achieving the national target of the EU2020 strategy, for reducing the ESL rate to 10% by 2020. Achieving the target set in the strategy was a top priority for Cyprus and has been achieved in the last 2 years. To achieve these goals and address the ESL problem, Cyprus is working towards increasing the opportunities to keep young people in education and training. Particular emphasis is placed on prevention and early intervention programmes since leaving school early means lost opportunities for young people and loss of social and economic potential for each Member State, but also for the whole of the European Union.

For Cyprus prevention is of particular importance, since it is more effective and can provide better results. It is generally accepted and has been demonstrated by numerous studies, both in Cyprus and in other Member States, that early school leaving is mainly focused on specific groups of students and school population in specific areas and schools.

The latest figures show a dramatic decrease in the ESL rate that can be accounted both to the successful implementation of a series of programmes during the last few years and to the departure of many immigrant citizens from the country due to the severe economic conditions on the island. Cyprus will pay particular attention to the results of the coming months in order to verify the latest figures.

9.2. Early School Leaving

9.2.1. Extent of ESL in Cyprus

The percentage of early school leavers in Cyprus has decreased from 18,5% in 2000 to 11,4% in 2012 to 7.9% in 2014. The rate of early leavers from education and training marked a significant decrease reaching 9,1% in 2013 leading to over-exceeding the national target of decreasing it to 10%. According to the 2013 data, the percentage of early school leavers was the lowest ever reported and could be attributed to two main reasons: Firstly the number of non-native students in public schools has decreased following a decrease in the number of immigrants, who have chosen to return to their country of origin, due to the crisis in Cyprus. Secondly, the attractiveness of the tertiary education has increased due to the measures adopted in the recent years, offering an alternative path to weak students. The promoted measures, in conjunction with the economic crisis, have contributed to a significant increase in the number of pupils who opt to enroll in Technical Schools. Over the past three years, the percentage of



pupils attending Technical Schools has increased from 13% to 19%. In addition, there have been important improvements regarding the performance of pupils enrolling in Technical Schools. It is striking that 85% of pupils who wish to attend Technical Schools enroll during the enrolments of June, implying that they are pupils who complete their studies in lower secondary education successfully and have technical education as their first choice.

In order to meet the national target of reducing the rate of early school leavers by 2020, a series of priority measures with aim to facilitate the integration of students at risk, increase the attractiveness of technical vocational education and training and increase participation in Higher Education have been introduced.

9.2.2. Good practices and policies

To tackle the issue, Cyprus has developed a comprehensive strategy that includes measures for the key stages of prevention, intervention and compensation. In all three stages Cyprus has implemented specific actions during the recent years. The most important objectives of these measures include the following:

9.2.2.1 Facilitating the integration of students at risk to the school system

The measures referred hereafter envisage to facilitate school enrollment and school success as well as to effectively address any issues of antisocial and delinquent behavior factors that contribute to early school leaving phenomena. The quantitative target for these measures concerns the percentage of the total student population enrolled in an educational establishment belonging to a Zone of Educational Priority (ZEP), by raising the enrollment ratio to 15%.

I. ZEP – Zone of Educational Priority

The program is one of the main policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture, implemented in socially disadvantaged areas with the aim to offer equal opportunities in education and to combat early school leaving, school failure, functional illiteracy, educational marginalization and social exclusion.

The criteria for the determination of the ZEPs are:

- Schools in impoverished areas.
- Student population coming from families of a low socioeconomic and educational level.
- Large proportion of students with a migrant background.
- High rates of school failure and early school leaving.
- High incidence of violent and delinquent behaviour.



The Policy for ZEP derived from the strategy of positive discrimination (UNESCO), which is based on the unequal treatment of inequalities and the quality of opportunity in education. Each ZEP consists of one gymnasium (lower secondary school), the main primary schools (in its capture area) and the main kindergartens linked with these primary schools, in degraded areas with a student population coming from families of a low socioeconomic and educational level.

The criteria for defining an area as ZEP is a high record of school failure and functional illiteracy in the area's school units, a high share of migrant or foreign language speaking students, a high number of drop-outs and high incidence of violence and anti-social behavior (young delinquency).

The budget of the measures is 10,9 million euro and its co-funded by the European Social Fund by 85%. Currently there are 8 ZEPs in all main cities: Nicosia, Larnaka, Limassol and Paphos in which there are 42 participating school with a total population of around 7,000 students (10% of the school population).

Basic principles:

- The operating principle of the program is to provide additional resources to schools in the most disadvantaged zones and allow them to develop specific initiatives and educational methods tailored to pupils' needs.
- Improving educational continuity between the three levels of education through a Zone of Educational Priority.
- Strengthening school links with parents by giving parents confidence in the school and by involving them in the development of school projects and activities.
- Developing children's reading, writing and math skills, as a major educational priority.
- Opening up the school to the local community to create conditions for an effective partnership.

Objectives:

- the reduction of early school leaving – school drop outs especially during the ten year compulsory education
- the reduction of school failure
- the reduction of bullying and school violence



- the strengthening of social cohesion through a school system that respects difference, pluralism (cultural, language, religious) and multiple intelligence and a school systems that caters for the social inclusion of all children and for combating dropping out of the system and social exclusion.

The projects include a number of supporting actions such as:

- Reduction in the number of students per classroom (maximum of 20 students in Grades 1-2 and 24 children in grades 3-9).
- Additional support lessons based on pupils' needs (speech and language difficulties, learning difficulties, emotional or behavioural problems).
- Bilingual teachers for effective communication between teachers, pupils and parents.
- Afternoon programs and activities of preventive nature (pupils' clubs, workshops and groups, programs of educational, cultural and health promotion activities for pupils and parents).
- Appointment of two educators in each ZEP as coordinators.
- All-day functioning of the primary schools and gymnasiums covered by ZEP.
- Three additional projects running during morning school hours.
- Funding of summer schools running during summer holidays.
- Special Greek classes for migrant students and parents.
- Creation and pilot function of four (4) Centres of Information and Psychosocial Support
- Additional support from the Service of Educational Psychology and the Social Welfare Services.
- Establishment of the "*Centre for Information and Psychological and Social Support*" has been offering since the beginning of 2013 various services to students, teachers and parents.

According to the External Committee, appointed by the MOEC for the assessment of the pilot operation of ZEP, it has been noted that the functions of the ZEP had positive results, such as reduction of student drop-outs, reduction of school failure (referrals and repetitions) and the minimization of referrals to the Educational Psychology Service. Overall, in school units where the ZEP program was implemented, improvement was noted in all operational areas.

The effectiveness is evaluated on the basis of the following indicators:

- Reduction of early school leaving
- Reduction of school failure
- Improvement of school achievement
- Reduction of reported bullying
- School cooperation with the community



II. Task Force on School Violence – Observatory for Violence in Schools

The operation of the Task Force on School Violence (Observatory for Violence in Schools) which aims to address issues related with antisocial behavior and youth delinquency. Through the task force, school mediation has been incorporated in the strategic planning on school violence and citizenship development. The program has been running since September 2012 in secondary schools, and since 2013 in elementary schools. More than 30% of schools have opted for the program in the past two years. Teachers and students become mediators by taking the training offered by the Ministry. The curriculum includes social, communication and mediation skill development, anger management, empathy, negotiation, tolerance and compromise. The first data collected indicates success in conflict resolution and positive change into the school climate.





- III. **Programme for Greek Language Teaching Applicable to Migrants and Other Foreign Language Speaking Residents of Cyprus** Measures to help integrate migrants and reduce drop-outs include initiatives to help teachers cope with this challenge and to improve the teaching of Greek to migrant children. A “Programme for Greek Language Teaching Applicable to Migrants and Other Foreign Language Speaking Residents of Cyprus”, is offered as of November 2010 by the Adult Education Centres of the MoEC and co-financed by the European Social Fund. The programme aims at the prevention of social exclusion, as well as at the reinforcement of social and economic cohesion. Residents of Cyprus over 15 years of age who are migrants and/or foreign language speakers are entitled to apply. Small groups of 10 to 15 students meet twice a week for two 90-minute sessions. Attendance is free of charge and the classes are conducted by experienced Greek language teachers specially trained in adult education. A total of 50 sessions take place per academic year, per group and the programme is offered with an island-wide coverage. The Programme will operate up to school year 2014-2015. It is estimated that by 2015, the total number of enrolments will reach 15.000.

IV. **Health Education in the new National Curriculum**

The implementation of the Health Education Curriculum which acts as a guide for school interventions. Its methodological framework encourages teachers, parents and pupils to collaborate and promote social measures that facilitate healthy choices. Thus, intercultural dialogue and active citizenship are actively promoted. Likewise, the central goal of these thematic areas of the curriculum is to enable students and schools to act as agents, addressing the social gradient of discriminations through critical thinking and social learning action competence skills.



9.2.2.2. Upgrading Vocational Education and Training

The measures presented here after aim to improve the quality and attractiveness of the education and training systems. They include actions other than the restructure of Upper Secondary and Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and are focused on expanding the quality of education and the opportunities presented to the students of Technical and Vocational Schools. The quantitative targets include raising the student population of Technical and Vocational Education.

9.2.2.3. Strengthening the links between vocational education, training and the labor market

All efforts are currently shifted in the creation of an intermediate level of education, between upper secondary and tertiary, which will offer to learners at affordable cost, education and training programs complementary to the ones offered by Private Colleges. The quantitative target is the operation of at least one Post Secondary Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PSITVE) in all provinces by 2012 and the enrollment of the total of 196 students at the first year of their operation.

9.2.2.4. Expanding the modernizing the higher education system

In order to be able to increase the number of students attending Higher Education the Ministry of Education and Culture, other competent ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labor and Social Securities, High Education Institutions, businesses, local industries and the labor market are enhancing their cooperation towards the development of an action plan for reinforcing the links between Higher Education and the labor market. The quantitative targets include the increase at 20-22% of the students attending programs of study related to science and technology by 2020.

9.3. *Validation of non-formal and information learning*

Since 2010, significant steps have been taken in Cyprus in relation to the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Although there is no comprehensive system or framework of validation of non-formal and informal learning, the need for the development of such a system has been identified. Public authorities seem to recognise the importance of validation and the development of supportive structures is foreseen, while specific measures mostly regarding vocational/occupational qualifications are already being implemented. At the same time, an important development occurred in 2013. The cabinet of Ministers



approved the establishment of an interdepartmental Committee (hereafter the 'Committee'), which has the task to develop and see to the implementation (by 2018) of a comprehensive action plan for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, in line with the Council Recommendation of 20.12.12 for the validation of the non-formal and informal learning.

As there is no comprehensive framework yet, practices in place are fragmented and limited. Where in place, validation does not cover all stages, as they are identified in the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, nor is the same terminology used. Current practices mostly concern assessment and certification, where recognition of prior work experience may be taken into consideration, and do not explicitly regard the identification, assessment, certification and validation of learning acquired from any learning path. The focus on vocational/occupational qualifications, which correspond to pre-set occupational profiles, can be attributed to the high rates of persons employed without any certification in certain occupations. Additionally, due to the economic crisis, significant efforts are made for job placing and training unemployed Cypriots and EU nationals, to fill vacancies and/or replace labour from third countries, but without a specific system of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Validation mostly takes place through the System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) run by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA).

In Cyprus, there is no national legislative framework or system in place for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Nonetheless, significant steps have been taken in this direction in the past three years:

- the design of the NQF was completed in May 2012 and is expected to be implemented in 2014 (see Section 2.3 for more details);
- the HRDA is the responsible organisation for the establishment and implementation of the SVQ, under which non-formal and informal learning are recognised;
- the use of Europass has significantly increased - Europass is promoted by the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC-Kentro *Paragogikotitas*, KEPA), the national Europass Centre, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (*Ypourgeio Ergasias kai Koinonikon Asfaliseon*, YEKA);
- the establishment of an interdepartmental Committee that has the task to develop and see to the implementation (by 2018) of a comprehensive action plan for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, in line with the relevant Council Recommendation.



9.3.2. Current state legal framework

9.3.3. Validation on non-formal learning in education

Non-formal and informal learning are not recognised or validated in formal education. Only on a tertiary level can institutions (public and private universities and colleges, *Kollegia*) recognise previous work experience of individuals so as to allow them to transfer credits and defer specific courses/modules towards the attainment of a specific degree/qualification. Also, the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KYSATS), which recognises Higher Education (HE) qualifications, can recognise, as part of an individual's qualification, credits that come from work experience and credit transfers from recognised examinations of foreign education systems (e.g. A levels)². So, if for example, an employer asks a job applicant to get recognition of his/her qualifications from KYSATS, and this qualification includes credits from work experience, the Council will grant recognition. However, such credits from non-formal or informal learning can only comprise up to 10 % of the qualification in question. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), although autonomous, try to adhere to the 10 % limit of KYSATS.

9.4. Students' assessment procedures

Assessment

Assessment of students constitutes an integral part of learning and aims at examining the extent of implementation of the learning objectives, as these are defined in the Analytical Program. The system of assessment in secondary education makes provision for diagnostic, formative and final evaluation of students. The final assessment is effected by means of the intermediate or final exams.

A student is assessed as for his:

- Entanglement in daily teaching and learning process in class and his general activity at school.
- Progress results, as shown by the written tests and the final exams every trimester.
- Studies and participation in the activities of the Program «A.C.S».

a) Types and contents of tests

Tests can be:

- On the daily course, up to 45 minutes (without notice).
- Of one teaching hour duration, per day, on the daily subject (upon notice).
- Of one teaching hour duration, on a unit, common or not (upon notice).

Teachers can undertake the usual oral exam on any of the courses of the day the same day that students take a written test upon notice.

b) Absence from and before a test



If a student is absent during a test, he can be examined orally or in writing on the first occasion, at the discretion of the teacher. His absence from a lesson or lessons preceding a test with notice will be considered unjustifiable, unless the reason for his absence is judged as satisfactory by the relevant Assistant Principal.

c) Examination courses – Promotion at Unified Lyceum

The following are defined as compulsory examination courses, in the written intermediate or final graduation exams, at the end of the school year:

A Form: Modern Greek, Mathematics, History, Natural Studies (Physics, Chemistry, Natural Science).

B Form: Modern Greek, Mathematics and two (2) of the optional stream subjects chosen by the student.

C Form: Modern Greek, Mathematics and two (2) of the optional stream subjects chosen by the student.

In case Mathematics is one of the optional stream subjects chosen by a student, then he is required to take an exam in the optional stream subject of Maths as well as in two more stream subjects. If a student has not selected Mathematics as an optional stream subject, then he is required to take the common core Mathematics exam. Exams for the C form are set on a nationwide basis and are termed as Common School Leaving Examinations. In the C form the syllabus is examinable. Upon successful completion of the C form students are awarded a **school leaving certificate**.

At the end of the A form of Unified Lyceum, students have the opportunity to be examined, in order to obtain a «**certification of good knowledge**» of **Information Technology**. The scale which is used for marking the written exams and determining a student's record in Unified Lyceum is:

Poor: 1 to 9

Satisfactory: 10 to 12

Good: 13 to 15

Very well: 16 to 18

Excellent: 19 to 20

The lower mark for moving up a class, that is to say the base, is «Satisfactory» 10. As for the **courses which are not examined in writing at the end of the year**, the yearly mark is the average mark for three trimesters. Students who are weak (their annual mark is below 10) in non-examination courses are required to take a written exam in June on these courses as well. For **examination courses** the yearly mark is the average mark of all trimesters and of the written exam.

Students who **for no justified reason do not take a written exam** in June are referred to a written exam in September and the mark of this exam is their yearly mark. In case of students who, at the discretion of the Teachers' Association, do not take a written exam **for a justified reason**, the school arranges a second examination period either in June or September.

A student is promoted in June:



- a) If he gets a mark of at least «Satisfactory» 10 in each course.
- b) When he is weak in a non-examination course, but his average mark in the examination courses and the course in which he is weak is at least «Satisfactory» 10.

A student is not promoted in June:

- a) When he fails in 3 or more examination courses or 2 examination and 2 or more courses which are not examined in writing at the end of the year or
- b) Because of poor class attendance.

In case of students who fail in an exam and are referred to a reexamination in September, as well as students who are referred to a complete or partial exam because of poor class attendance, the examination is both written and oral and is undertaken by a committee of two teachers assigned by the school Principal. A written exam precedes an oral one.

A student moves up in September:

- a) If he gets a mark of at least «Satisfactory» 10 for each course.
- b) If he fails in a course which is not examined in writing at the end of the year, but his average mark for the examination courses and the course he fails in is at least «Satisfactory» 10.

A student does not move up in September:

- a) If he does not achieve the required marks.
- b) If he does not attend the September exams for no justified reason.

A student graduates:

- a) If he gets a mark of at least «Satisfactory» 10 for each course.
- b) If he fails in a course which is not examined in writing at the end of the year, but his average mark for the examination courses and of the course that he fails in is at least «Satisfactory» 10.
- c) If he fails in an examination course with a mark not lower than 8, but the average mark for the examination courses (including the mark of the course that he fails in) is at least 12.

A student, who fails to graduate in June, is eligible to take the final exams in the examination periods of September, June or February, over the next three years following his failure.

An indicative certificate (for those who successfully complete forms A and B) or a School Leaving Certificate (for those who graduate) is awarded at the end of the school year to all successful students. The School Leaving Certificate is a qualification for employment in office work and also ensures admission to Cypriot and foreign institutions of tertiary education



9.5. Survey based analysis: from theory to practice

The two questionnaires - for teachers and for students - were distributed to 25 students aged 14-17 years old and 10 teachers in Cyprus. Emphasys Centre has carried out the empirical study regarding the attitude on school leaving, focusing on identifying the benefits of recognising and validating the students' non-formal learning in school assessment.

Each questionnaire has been translated in Greek and distributed to the students and the teachers. The participants in the survey were informed about the aims and objectives of the NON FOR LESL project, the importance of their involvement in this survey and assured of the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality of their personal views stated in their answers; Emphasys staff assisted the students during the study.



9.5.2. Students' views

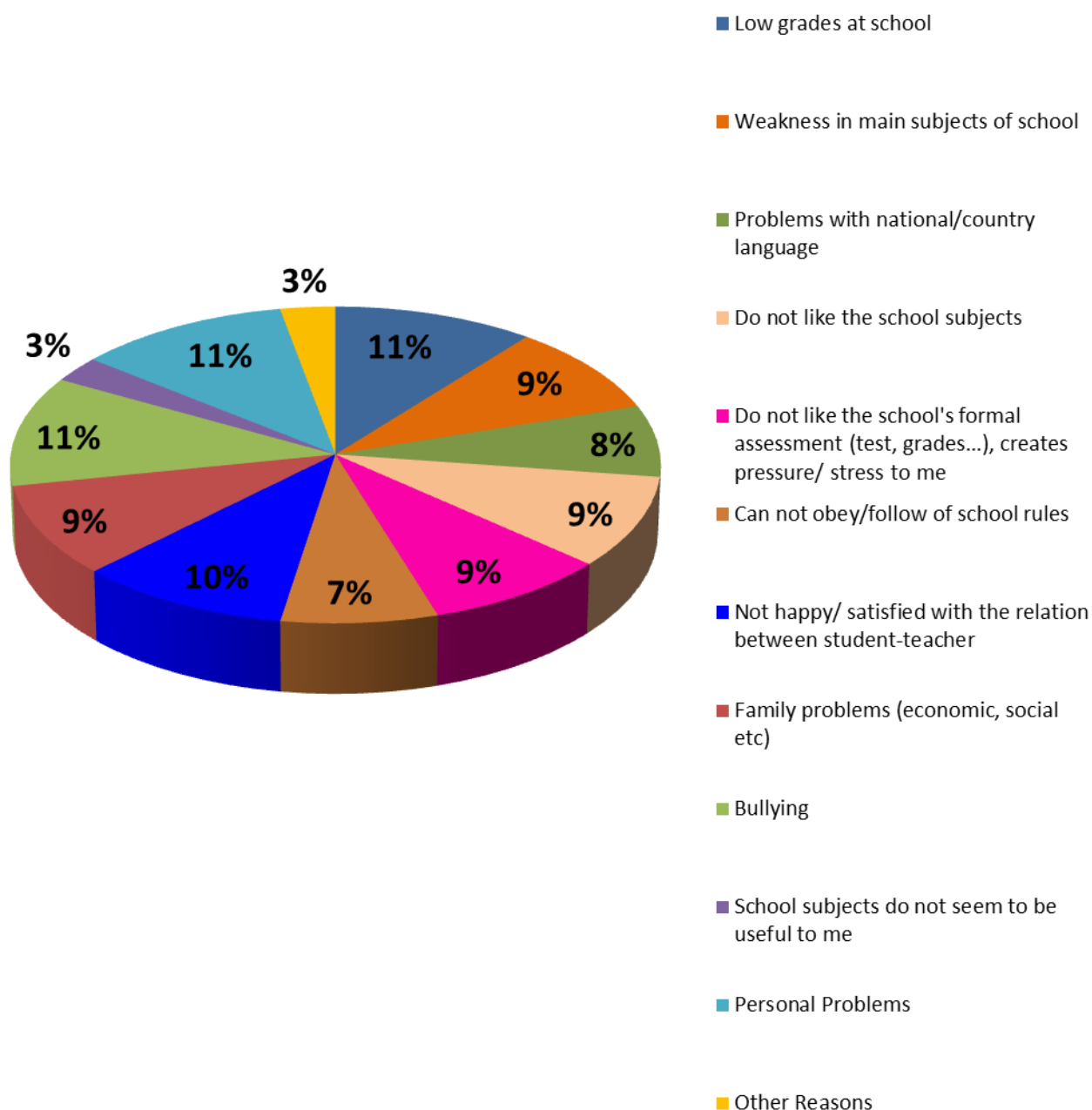
Personal characteristics: 20 students out of the 25 have completed the questionnaires fully, 12 students were male and 8 were female 60% male and 40% female.

9.5.2.2. What are the most important factors that influence students to leave school early?

The most important factors for students are: bullying, low grades at school, dissatisfaction with teacher-student relationship, personal problems and school subjects do not appear to be useful to students.

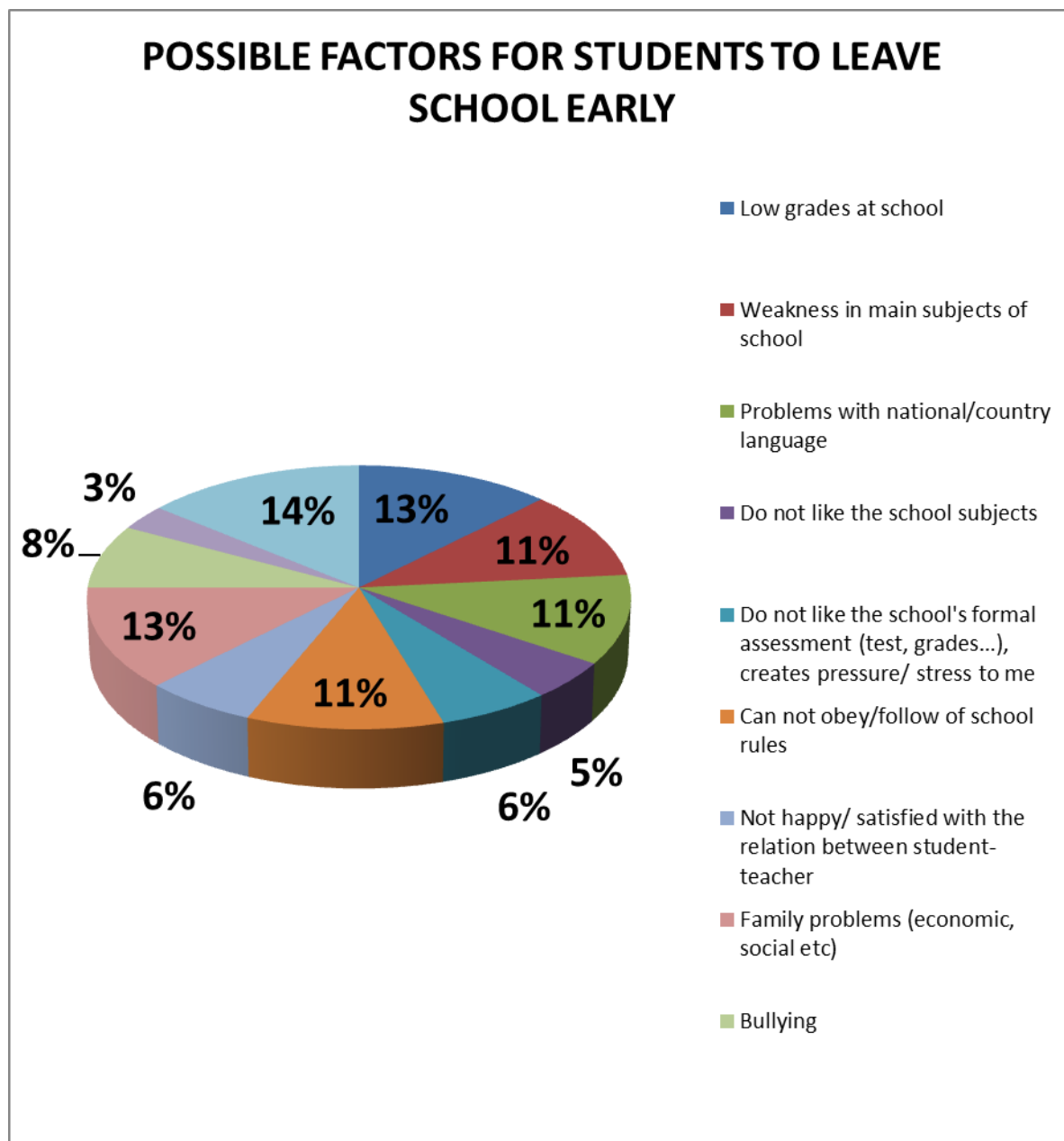
Below are the students' views:

WHY STUDENTS LEAVE SCHOOL EARLY?



The most important factors for teachers are: low grades at school, weaknesses in main subjects at school, family problems, problems with national language, cannot obey school rules and personal problems.

Below are the teachers' views:

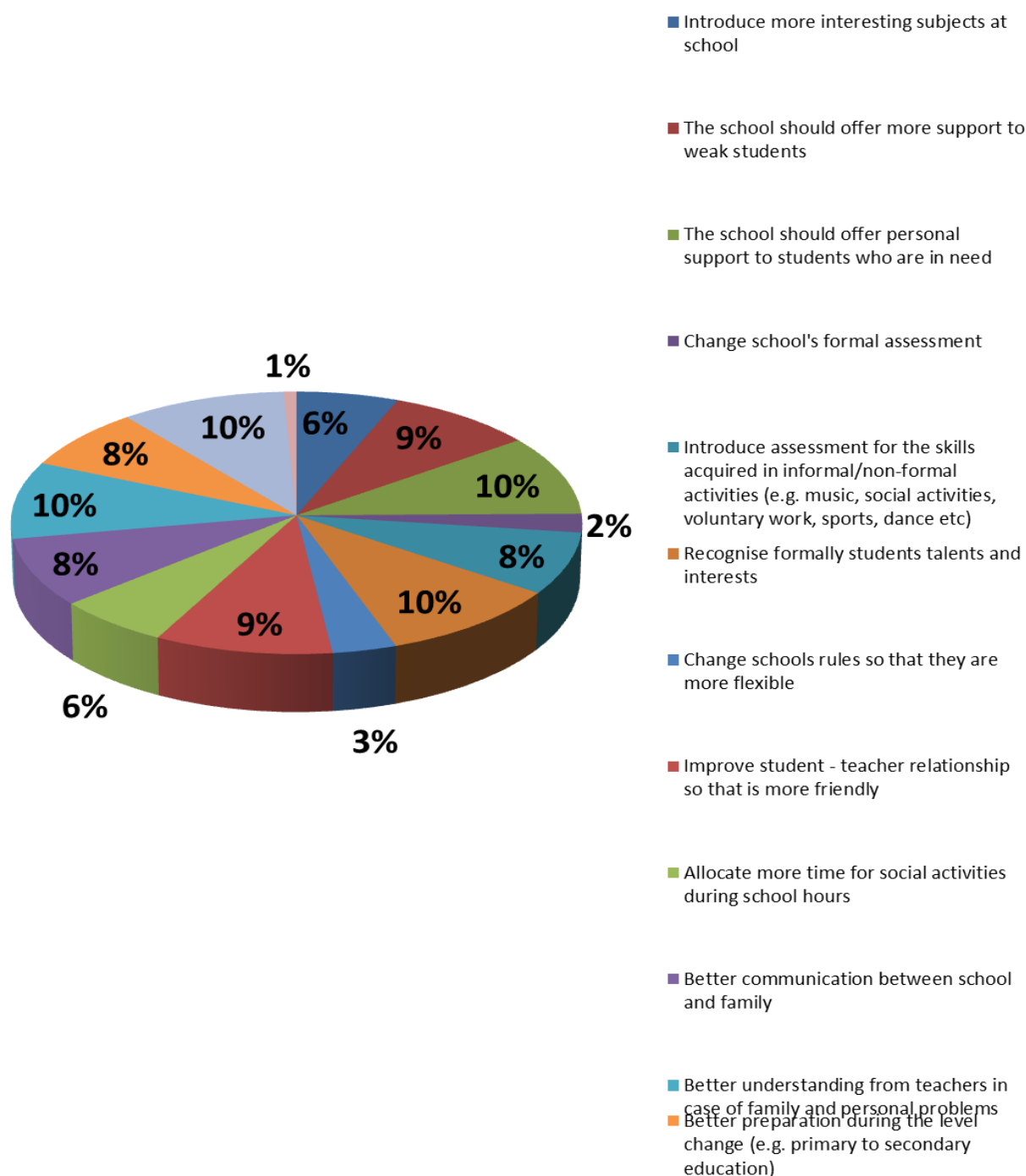




9.5.2.3. What are the possible changes that can be introduced in schools that could help/encourage students to complete their schooling? Below are the students' views:

According to **students** the changes that should be introduced are the following: more individual support to students in need, better understanding from teachers for individual problems, improves teachers' and students' relationship, recognize formally students' other interests, talents and skills and introduce assessment measures.

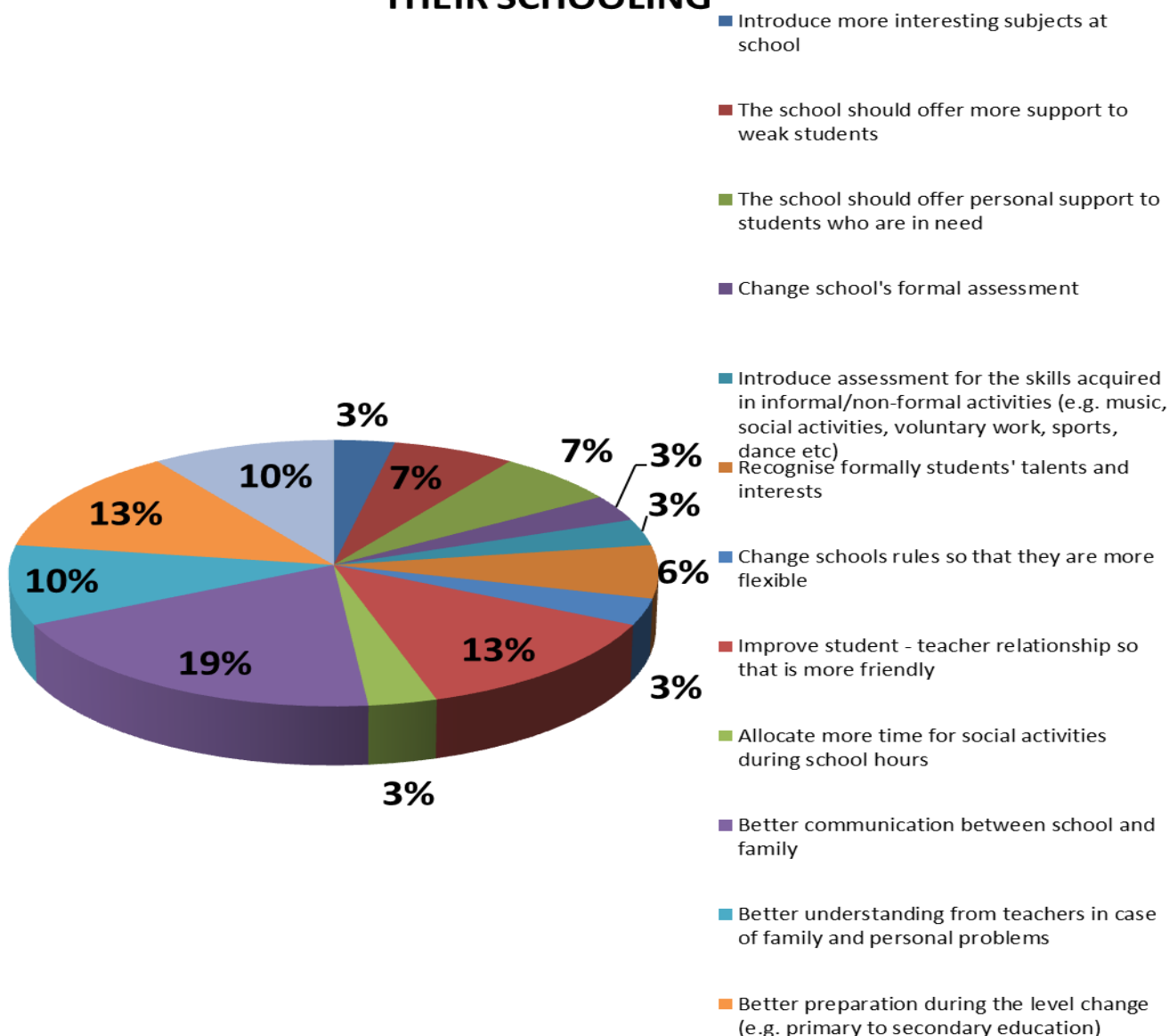
WHAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED FOR STUDENTS IN ORDER TO STAY AT SCHOOL?





Teachers have the following views: improve communication between school and family, show better understanding for family and personal problems faced, improve student and teacher relationship and better preparation between the transition levels.

POSSIBLE CHANGES THAT CAN BE MADE IN SCHOOLS IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO COMPLETE THEIR SCHOOLING

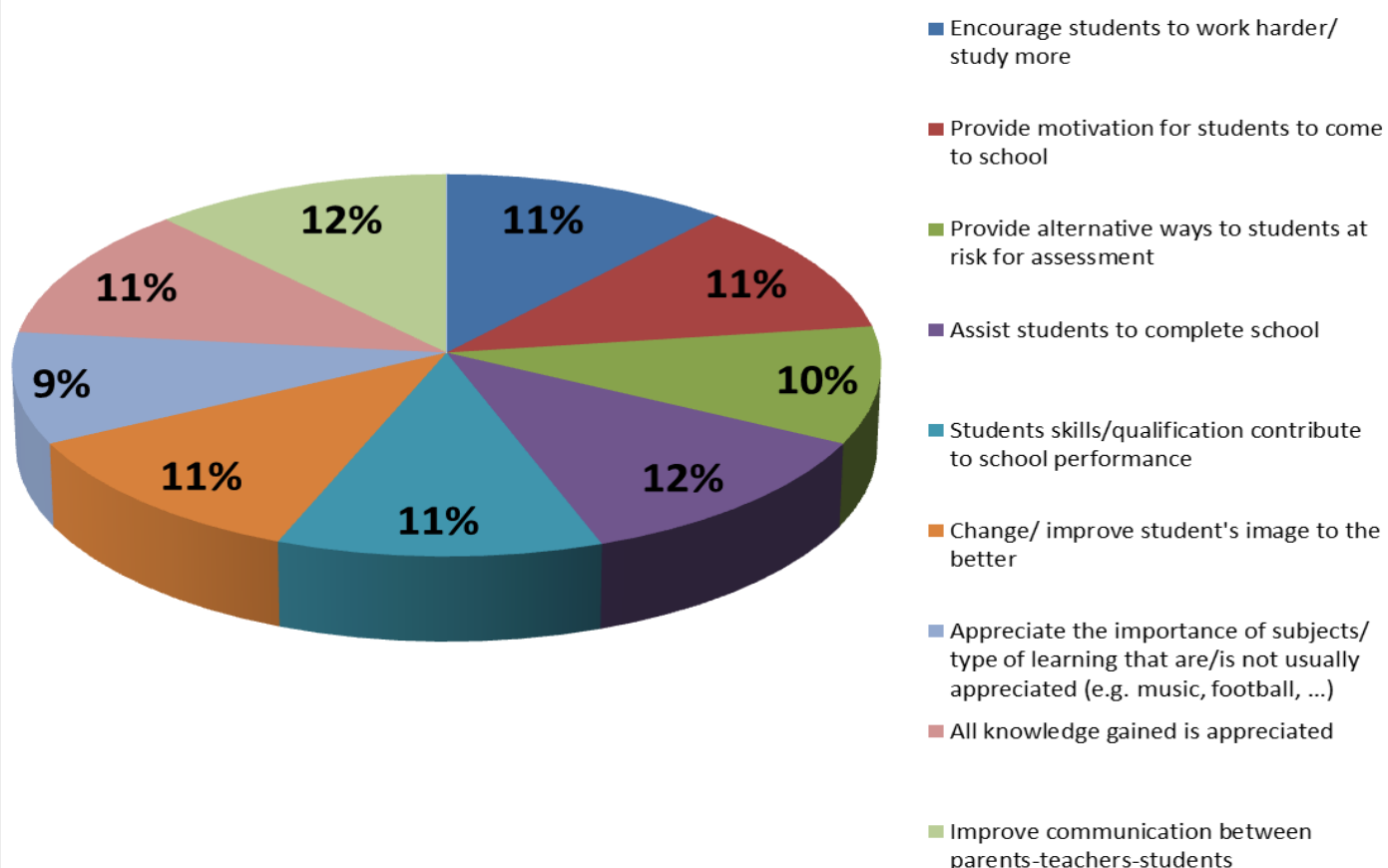


9.5.2.4. What are the benefits for students, if the non-formal learning is recognized and validated in school?

Students believe that the benefits are the following: students will be encouraged to study more and work harder, they will be more motivated to attend school, they will be offered alternative ways to be assessed and therefore be supported to complete schooling. Their image will be improved and the importance of other skills and knowledge will be appreciated.

The students' views are presented below:

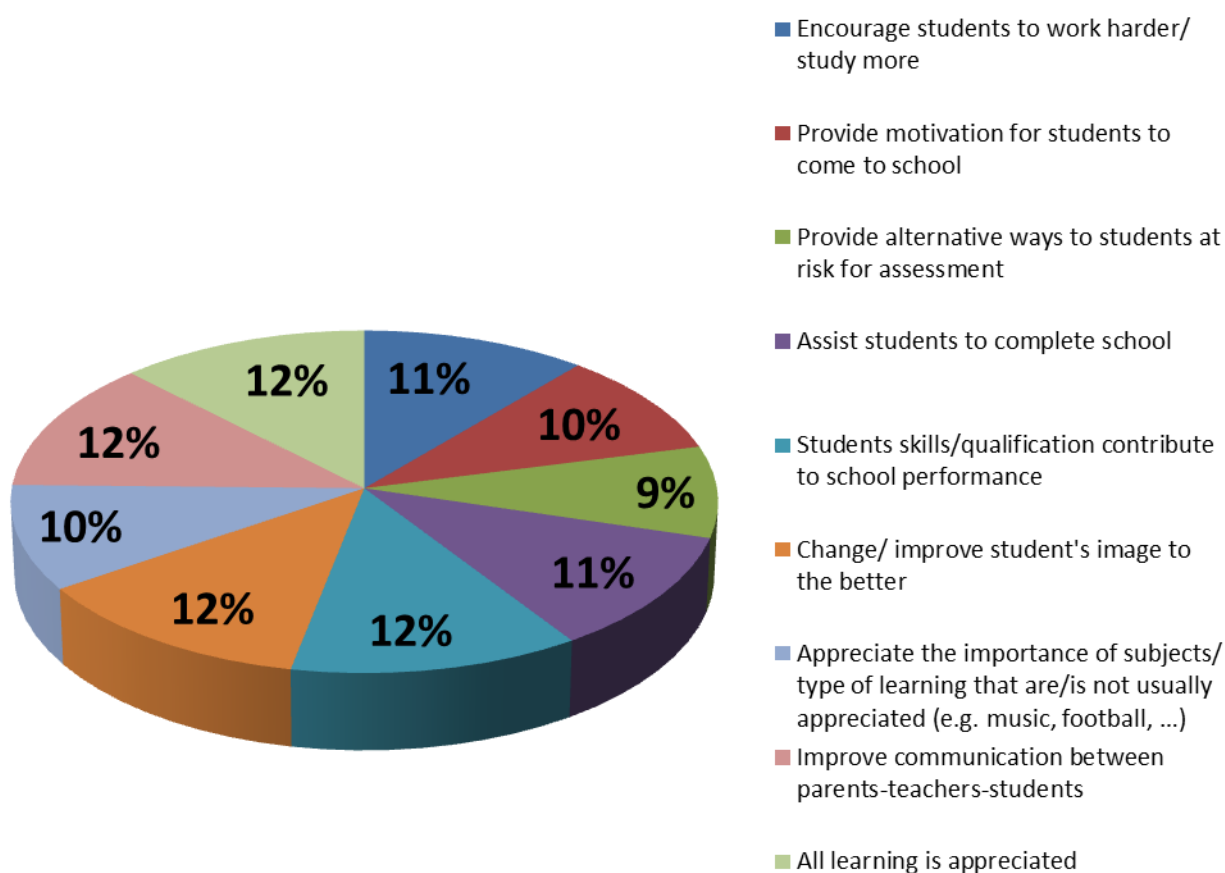
Benefits for recognising and validating student's learning in non-formal activities





Teachers' views on the benefits of recognizing and validating students' non-formal learning are very similar to the students' views.

THE BENEFITS OF RECOGNISING AND VALIDATING STUDENTS' NON-FORMAL LEARNING

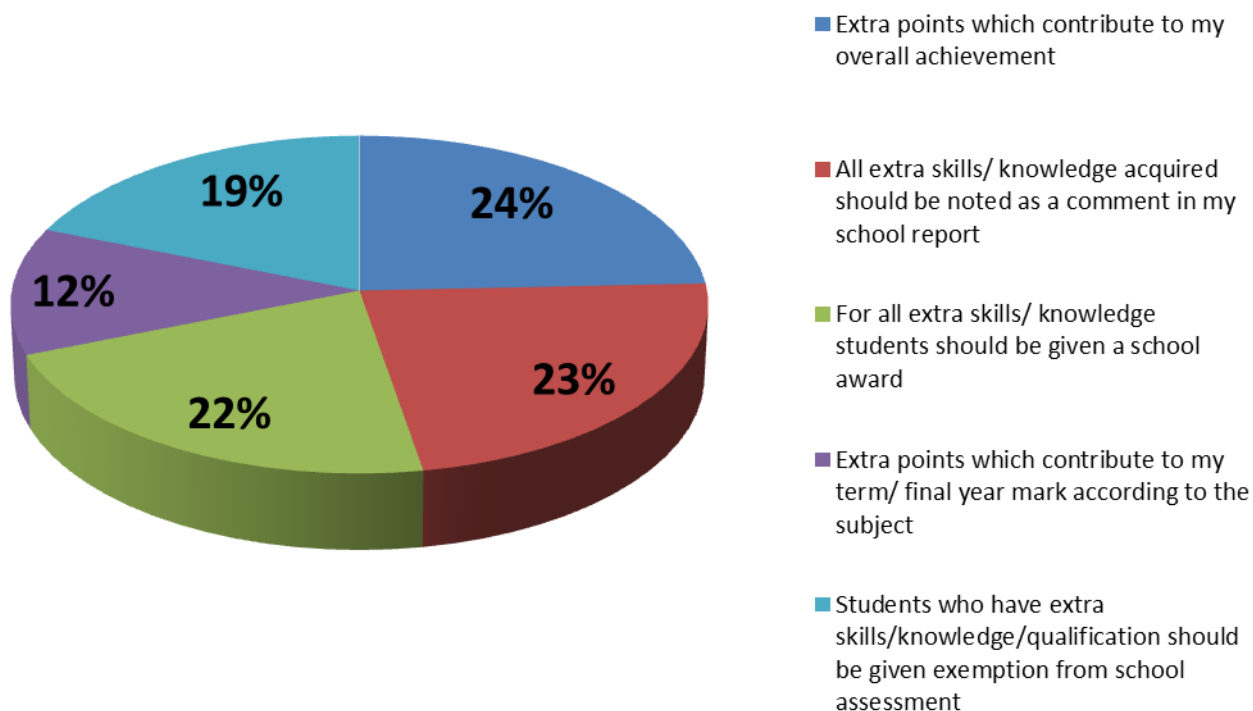




9.5.2.5. What are the ways that the school could take into account students' skills/knowledge gained in non-formal learning/extra-curricular activities?

The students' views are shown below:

In what ways could the school take into account your skills/knowledge/ competences that you have acquired from extracurricular activities





9.5.3. Teachers' views

9.5.3.2. What are the measures that teachers have taken to prevent ESL?

The measures that the teachers have taken to prevent ESL are the following:

1. Better communication channels with the students' family in order to understand the problems faced.
2. Support of the student in risk by the school psychologist of the school or any other specialist required.
3. Better communication within the school community: the responsible teachers, the deputy head teachers and the head of the school.
4. Provision of extra teaching lessons to support the needs of the student.

9.5.3.3. What are the problems within the educational system/forma school that have been identified to influence students to leave school early?

The problems identified by the teachers are the following:

1. There is a great difference between the different sectors of education (primary education, secondary education, lyceum, VET) and students are not well prepared to deal with the changes related to the rules, regulations, attitude and school culture.
2. The subject matter to be covered in each lesson is enormous and leaves teachers with limited time to deal with students' worries, individual needs and concerns.
3. The teaching methods applied are more teacher-centre rather than student-centre therefore students' motivation and involvement is limited. This is mainly due to the exam oriented type of teaching and learning.
4. The detection of students' individual needs and deficits are not considered early enough and lead to school failure at the age which students are more vulnerable.

9.5.3.4. How can the recognition and validation for non-formal learning be introduced (practically) into the school procedures?

Teachers believe that the students' non-formal learning should be taken into account within their official assessment, either by allocating a percentage to their overall grade or by allocating a special mark/grade in their school leaving certificate or their year certificate. Teachers' strongly believe that students should utilize all the knowledge and skills gained through their involvement in extra-curricular activities for their own benefit with in the formal schooling.



9.6. Conclusion

Early School Leaving has been greatly discussed among educationalist in Cyprus in the last decade. Certain measures have been taken which have proved successful as the percentage of ESL has been reduced to 7.4% in 2014. However, the main concern is that ESL has been transferred to the later stages of secondary education that is not reported and not at the compulsory years. In addition the economic crisis has pushed a great number of foreigners to leave the Cyprus which have influenced the percentage positively. Therefore the efforts to continue deal with ESL at the stage of prevention, intervention and compensation should continue.

10. APPENDICES - QUESTIONNAIRES