DROPOUT AS A STRATEGY
TO ESCAPE SOCIAL ISOLATION

ABANDONUL ȘCOLAR CA STRATEGIE
DE EVITARE A IZOLĂRII SOCIALE

Tariq MURAD,
PhD student,
Tiraspol State University, Chisinau

Rezumat: Factorii ce afectează societatea modernă, cum ar fi: nedreptățile sociale, viciile, atitudinea derizorie față de valorile umane etc. au un impact destructiv asupra viitoarei generații. Decepționați de realitatea crudă în care trăiesc, tinerii devin sceptici față de viață, iar scepticismul îi conduce la diverse acțiuni ce marchează semnificativ viitorul lor, una din ele fiind abandonul școlar.

Cuvinte-cheie: abandon școlar, elevi, scepticism, izolare, impact destructiv.

The common belief nowadays is that the world is unfair and often a terrifying place, especially for young people who lack the experience and the efficient life skills. Moreover, it is true that the conventional wisdom, which the old generation is trying to ladle into the young people with such overwhelming generosity, often have little relevance to the increasingly complex problems of the current time. The grown-ups may argue, a little defensively, that the reasons for the mess are somewhat different from what most young people think they are, and that the current crop adults neither so stupid nor so corrupt as their youthful critics often assume. Nevertheless, I am worried to see the young generation approaching the future with a certain but yet uncontrolled scepticism.

For the young generation scepticism became a simply habit of not believing anything until you have some solid evidence that it might be true. They stopped taking things for granted. Therefore the relevant question for the arriving generation is no weather our society is imperfect, but how to deal with it. For all its harshness and irrationality, it is the only world we've got. Choosing strategies to cope with it, then, is the first decision a young adult has to make, and usually the most important decision of his lifetime.

One alternative that I've noticed is dropping out of school. For some young people who decide to drop out from school, it is a strategy to deal with the reality they live in. Through dropping out certain individuals try to run away from school, in hopes of finding a simpler, more pastoral and more peaceful frame.

Dropout students usually suffer from social isolation and a feeling of alienation, they actually lack a meaningful relationship. This situation has negative effects for not only the functioning and well-being of the student, but also for his solidarity and social cohesion within school in particular and within the society as a whole.

One of the reasons of this problem is adults' attitude. Adults usually

forget they passed through similar situations during adolescence – a decisive period for future life. They blame youth for their mistakes instead of being empathetic. The same thing with teachers, they forget that they were once students. If we, adults, succeeded to look at things in the perspective of the youth, then, we would be able to help them to be prepared socially, mentally, physically and, the most important of all, spiritually for the future. If young people fail to prepare they face immeasurable problems.

Teachers are the key component for providing a better alternative to students other than dropping out. Unfortunately, some teachers push students to drop out. Learning at school usually becomes problematic and challenging for some students to the extent that the school main focus is on learning as an endeavour in itself, rather than as a means to building social relations and engaging students in meaningful activity [3]. For example, educators tend to view friendship, games, romance, collections, popular music, as attractive nuisances that prevent learning and ignore the fact that through these experiences youth gain important life skills like exploring one's interests and abilities. In other words, students are expected to learn to learn in isolation from the social relations that bind them.

Therefore, it's our responsibility to benefit from this tremendous learning energy that comes with social membership. We need to provide students with the opportunity to form communities of practice around subject matter. These opportunities are equivalent to the everyday experiences that the students have through their interaction with families, neighbourhoods, communities, workplaces, clubs and so on [1]. This leads to full meaningful students' participation in the school. Moreover, if students could implement what they learn into their outside school life and bring what they learn elsewhere at school, they wouldn't feel isolated any more. A school must offer learning as a key to the real world.

Due to their poor academic and social integration into the institutional life, students at the risk of dropping out of school are usually more likely to experience isolation and alienation from school. They feel alienated and lack the sense of belonging to school, fact connected to negative student behaviours such as self-isolation, failure, absenteeism, and dropping out. These students usually feel unconnected to the teacher, other students, or the school community at large. They also suffer from the feeling of loneliness, even when in the company of others, due to a perceived lack of meaningful, intimate relationships with peers, family, and the wider community. Students who feel isolated tend to be separated from mainstream groups, feel a lack of connection to others, and feel no one cares or pays attention to them [1]. Therefore, full meaningful students' integration in the learning process has an important impact on persistence.

To reduce social-isolation among students there are few steps that a teacher can conduct [2]. First, identifying the reasons for students' isolation through observations in different setting at school, conversations with the student and parents and even conversations with students' teacher from

previous years; then, according to the collected data, the teacher can determine the reason for the student isolation, whether it is related to shyness, bossiness, aggressiveness, appearance, hygiene issues, academic performance or behavioural problem. The next step, is coaching the students in social skills through raising their social intelligence and teaching them how to use basic skills in different situations such as making eye contact, joining in activities, or asking others to play. Third, the teacher should mobilize the whole class, arranging social interaction for all students, fact that ensures successful social involvement and foster relationships among classmates. An additional important step is to emphasize the strengths and talents of isolated students and make their classmates aware of them.

Finally, I underline that it is imperative to involve parents in their children's social life, encourage them to foster peer relationships, for example guide them how to build a successsful visit experience for their child's peers. All the steps I suggested above contribute to the feeling of integration and belonging among students and, consequently, reduce their tendency to drop out.

Bibliography:

1. Bekuis T. Unsafe public schools and the risk of dropping out: A longitudinal study ofadolescents. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Boston, MA, March 29-April 2, 1995. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 3888907).
2. Cohen - Navot, M., Ellenbogen - Frankovits, S., & Reinfeld, T. Overt and covert dropout among youth. Research Report - Draft for comments. Knesset Research and Information Center, JDC - Brookdale Institute, 2001.
3. Israel. Ministry of Education. Results of Matriculation Examination 2011. Jerusalem: Publications Division, 2012.