

PREVENTION OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING REPORT ON THE NATIONAL SITUATION

Case Studies in Italy

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CASE STUDY 1 : TAMER

NAME, AGE, PLACE

Tamer is a 20year old boy, born of Egyptian parents in Italy, outskirts of Florence

CASE DESCRIPTION

(events description)

Tamer's parents have academic degrees. Lower secondary school was marked by rebellion against imposed rules and regulations he could not understand and accept. He is interested in computers, so he chose to attend the Vocational Institute in electronics. Laboratory activities fell short of his expectations and his behaviour did not change. He repeated the first year moving to the mechanical sector where some teachers took care of him while others use prescriptive methods. He failed again and started attending a regional vocational training course with brilliant results.

He succeeded in getting such a qualification that he was called for a job interview at the most important company of the sector. The interview was the turning point of the process, he understood that what he had learnt was useful and decided to go back to school to obtain the third year qualification. The successful results got him to continue the course with a new self esteem though with some problems related to his past experiences.

ANALYZE THE SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE CASE

CAUSES

Tamer's problems arose out of difficult relationships with teachers who were neither prepared nor specifically trained to communicate with teenagers. Tamer's real participation, intended as interest and passion for learning started with his first contact with a working environment.

APPROACH

The school which was not able to give him proper attention, advised him to attend a regional vocational training course where learning pace was slower and there was the possibility of an active, practical elaboration of what he had learned, as he needed.

SOLUTIONS

Use of Tamer's own learning pace and practical training in the vocational centre workshops

RESULTS

Vocational training qualification, state school qualification, attendance of post qualification courses

GOOD PRACTICES ADOPTED

METHODOLOGIES APPLIED

Tamer marked a turning point when his educational relationships became thoughtful and reciprocal, when selfmotivation was recovered with a wish to know, understand and act, when he recognized, with selfassessment, that his commitment met his needs.

SUBJECTS INVOLVED AND THEIR COMPETENCES

Regional vocational training centre

RELATED TRAINING ACTIVITIES

None

MOST SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS

Simulation of working activities, attendance of regional vocational training course, job interview

ATTACHED DOCUMENTATION

interviews

CASE STUDY 2 : LORENZO

NAME, AGE, PLACE

Lorenzo, a 18 year old boy, industrial town

CASE DESCRIPTION

He experienced many failures after the third year of lower education as he attended several different schools. He was then contacted by institutional professionals and started attending a regional vocational training course to become a kitchen assistant. The course consisted of 1200 hours, including placements. At the end of the course he decided to join an integrated project between state schools and regional vocational agencies. The project aimed at allowing students to start a new path in either system and adopted new teaching methods together with individualized strategies insisting on the relationships between students and teachers. Lorenzo decided to go back to state schools. At that moment his competences would have allowed him to enrol on the third year of a Vocational Institute for tourism without experiencing difficulties or studying extra subjects, yet he was so highly motivated by his interest in graphics that he preferred to sit for additional exams in order to enrol on the second year in that sector. Since then he has been following all subjects successfully and he is preparing his third year qualification with determination.

ANALYZE THE SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE CASE

CAUSES

- at the beginning of Upper Secondary Education dissatisfaction with the choices
- general lack of motivation
- lack of interest in certain subjects

APPROACH

- No particular approach in the first phase
- Information and guidance from the regional vocational centre
- Personal motivation to go back to school

SOLUTIONS

- Highly individualized teaching strategies
- Implementation of an individualized, shared project

RESULTS

Positive ongoing process

GOOD PRACTICES ADOPTED

- Interaction of institutional professionals
- Highly individualized actions to motivate the student and share a personal project
- Presence and help from the family in any phase of the process
- Innovative teaching methods
- Follow-up actions once the student attended school again

METHODOLOGIES APPLIED

- Steady communication with the student and his family
- Motivating teaching methods, practical activities

SUBJECTS INVOLVED AND THEIR COMPETENCES

Teacher in charge of students' guidance in the present school

Professionals of regional vocational agencies

Mentor of the integration project

SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS

Competence assessment and credit transfer

Individualized support activities

Cooperation with the family

ATTACHED DOCUMENTATION

interviews

CASE STUDY 3 : SALVO

NAME, AGE, PLACE

Salvo, a 16 year old boy, mountainous region

CASE DESCRIPTION

Salvo is intelligent but he is socio-culturally disadvantaged after the break-up of his problematic family. He lives in a boarding school, located 50 kms from the school he is attending, and spends there even all his weekends. He failed his first year in the Vocational Institute for thermic plant operators. The headteacher reported the situation to the community services. In September 2007 he enrolled on the first year again and both his school career and his stay at the boarding school were at risk. He was suspended more than once because of unruly behaviour and dangerous actions against himself and the others. In January 2008 he started improving his behaviour and his learning results. In April interim assessment he showed some problems only in two subjects.

ANALYZE THE SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE CASE

CAUSES

APPROACH

Teachers noticed that in spite of some integration activities carried out by the whole class, the student's behaviour was getting worse and worse. He had very serious difficulties in his relationships both with the class group and the boarding school mates.

SOLUTIONS

Teachers together with the headteacher started the following actions:

- Frequent meetings with the family to create an effective communication
- Involvement of the community services to deal with the family
- Individualized project including remedial interventions and improvement of basic skills based on the use of ICT and of the mechanics laboratories
- Support from the teacher in charge of students with special needs, to help self guidance, new motivation and a positive approach to the school community

RESULTS

Relationships with peers have steadily improved and the student showed interest in working inside small groups and in the execution of practical activities. Changes were mainly noticed in his new sense of responsibility, he is now conscious that he can obtain his qualification provided he wants it, and he does want to become a mechanic with adequate competences. He has started relying on some of the teachers too.

GOOD PRACTICES ADOPTED

METHODOLOGIES APPLIED

With the support of a psychologist and of the community services, we have insisted on active listening and narrative methods. Communication and cooperation with the boarding schools tutors allowed to have a complete, clearer picture of the student's problems. Thanks to steady contacts with his mother and the grandparents on his mother's side, we have been informed about behaviours at risk (alcohol abuse) on which the tutors have worked. At school practical activities and group works were favoured.

SUBJECTS INVOLVED AND THEIR COMPETENCES

Teachers, boarding school tutors, community services assistants, a psychologist

MOST SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS

Co-teaching to allow group work

Increase of practical activities in extracurricular time

Cooperation with boarding school tutors

ATTACHED DOCUMENTATION

interviews

CASE STUDY 4 : ANDREA

NAME, AGE, PLACE

Andrea, a 16 year old boy, Florence

CASE DESCRIPTION

He was the best in 1A. Before Christmas 2007 he showed signs of discomfort, he did not feel like studying, spoke about how useless the school was and so on. He started playing truant. Before February interim assessment he disappeared and the teachers in charge were not able to contact him in any way. The school could only inform the competent authorities he had left compulsory education.

ANALYZE THE SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE CASE

CAUSES

His brother, who was a former student of ours, moved to another school last year

APPROACH

Meetings at the listening centre of the school, with the school psychologist, contacts with the professionals from the local community services

SOLUTIONS

The psychologist was most active in trying to motivate the student, also suggesting a change in the type of school

RESULTS

At the moment school has lost all trace of him and we have only to admit our failure in preventing Andrea from dropping out of school

GOOD PRACTICES ADOPTED

METHODOLOGIES APPLIED

The listening centre run by teachers, the psychologist's motivation strategies, the approach of the external professionals

SUBJECTS INVOLVED AND THEIR COMPETENCES

Teachers at the listening centre, the psychologist, the external professionals

RELATED TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The teachers involved are members of the Commission for the "Prevention of early school leaving" and meet the psychologist and the community service professionals periodically.

MOST SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS

Cooperation with the school psychologist

ATTACHED DOCUMENTATION

interviews

CASE STUDY 5 : MEHDI

NAME, AGE, PLACE

Mehdi, a 15 year old boy, a country village

CASE DESCRIPTION

Immigrant from Morocco, he attended one year course in a lower secondary school where he was taught basic literacy skills. Though he has some difficulties in written Italian, he understands it fairly well and speaks it fluently, which allows him to have relationships with school friends and teachers. At the beginning of the school year he appeared happy, interested and with good learning skills, then he joined a group of problematic students and started playing truant and stopped studying. He did not attend school from January to March, at the moment he is coming as he knows that attendance is compulsory but refuses any kind of work. He is determined to pass to regional vocational courses as soon as he is 16, which is before the end of the school year. His family is absent, his father seems to have lived in Italy for 20 years and he is living in another region at the moment. Mehdi lives with his sister who works as a shop assistant. When he was not attending school in December, his friends said that he was working at a pizza shop while at school we were having the guidance module. He confirmed the information when speaking to the professional in charge of students' guidance, adding that he was at the time working in a camping site.

ANALYZE THE SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE CASE

CAUSES

Immigration, a socially disadvantaged family which had broken up, low self-esteem, economic needs

APPROACH

At the first signs of quitting, teachers had meetings with him aiming at renewing motivation. Unfortunately he was in a very difficult class group with many other similar cases: 3 students repeating the year course, one of them Romanian, a Chinese girl, a student who left school after Christmas holiday, two students with special needs (one not officially certified as such, but followed by he community services), one student coming from another school (after a short attendance in our school) and repeating the year course, one student in very poor health. At the beginning he was supported with individualized remedial activities, which were not very successful and made him refuse any individualized teaching project. In January, as the school did not succeed in speaking to the family, the local competent authorities were informed that he had left the school. He was invited to use the counselling service but up to now he has not taken it into consideration.

SOLUTIONS

Co-teaching, listening centre, guidance

RESULTS

Mehdi stays in the classrooms and waits for the moment he can pass to regional vocational courses

GOOD PRACTICES ADOPTED

METHODOLOGIES APPLIED

Individualized activities

Remedial modules

SUBJECTS INVOLVED AND THEIR COMPETENCES

Teachers, a counsellor

MOST SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS

Co-teaching

ATTACHED DOCUMENTATION

interviews