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The school drop-out phenomenon: Etiology and remedies

التسرب المدرسي: المسببات والعوامل، الوقاية والعلاج

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Abstract:

The school is a fundamental basis for any society. It constitutes one of the most important steps to prepare any child for the challenges of his/her future life. However, it is experiencing some new phenomena, which are recognized as worrying such as the phenomenon of "school dropout". Clearly, everyone agrees that its consequences are harmful both for the pupil, the family and even for the society.

The review of the literature informs us that modern society requires more and more improvements in terms of learning and scientific knowledge, skills and know-how for its adaptation to its environment. Hence the harmful repercussions of this phenomenon which affect the key sectors of society as a whole, particularly those relating to the fields of education, health and the world of work, hence the interest in the study of this phenomenon. Indeed, our presentation concerns the phenomenon of "school dropout" the factors and the process of its appearance as well as the recommendations for the prevention and mitigation of its effects.

Keywords: School dropout; Etiology and factors; Types of dropouts; Dropout process; Prevention and remedies

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الملخص:

المدرسة ذات أهمية كبيرة لأي مجتمع. وهو يشكل إحدى الخطوات الضرورية والأساسية لإعداد أي طفل لمواجهة تحديات مستقبله لكي يصبح مواطناً. إلا أنها تشهد ظواهر جديدة، بعضها مثير للقلق. ومن بين هذه الظواهر، ظاهرة "التسرب من المدارس".

ويتفق الجميع على أن عواقبها ضارة بالفرد والمجتمع على السواء. إن مراجعة الأدبيات تعلمنا أن المجتمع الحديث يتطلب المزيد والمزيد من التحسينات من حيث التعلم والمعرفة العلمية والمعرفة والدراية لتكيفه مع بيئته، ومن هنا تأتي التداعيات الضارة لهذه الظاهرة التي تؤثر على القطاعات الرئيسية في المجتمع مثل ككل، وخاصة تلك المتعلقة بمجالات التعليم والصحة وعالم العمل، ومن هنا الاهتمام بدراسة هذه الظاهرة.ف ي الواقع، يتعلق عرضنا بفهم التسرب المدرسي بناءً على الدراسات التي أجريت بشكل خاص حول عوامله وعملية ظهوره بالإضافة إلى التوصيات للوقاية من آثاره والتخفيف من آثارها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التسرب المدرسي، المسببات والعوامل، أنواع التسرب، عملية التسرب، الوقاية والعلاج

1/ Introduction

The school is of capital importance for children, it represents the first place of exchanges, of various interactions and above all of necessary learning allowing them to acquire the basic elements for good socialization, consequently, the improvement of skills of adaptation to the demands and future challenges of their environment, in particular what refers to intellectual, cognitive, social, emotional standards and knowledge, even the knowledge and know-how that reassures when entering the world of work. Today, the obligation to attend school for all children and the exponential demographic evolution of human society constitute a challenge and a burden for schools through the appearance of problems of various natures such as the phenomenon of school dropout considered worrying, because it hinders the schooling process and affects a very significant number of children within it. Recent research emphasizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and increased the scale of school dropout (OCDE, 2022), making an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon more urgent than ever. This is a phenomenon with harmful consequences for the pupils, their family and even for the society. Our presentation will

focus on this phenomenon of school dropout, in particular, on the essentials of its approach basing on the review of the literature by understanding the definitions required to explain it, its etiology and the different factors, types and processes of its appearance. Moreover, it will include proposals for treatment through remediation or prevention of the occurrence of this phenomenon.

2/ Definitions of school dropout

The review of the literature shows that school dropout is a complex phenomenon with a variety of dimensions and several definitions. For Scellos J, "school dropout refers to a variety of situations involving a temporal dimension resulting in the accumulation, in young people's schooling, of a set of factors that lead them to leave school before the end of their course" (Scellos, 2014, P.23-24).

Other authors, such as Chambry.J, Lauru.D and Stavroulakis. S this definition is expressed by focusing on the school dropout "[...] Even if this term covers multiple situations: school dropouts, absenteeism, phobia [...], the French Ministry of Education defines a dropout as someone who leaves the school system without a level V diploma (BEP or CAP) or a higher-level diploma (baccalaureate). School dropout is more likely to affect under-16s who are still subject to compulsory education" (Chambry, Lauru and Stavroulakis, 2019, P.13-14).

Another definition by Esterle-Hedibel.M, states that "a school dropout is defined as someone who has left school without obtaining a secondary school diploma, either in the youth sector or in the adult sector[...] and who has not returned to complete the requirements before the age of 22" (Janoz, Leblanc, Boulerice, 1998,91). [...] The use of the term 'dropout' would thus be tantamount to covering all kinds of difficulties experienced by students, from absences to delays in learning, as well as psychological or family difficulties" (Esterle-Hedibel, 2006, p.45).

We can therefore see a diversification of meaning in its approach and a particular importance attributed to it, given the fact that it seriously hinders young people's schooling and preparation for their future. In

particular, by leaving the school system without a diploma and with no prospects for the future.

Among the key elements addressed in understanding and preventing school dropout are the etiology and factors leading to dropping out.

3/ Etiology and factors involved in school dropout

The review of the literature shows that several authors have addressed the risk factors for school dropout in their works. Spinelli.E was interested in this plurality and, in her thesis, referred to the work of Gilles, Plunus, Renson, Polson and Dethier (2009), Lafontaine and Crahay (2004), Glasman (2011), Bryk and Thum (1989) and Garczynska (2015) to study these factors. Based on the classifications of Gilles *et al*. (2009) in particular and confirmation of those of Leclercq and Lambillotte (1997) cited by Thibert (2013), she draws up a general summary table of the following risk factors:

Table 1: Internal and external determinants of school dropout

Internal determinants of the school system	External determinants of the school system
Organizational and structural factors.	Factors relating to social and family environment
Factors specific to teacher/pupil relationships.	**Individual** factors.

For their part, Potvin. P, Marcotte. D, Royer. É and Deslandes. R agree on the etiology, stating, "Researchers agree that dropping out of school is a multidimensional phenomenon that results from a combination of interacting factors. The decision to drop out of school is not made on a whim. In most cases, it is the result of frustrations accumulated over a long period. These frustrations are caused by failure at school and difficulties in relationships with peers, teachers and parents. Gradually, dropouts become disengaged and distance themselves from school". (Potvin et al, 2007, p.3)

So there are two types of determinants of school dropout that are Internal and external determinants.

The internal determinants of school dropout

1/ Two types of factors represent this:

Factors relating to the organization and structures for which Spinelli.E points out that "The Canadian Dropout Prevention Guide (2004) mentions the following: [A negative classroom climate can contribute to an increase in attention deficits, oppositional disorders and behavioral problems in students. At-risk students also perceive more shortcomings in terms of the overall organization of their class: little mutual aid between students, little teacher commitment to students' problems with class organization (Potvin, Fortin, Marcotte, Royer&Deslandes, 2004, p. 2).

Table 2: Organisational and structural factors

Factors	Explanations
Disparate courses of study	Disparate courses of study, in which inequality of opportunity reigns, are a source of school drop-out. (Lafontaine & Crahay, 2004)
Inequality	Young people who are treated illegally and who feel excluded from the class group are often led to lose interest in learning and even to stop going to school. (La Fontaine & Grahay, 2004)
The requirements and expectations of certain schools	...can lead students to feel overwhelmed by all that is asked of them, which sometimes makes them no longer want to invest themselves in learning. (La Fontaine & Grahay, 2004)
The transition from primary to secondary school	...is a particularly sensitive moment that can be very difficult for some pupils. This can lead to students becoming detached from school and no longer bothering to work, or even not going to school at all. (Glasman, 2011)
The school climate in general and the lack of clear rules	If the school climate is not healthy and the rules are not clearly spelled out, these factors can lead to confusion and discomfort among pupils (Blaya, 2010)
Non-differentiation	If schools do not differentiate, pupils who are not up to standard may feel they are being outclassed and lose interest in learning. It is therefore necessary to take account of pupil's actual level and not their assumed level (Saillot, 2018)
Malevolence	The need to establish a caring school based on "a mode of reception that respects the particularities of each individual

	and a positive mode of learning and education" (Saillot, 2018, P.2)
The non-inclusive school	A school that does not practice inclusion does not allow everyone to find their place within the school (Gardou, 2012; Tremblay, 2012)

Source: (Spinelli, 2021, P.8).

Factors specific to the teacher/pupil relationship: this relationship remains a determining factor in the learning process through the transferential movements between the two protagonists. Potvin. P, Fortin. L, Marcotte. D, Royer. É and Deslandes. R state: "The quality of the teacher-pupil relationship has an impact on young people's performance and perseverance in school. Academic success and the degree of conformity to the role of 'good learner' strongly influence the teacher's attitudes, positive or negative, towards his or her learners. (Potvin et al, 2004, p.4)

2/ The external determinants of school dropout

External factors influencing school dropout include both family and individual aspects. Potvin and his colleagues highlight eight key family-related variables: socio-economic conditions, family structure and climate, parenting style, parental commitment, supervision, involvement, and the encouragement of autonomy. Low-income families, single parent or blended families and households with poor family cohesion and support are associated with higher dropout risks. Issues like poor communication, lack of emotional support, and family conflict negatively impact students' academic performance and emotional well-being, increasing their likelihood of dropping out.

Parenting style plays a crucial role in shaping children's behavior and academic success. Authoritarian, overprotective, or cold parenting can lead to anxiety, aggression, and social withdrawal, which are linked to school failure. Lack of parental involvement, poor communication, and insufficient supervision exacerbate these risks. Parental commitment is especially important for girls, and knowing children's activities outside of school is vital to prevent risky behaviors that hinder academic progress. Encouraging autonomy in a supportive, democratic family

environment fosters children's independence and critical thinking, reducing the chances of school dropout.

Table 3: Individual factors

(S

Factors	Researcher/Researcher
Behavioral disorders or social skills	Jimerson, Anderson and Whipple, 2002
The masculine gender	Lessard, Fortin, Joly, Royer, Potvin and Marcotte, 2006
The use of narcotic drugs	Janosz, The White, Tremblay and Boulerice, 1997
Depression or even burnout	Marcotte, 2009
Learning disabilities	Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Aboot, Hill, Catalano and Hawkins, 2000
Acts of delinquency	Lagrange, 2001
The loss of meaning of learning	Sweat, 2012
Perseverance in the face of a difficulty	Thibert, 2016
A bad esteem	Laporte and Sévigny, 1998
Language difficulties	Feyfant, 2012
The migratory status	National System Evaluation Council School (CNESCO), 2017
The Covid 19	Swiss Radio Television (RTS), 2020

• Socio-economic and Cultural Determinants

While our analysis has primarily focused on academic and familial dynamics, it is imperative to recognize the decisive influence of socio-economic and cultural factors. Poverty and systemic inequalities create fertile ground for school dropout by limiting access to educational resources and generating chronic stress that impedes learning (Bernard, 2019). Inequalities related to ethnic origin or immigrant status can also create a climate of institutional distrust, undermining the sense of belonging to the school (Garcia, 2021). Conversely, the presence of strong community resources (associations, mentoring, homework help) acts as a major protective factor by providing external support and social capital to the most vulnerable youth. Integrating these dimensions is therefore crucial for a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

3/ Types of school dropout

It should be noted that some authors use the term "types of school dropout", the content of which always addresses the multifactorial dimension represented by the triad of pupil, school and society. Thus, Karko. S and Stokkink. D state that "Dropping out of school takes on diverse and eminently subjective realities in the field. It is a complex phenomenon that cannot be interpreted by numbers alone".(Karko and Stokkink, 2007, p.9) They propose a classification according to three types:

- ***Friendly dropouts*:** students who drop out do so because of the bad influence of fellow students who are themselves dropping out...
- **- *Solitary dropouts*:** young people drop out of school because of a serious personal malaise. They have great difficulty communicating, whether with their parents, teachers or friends, and may suffer from other psychological problems of varying degrees of severity (anxiety, depression, etc.).
- **The *family dropouts*:** supported by the family. This occurs when a pupil stops school temporarily with the agreement of his parents while waiting for a change of direction.

On the basis of the above, we can say that the literature review confirms that school dropout is a multidimensional phenomenon. E mentions that "[...] The research consulted for this study all comes to the conclusion that school dropout is a multifactorial phenomenon, since it originates in a dysfunction within the *triad of youth, school and society* (Gilles, Plunus & Polson, 2008). It is when a link between these different partners breaks down those problems are most likely to arise. What's more, Blaya (2010b) points out that identifying the various risk factors makes it possible to highlight the protective parameters that the various parties - parents and teachers in particular - can put in place to help young people complete their education in the best possible way". (Spinelli, 2021, P.9-10-11)

4/ The school dropout process

The study of the school dropout process shows us the fundamental elements that disrupt the academic progress of children and adolescents in particular. It is of vital importance for understanding this phenomenon,

and for many researchers. For example, Le coq. A, Fortin. M, and Lessard. A point out that "[...] It is essential to understand the processes and mechanisms that lead a student to drop out, because it is a complex and gradual process that develops through the interaction of personal, family and school factors (Esterle-Hedibel, 2006; Fortin, Marcotte, Diallo, Royer and Potvin, 3013; Fortin, Marcotte, Potvin, Royer and Joly, 2006; Robertson and Collerette, 2005)" **(Le coq. A, Fortin, M, and Lessard, A, 2014, P.13)**

Research into school dropouts has shown that the decision to leave school generally requires a period of time during which dropouts accumulate difficulties that will lead them to stop the schooling process. These difficulties are of various kinds. As Scellos J points out, "[...] Dropouts are said to be subjected throughout their school career to such pressures that the only way to reduce this state of stress and frustration would be to leave school (Eliott & Voss, 1974, [...] the school career of certain pupils suggests that school dropout should be thought of as a continuum punctuated by initiating moments that will set individuals down the path of leaving school **(Blaya, 2010)**" **(Scellos, 2014, P.57-58).** Thus, she mentions that the school dropout process takes place over time, therefore in relation to the pathway of the student's school experience as developed by Bernard. J-Y in his work, in which he "develops the idea that the **school** dropout process takes place over time through the difficulties encountered by pupils very early in their school career. These difficulties are said to be at the root of the **school** dropout process, and to condition the rest of the curriculum by pushing pupils out of school.

The first stage of dropping out: this refers to an early school difficulty, which is the starting point of the pupil's difficulties, often originating in the first years of schooling, and referring to the pupil's learning difficulties. Bernard. J-Y (2011) breaks down this first stage into two points. On the one hand, the discrepancy between the school's requirements and the pupil's difficulties would prevent pupils from appropriating the school's codes, particularly in terms of language. This difficulty would immediately create a gap between the expectations of teachers and those of pupils. On the other hand, the interactions that

contribute to difficulties at school implicitly generate a mutual lack of understanding between pupils and teachers, leading the latter to distance themselves from the school on a cognitive level... This first stage manifests itself in 'incongruous' behavior that excludes pupils from the school environment while they remain in school, and gives rise to a feeling of injustice in them, conditioning their entry into the second stage of the process.

The second stage of dropping out: this would lead pupils to change their attitude and behave in such a way as to 'contribute' to the rejection of school, which would crystallize around the development of 'a-school' behavior that the institution would be unable to manage or accept **(Millet and Thin, 2005, cited by Bernard, 2011)**. These behaviors are as much the consequence of the low self-esteem experienced in the classroom as they are the consequence of the relational difficulties experienced in the relationship with the teachers, leading these students to refuse to conform to the school norm by refusing to work or by disrupting the class, and leading them to distance themselves even further from school.

The third stage of the dropout process: this would take them "outside the walls", initially through a phase of absenteeism "in class" while they were still attending school, being present inside the school grounds or still present on the outskirts of the school. Then this 'attendance absenteeism' would turn into chronic absenteeism, leading them to become progressively detached from lower or upper secondary school and would lead them to leave school, effectively and definitively, before the end of the current curriculum (Guigue, 1998)." **(Scellos, 2014, P.59-60)**

Other studies, such as those by Scellos.J, point to a state of inappetence and a downward motivational dynamic towards learning at school. She states "[...**]** In another study looking at the school dropout process, Bloch and Gerde (2009) were interested in what might have prevented school dropouts from taking an interest in learning throughout their school career. To this end, they interviewed twenty drop-outs in order to assess the factors that might have played a role in what they

termed the process of inappetence towards school. Through their various interviews, they found that the school dropout process was built on a number of stages that gradually led pupils to distance themselves from school until they left for good, as shown in Figure 1.

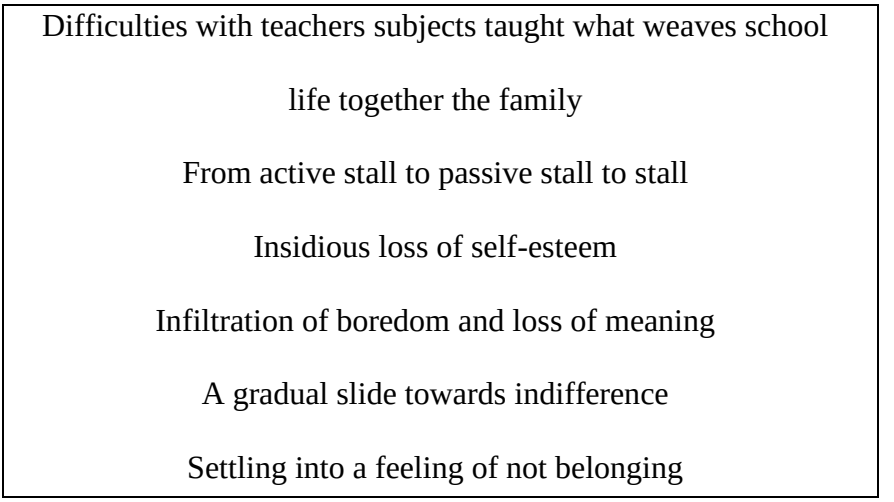


Figure 1- Diagram of the process of in appetence leading to school dropout (Bloch and Gerde, 2009)". **(Scellos, 2014, P.60-62)**

The school dropout process and motivational dynamics

With regard to the school dropout process and its motivational dynamics, Scellos. Vallerand and Sénécal (1992), based on cognitive evaluation theory (Deci& Ryan, 1985), propose that the school dropout process is based on motivational dynamics and is organized around a successive decline in the various components of motivation, as shown in Figure 2 below:

This motivational process was clarified in subsequent research based on the results of previous.

Figure 2- Illustration of the school dropout process based on motivational dynamics **(Vallerand and Sénécal, 1992)**

→ **Time1**: Determinants (controlling events and school failures)

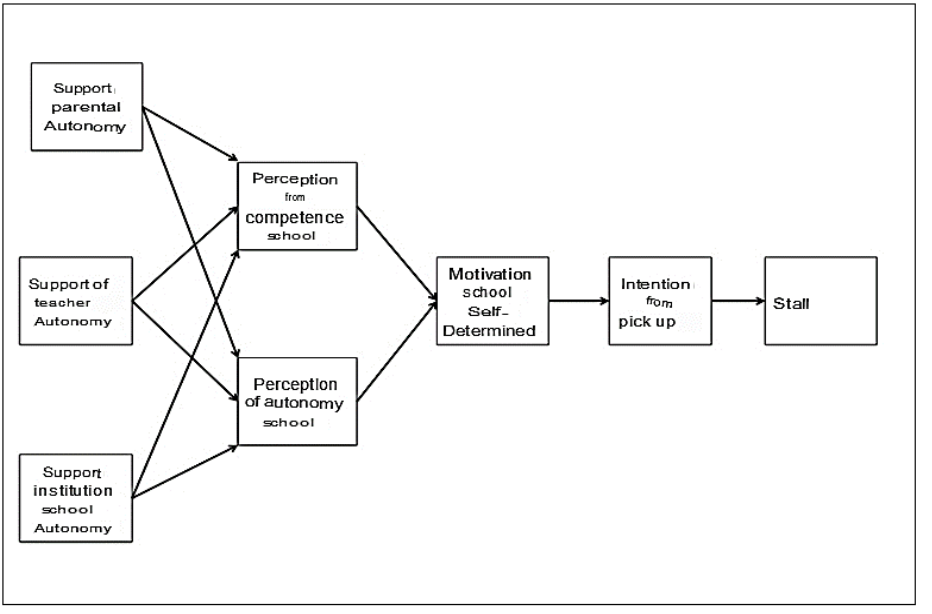
➔ **Time2:**Perception of incompetence and lack of self-determination

➔**Time3:**Loss of motivation

➔ **Time4:**Leaving school

Research both on what researchers refer to as the motivational continuum and on the links that this continuum has with school dropout through both the factors that determine dropping out and the consequences of these difficulties on students' continuation of their studies. This model is presented in Figure (3) (Vallerand et al. 1997)" **(Scellos, 2014, P.60-62)**

Figure 3: Motivational model for school dropout of secondary school (Vallerand et al., 1997)



Field Survey

To address the lack of primary data, an exploratory study was conducted involving 30 students who had dropped out and 10 teachers

from two educational institutions. This investigation, which combined semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, identified several significant trends. The results show that 75% of the students cited a "feeling of uselessness" regarding their learning, thereby confirming the process of disengagement theorized by Bloch and Gerde (2009). Meanwhile, 80% of the teachers highlighted a "growing gap" between student profiles and the teaching methods used, validating the impact of internal factors related to school organization. The case study of "Lucas," a 16-year-old student, paradigmatically illustrates the three-stages of the process described by Bernard (2011): early reading difficulties (Stage 1), followed by disruptive behavior in class (Stage 2), and a progression to increasing absenteeism leading to definitive dropout (Stage 3). Although limited in scope, this micro-survey firmly anchors the theoretical reflection in an observable reality and reinforces the understanding of the multidimensional nature of the school dropout phenomenon.

5/ Preventive action and remedies

Faced with the complexity of school dropout, research has developed a set of guiding principles to inform preventive action. This section will present these recommendations, followed by a critical analysis of the challenges encountered in their concrete implementation.

5.1/ Guiding Principles for Preventive Intervention

Potvin and his colleagues developed a set of effective preventive actions to address the risk of school dropout, known as the "guiding principles of preventive intervention." Their approach emphasizes early intervention, starting in secondary school and recognizes the unique needs of each student including gender differences. The strategy promotes a multidimensional approach, involving individual follow-ups, group workshops, parental education practices, classroom management, and fostering a positive school climate. Key areas of focus include addressing depression, family disorganization, poor teacher-student relationships, and low academic performance in core subjects. The effectiveness of these interventions is evaluated through continuous monitoring of their implementation and impact. **(Potvin, et al, 2007, p. 3-4)**

5.2/ Implementation Challenges of Interventions

While the guiding principles of Potvin et al. (2007) provide a solid theoretical framework, their practical application faces several major institutional challenges. Chronic budget limitations in schools compromise the sustainability of individualized follow-up programs, despite their proven importance. **(Janosz et al., 2020)** The insufficient training of teachers in early detection and pedagogical differentiation constitutes another obstacle; often leaving them ill equipped to handle the complex profiles of at-risk students. **(Garcia, 2021)** Finally, political constraints such as frequent curricular reforms and pressures related to standardized results tend to marginalize long-term preventive approaches, even though they are the most effective, in favor of short-term solutions. Successful implementation would therefore require targeted resource allocation, continuous professional development for frontline staff and political stability to ensure the continuity of support systems.

6/ Conclusion

The phenomenon of school dropout is global and is increasingly attracting the attention of those in the field of teaching and education. We note richness in its approach and a plurality of studies addressing the factors involved in the process of its appearance, focusing on the school, the family and the pupil himself. However, researchers agree on the fact that this phenomenon appears after a determined process on some well-determined successive and predictive phases following an established set of recommendations. It is important to emphasize that the theoretical models presented, primarily developed in Western contexts, require careful transposition.

Their application in educational systems with distinct school cultures, differentiated resources, or different relationships to authority necessitates substantial adaptations. **(Zhao, 2020)** The intercultural validity of preventive interventions thus deserves particular attention for relevant implementation on an international scale. Until today, the phenomenon of school dropout still remains worrying and requires

treatment to mitigate its spread within all societies. Even more, suggesting alternatives to the current schooling model if necessary.

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