Using data to make the right decisions

Description

In the city of Hasselt in Flanders (Belgium) data on school absenteeism is used to inform school-specific action plans.

Countries

🇧🇪 Belgium

Why is this approach useful?

VET providers may collect data on drop-out, absenteeism and other phenomena related to early leaving from education and training. This data helps providers respond to the following questions:

- Is early leaving from education and training a problem in our school/training centre/company?
- Is the risk of early leaving higher in some programmes or for some learner groups?
- Are the measures in place to tackle early leaving achieving their intended results?

Why is it a quick win?

National or regional authorities, local authorities, or VET providers themselves often already collect data on indicators related to early leaving from education and training (e.g. drop-out, absenteeism, year repetition). Sharing this data (as far as possible according to data protection legislation) so that it can be used to inform decision-making by providers is relatively low cost and generates a greater return on the effort of data collection already in place.

How to make this approach successful?

Data related to early leaving can be useful to VET providers if:

- The indicators used are simple to understand, interpret and use, and are presented in a user-friendly way.
- Comparable data for a number of years is provided.
- Data is contextualised by using relevant comparators such as the regional average, or the average of 'similar' schools, e.g. schools with a similar socio-cultural background.
- Data is further analysed by the VET provider, taking into account the qualitative inputs of staff and learners.

Data is, in this case, used for formative purposes, to help VET providers make decisions related to tackling early leaving. It is advisable to keep this process distinct from the use of data for evaluation purposes.

Examples of measures using this approach

Sharing statistical data with VET providers. The TABOR dashboards in Belgium

The TABOR dashboards are compiled centrally by the statistical office of the ministry of education of the French-speaking Community of Belgium, and provided to each school head and the authorities governing the school. The tool intends to support quality improvement and decision making at school level but it is not a control tool (i.e. not linked to any sanctions or funding measures). The dashboard contains various indicators at school level, including: proportion of students who repeat a grade; proportion of those who are delayed in their education progression; and proportion of those who exit the school differentiating between those who are no longer enrolled in the education system of the French speaking community, those who changed type of programme or those who changed school. The dashboard also presents the mean of the French-speaking community in Belgium in each indicator.

Monitoring absenteeism as an 'early warning' sign. The Flemish municipal project COACH

The municipal project 'COACH' implemented in the city of Hasselt in Flanders (Belgium), supports schools by providing them with data on truancy so schools can design their own individual action plans. It also involves the implementation of an early warning system, whereby the municipality and the secretariats of the schools in the city record data on school absenteeism. The project also foresees the support of schools in the development of a sustainable action plan addressing early school leaving as well as the coaching of individual students to help them address behavioural issues. The project started with three schools that implemented their action plans during 2014-15, and now 16 out of 17 Once the schools are successfully implementing their action plans they enter a so-called "learning network" designed for schools to exchange experiences.

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Related intervention approaches

Identification of learners at risk of early leaving

Monitoring early leavers