

The role of VET as a second chance for early leavers, Reinhold Schiffers, European Association for Second Chance Schools

It is easy to pick the apples that hang low

Second chance education deals with those “apples” which hanging high.

Study “Preventing Early School Leaving in Europe – Lessons Learned from Second Chance Education” 2013, European Commission

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2013/second-chance_en.pdf highlights the most important success factors of Second Chance Education.

The findings covers these areas:

Governance	Mix of stakeholders in governance and management School collaboration and confederacy
External cooperation	Multi profession team teaching Strong models of employer engagement
Institutional climate	Pupil participation in setting and reviewing school policies Flexible organisation of the school day / week
Mental health and wellbeing	Personal development and life skills Counselling and emotional support
Curricula and assesment	Holistic learner self-assesment Portfolio-based learning Embedded literacy and numeracy Unitised accreditation
Pedagogy	Social pedagogy model Mixed teaching and coaching

In Second Chance Education we developed these approaches to meet the needs of disadvantaged youngsters who have more complex needs compared with the general population.

The experience of the SCE in the VET area shows that VET for disadvantaged youngsters succeeds if VET creates an environment with social, emotional and learning support.

What does that means in practice?

In your all day job you have to focus on the learner and first on their basic needs.

Strengthen their need for safety, so they can say – I feel save in the environment, with the learners and teachers. Look for an effective anti bullying strategy, f.e. “No blame approach” and train the staff to use it.

Strengthen their need for belonging, so they can say - I am seen as an individual and accepted as I am.

Work in every classroom, in every situation, in the development of good relations between learners and teachers, mentors

Strenghten their need for power, so they can say - I am involved in the decisions that affect me

Strenghten their need for freedom, so they can say - I can decide and choose, I'm not a puppet on a string

Strenghten their need for fun, so they can say – I have fun, I enjoy what I do. We have fun together

focus on the learner, work with a multiprofessional team, train the teachers and mentors, be flexible in the program / curriculum.

Strengthen their confidence – self esteem by challenging tasks and the necessary accompaniment

Work with a multiprofessional team means to meet the complex needs. Meeting complex needs needs a lot of special knowledge: teachers, social workers, mentors, network of institution around which support school: health care, housing, debt counseling, drug counseling. Join experts who you trust yourself.

Train the teachers and mentors

For teachers and mentors who are traditionally trained these adolescents are strangers. You need training to understand them and to work successfully with them.

Be flexible in the program / curriculum

Set the goals, develop the way with the young people, let them go small steps, confirm the small success, use mistakes and detours as learning skills

To illustrate the power of relation to enterprises I will give you a story of a young women.

She leaves school in grade 8 without any School Diploma.

Without a school diploma, it is impossible in Germany to start a vocational Training. She had heard of friends from our program and since the social agency did not accept that she did nothing, she came to us. After half a year she was ready to do an internship. Saleswoman was her dream. We made her an offer as Saleswoman at a shoemaker. This was not her dream, but she accepted. There she saw how the shoemaker made custom-made shoes. That fascinated her very much. The shoemaker was ready to train her when she had got a school diploma. That has spurred her. It was intellectual not difficult for her to finish program successful and after half a year she proudly showed me a pair of shoes that she had made for herself, without pointing to minor flaws that she still had to work on.

Looking to the goal of European policy reducing early school leaving under 10% we should bare in mind, that even 10 % remain. 10 of hundred young pupil we left behind.

With this in mind Second Chance Schools and teachers share these beliefs:

- We need them all
- Give disadvantaged youngsters a chance to grow
- Strengthen their self-esteem and their self-awareness
- Networking with partners in community and business
- Work with the best teachers and give them support

For further information about

E2C – Europe

The European Association for Cities , Institutions and Second Chance Schools

see: www.e2c-europe.org

www.secondchanceeducation.eu/

Reinhold Schiffers, Boardmember of E2C - Europe

contact: rschiffers@arcor.de