



УДК 37.013.78

DOI <https://doi.org/10.26516/2304-1226.2018.25.59>

Early School Leaving in Bulgaria: Trends and Determinants. Part 2

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Abstract. This research, carried out within the framework of the international project «Empathic and supportive teachers – key to quality and efficiency in education», Erasmus+ EU Programme, is devoted to the problem of early leaving school and focused on characteristics and profile of the individual that correlate with motivation for the dropout. The paper analyses the trends and determinants, which culminate in the student's rejecting, or being rejected by, the school in Bulgaria. The results of the empirical study of students' opinion, related to the phenomenon of ESL are broadly discussed. An emphasis is placed on mechanisms of inclusion and a various forms of support for the students at risk of ESL, which help them to be involved in the school community's life.

Keywords: education, school community, early school leaving, inclusion, educational integration, children at risk, children from low-status social groups.

For citation: Lavrentsova E.V., Slavchev A.D. Early School Leaving in Bulgaria: Trends and Determinants. Part 2. *The Bulletin of Irkutsk State University. Series Psychology*, 2018, vol. 25, pp. 59-75. <https://doi.org/10.26516/2304-1226.2018.25.59>

In order for the problem of early school leaving to be meaningful, it is important to understand that dropping out of school is not a one-time act but a long process resulting from a number of reasons, risk factors and prerequisites. Many of them have a direct relation to the school environment and related mechanisms (unfortunately, not always effective) for inclusion / involvement of the child in the bosom of the school community.

There is a lot of evidence that many students lose faith in the encouraging potential of the school and think that teachers and school staff are not interested in them. It peculiarly concerns children from low-status families, they manage to see only a small part of what the institutions have committed to supporting their education and as a result their motivation and efforts to achieve something at school are not particularly promising. Hence, it is very important for the school to be fully relevant to the needs of different categories of students, to be able to capture the earliest exclusion signals and to give them adequate attention through a comprehensive system of effective actions and measures. But how is it possible for the school to become a desirable territory that the student would not want to leave? How is it able to contribute to the fullest extent not only for the high academic achievements of each child but also for his/her social sustainability and psycho-emotional well-being within the school community and, respectively, beyond?

The answers can be rediscovered in the opinions of the students themselves, which are addressed in the next series of questions in the survey.

VII. Type of support to do academically better at school

20.1. What helps me do academically better at school (Support from friends)

The majority of respondents – 83 % fully or partially share the view that *their friends and the help they provide contribute to their better school success* (Fig. 8). Such attitudes undoubtedly show a very high degree of trust, which is usually found in friendly relationships between teens at this age. Among their peers, in a friendly environment, they can more easily (than say in the family) share the emerging difficulties in the learning process and seek, on the one hand, psychological support, that aims to promote higher academic achievement by persuasion in the ability to cope personally with the situation, and as a result to enhance self-confidence and respectively self-esteem and, on the other hand, concrete forms of assistance in solving certain academic problems.

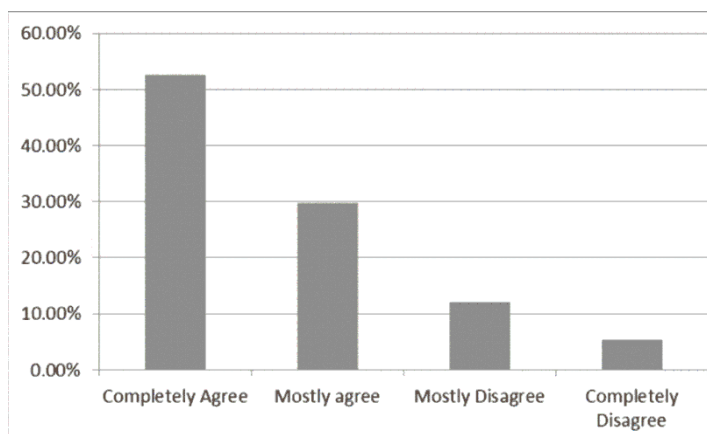


Fig. 8. What helps me do academically better at school (Support from friends)

At the same time, a significant percentage of the disagreements – about 17 % – also shows an implicit understanding perceived by the respondents that the support of friends also has their own constraints, especially when it related to different aspects of the learning activity: sometimes this support may be weak (if not properly organized) and sometimes even misleading and deviating from the established educational canon.

20.2. What helps me do academically better at school (Support from teachers)

The distribution of responses in this case is quite indicative and suggests that an absolute majority of respondents – 90 % unequivocally perceive support from teachers as a necessary condition for achieving better results in their learning activities. It is noteworthy that students not only attach great importance to this support (which obviously speaks to their positive expectations towards the teachers and high-level assessment of their professional skills and competences as long as

the students have full access to their qualified help), but they are also aware of the greater effectiveness of teacher assistance during their training than their friends.

20.3. What helps me do academically better at school (Support from school counselor)

The analysis of the answers reaffirms the previously established anxiety tendency, referring to the *low effectiveness of the work of the school counselors in a number of Bulgarian schools*. Thus, about 60 % of the students consider that the counseling activity does not support their academic achievement. It is possible, of course, that children do not always take into account the so-called indirect benefits that arise from the advisory work of the counselor aimed at helping them resolve conflicting situations and difficulties of psycho-emotional, communicative and other nature.

Another possible reason is that not every school institution in Bulgaria has such a type of specialist. But anyway, there is a deficiency of the influence of this kind of specialists on the optimization of different aspects of the educational process at school, related to some limitation, encapsulation in their actions and approaches, often due to the low degree of interrelation and interaction with class teachers, teachers and parents.

20.4. What helps me do academically better at school (Support from my family)

According to the data, more than 92 % of the students rely on their family support in the process of learning and directly connect their higher academic achievements to this type of help. In view of the enormous role that family plays in the lives of each child – this is perfectly understandable. But at the same time, it is remarkable that 37 persons or almost 8 % of respondents think that their family does not contribute to their better success at school (Fig. 9).

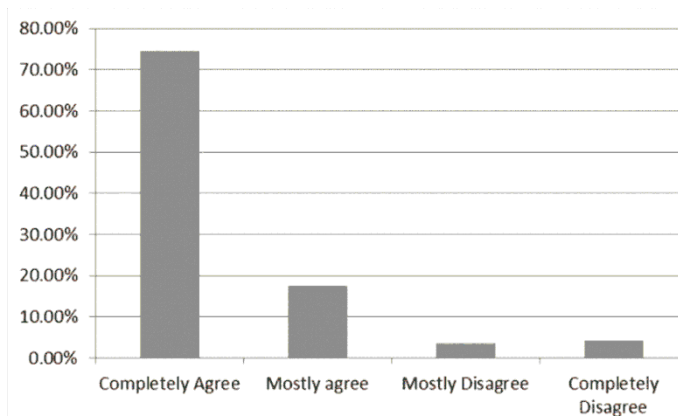


Fig. 9. What helps me do academically better at school (Support from my family)

Undoubtedly, there are a great number of reasons that may lead to such a situation: the difficult material and economic situation of the family, the inability of parents to provide active support to their children due to a very intense work engagement or work outside the country, their neglected attitudes towards children

as a whole, low cultural and educational status and etc. It is important to have an effective relationship between the family and the school that would help minimize the risk factors that negatively affect the academic success of the child and his/her psycho-emotional well-being. So it is necessary to increase the involvement of the parents. But their inclusion into the school institution can become really effective when specific, even role-specific forms of their participation and support are applied [Pritchard, Willams, 2001].

20.5. What helps me do academically better at school (Support from other persons at community level)

It is indicative that the students surveyed appreciate as much more active the assistance they receive from the persons belonging to the same (ethno-cultural, religious, etc.) community compared to the support of the school counselors – a positive response is 63 %, 40 % in the second case. This once again confirms *the need to look for additional resources and tools to help children with learning difficulties, both in the field of inter-community relations, and in the sphere of intra-community ones by strengthening different partnerships between community representatives, parents and teachers* (such as when appointing a minority assistant teacher – an effective measure that unfortunately has been stopped in Bulgaria).

20.6. What helps me do academically better at school (Myself)

The answers to this question outline a relatively favorable overall picture of the attitudes of respondents: the absolute majority of them – more than 93 % rely on their own strengths in solving some or other academic problems and are of the opinion that their success in school is directly dependent on the amount of effort they make. While the others – about 7 % apparently demonstrate the external control spot and in view of the lower adaptability characteristic of such individuals, they probably need more attention from the class teacher and school counselor. It is precisely for this reason that it is necessary in a timely manner to identify, through appropriate diagnostic procedures, both this category of «more problematic» children and others such as, for example, children at risk, etc. and at the same time to generate and implement the most adequate and effective ways of teaching them.

20.7. What helps me do academically better at school (Support beside the regular classes (e.g.: volunteers, working with students after regular classes))

Respondents' views on this issue have practically separated – half believe that such forms of support are important and put their positive effect on their success, while others express their disagreement with the proposed version of the answer. It is more likely that those students who disagree, remained outside the scope of such voluntary and other support activities, which speaks of insufficient use of a wide range of opportunities to optimize the educational process in the school in its out-of-class and extra-curricular frame.

VII. Reasons for conflicts

21. How often do I get in conflicts with my classmates

On the question of conflict in their relationship with their classmates, respondents generally describe a relatively acceptable situation – about 30 % of them say they are never in conflict, almost 60 % regard conflict as a temporary

phenomenon present in their classroom relationships, and barely 10 % say they are constantly confronting their classmates.

22.1. If you get a conflict, what the reason be (personal disagreements)

38 % of respondents point to personal misunderstandings as a common cause of emerging conflicts. Almost as many as 38 % think that conflicts between them and their classmates are rarely due to personal misunderstandings. A large share of respondents – 18 % think that conflicts in the class arise for other reasons.

22.2. If you get a conflict, what the reason be (other students are aggressive)

About 40 % of respondents say that the most common cause of class conflicts is the aggressive behavior of their classmates. Almost 37 % of respondents rarely perceive aggression as the cause of conflict, and 24 % firmly argue that aggression does not give rise to a high level of conflict. At first look, this is somewhat contradictory to the opinion of experts, but it should not be forgotten that it is a teenage child whose behavior is characterized by a high dose of outrage, sharpness, demonstration, often bordering on rudeness. It is possible that some of the aggressively coloured reactions of the classmates are perceived more neutral in this subgroup.

22.3. If you get a conflict, what the reason be (I am aggressive)

The distribution of responses in this case can be considered as a further confirmation of the above assumption. An even smaller number of respondents here – about 21 % associate the conflicts between them and their classmates with their own aggressiveness. Most of them adhere to the opinion that aggression on their part in very rare cases can be perceived as a cause of class conflicts.

22.4. If you get a conflict, what the reason be (I am stressed at school)

Although almost 60 % of respondents do not associate their stress in a school with a higher level of conflict with their classmates, the rest – nearly 40 % of the respondents express another opinion, with almost half of them – about 20 %, that in most cases this is the most common cause of conflict (Fig. 10). This fact clearly points to the need for comprehensive measures – both at the micro-level, within the classroom and at the meso- and macro-level, concerning curricula, assessment systems, etc., which would help reduce the level of stress in children. This is the key to successfully solving a number of serious school problems, included the problem of early school leaving.

IX. Characteristics of the preferred teachers

23. The teachers I like the most have the following characteristics (Understanding, Have a good sense of humor, Respect me, Fair, Do not evaluate me on my academic performance only):

The following question highlights features that, in the opinion of respondents, reflect as much as possible the «ideal image» or rather the liked profile of the teacher. An absolute majority – almost 96 % think that *the good teacher is the one who understands them* and relays to their problems, issues and experiences. About 90 % think that he also has a sense of humor. More than 92 % say that respectful attitude towards students is one of the most important features of a successful pedagogue. Almost as much students say they value and appreciate such

quality in the teacher as justice. Relatively lower, but still quite impressive – about 70 % – is the number of those who believe that the teacher should not evaluate them just according to their academic success in the respective subject (Fig. 11).

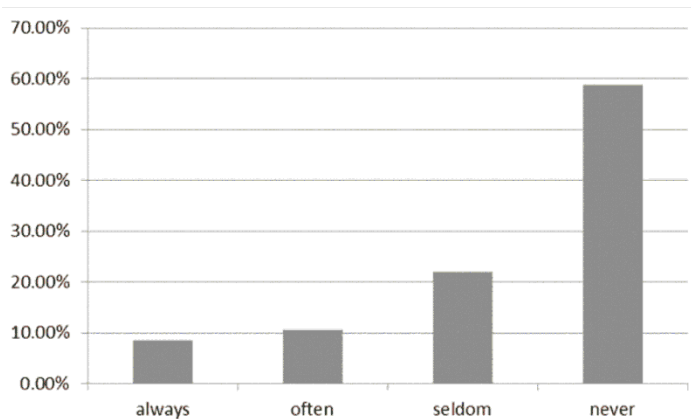
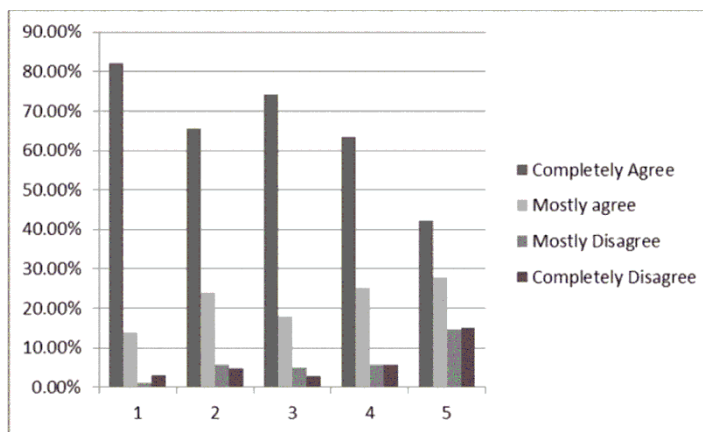


Fig. 10. If you get a conflict, what the reason be (I am stressed at school)



1. Understanding
2. Have a good sense of humor
3. Respect me
4. Fair
5. Do not evaluate me on my academic performance only

Fig. 11. The teachers I like the most have the following characteristics

X. Conflicts between students and teachers

24. Frequency of conflicts with teachers

Almost 67 % of students state that they never get into conflicts with their teachers and 28 % of them do from time to time. There is however the group of 5 % who state that they are in constant conflict with their teachers. It is this group of children that forms the more risky contingent within the school community in

terms of the higher probability of their early school leaving, to which the increased attention of the teachers, school counselors and other engaged persons should be directed.

25. Most common reason for conflict with teachers is:

In analyzing the respondents' free answers to the reasons for their conflicts with teachers, the following picture emerges: most conflicts are caused by the situations related to *obtaining a lower or weaker rating*. Secondly, the teacher's *unfair attitude* when evaluating, when the student expresses his/her own opinion or demonstrate critical position, etc. may be mentioned. Many students note as one of the main reasons for conflicts *lack of understanding* on the part of teachers, and some even call for greater negative attitudes towards them related to direct offending. Other more often mentioned reasons are *unprepared homework and lack of discipline*.

XI. Teaching methods

26. My teachers use the following methods of teaching:

An analysis of the answers received to this question shows that teachers generally use a sufficient wide range of teaching methods, incl. the most frequent are: discussions – according to 73 % of respondents, teamwork – 65 %, lectures – 64 %, group projects – 59 %, excursions – 54 % and study visits – 51 %. Besides, the debate often arises from the arsenal of methods used – according to 43 % of respondents and role-playing games – 38 % say. So, from a methodological point of view, the course of the educational process within the classroom seems relatively prosperous.

XII. Causes of failure at school

27. According to me, reasons due to which students do not do well at school include: (Teacher related factors), (Personal factors), (Economic factors), (Peer factors), (Family related factors), (School related factors), (Discrimination)

Analyzing the reasons why pupils experience certain difficulties and do not do well at school, the respondents agree that the lowest rate of success is mostly due to personal reasons (80 % express their agreement), 66 % of respondents see the root of the problem in the family, and 61 % – in peer factors. Few more than half – about 56 % consider that economic reasons are essential, and 53 % of respondents agree that the school related factors are the leading ones. The share is lower – about 46 %, which links poor success with certain reasons stemming from the actions of teachers. About 39 % of respondents support the thesis that the main problem is discrimination in the school community (Fig. 12).

Such a ranking of the reasons for the weak success, where the first by its influence group falls for personal reasons, family and classmates, unequivocally shows in what direction should the most work be done to solve the problem – with obvious emphasis on corrective and consultative forms of work. While the second group of the reasons basically gravitates around the socio-economic and school factors related to teacher activity and the functioning of the school institution. Here is also a very important field for work with its specific highlights and priorities.

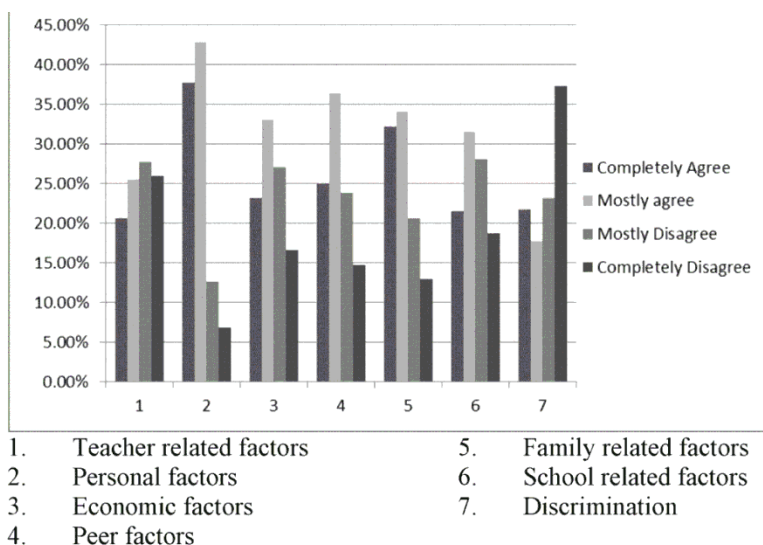


Fig. 12. According to me, reasons due to which students do not do well at school include

XIII. Help with personal and school issues

28. When in trouble or have personal difficulties/challenges I turn to: (My parents/care-givers), (My friends), (My teachers), (Head master), (School counselor)

In the presence of difficult life situations and serious personal problems, 77 % of respondents say that they constantly or often seek the help of their parents. 37 people rarely seek parental assistance, and 70 people or nearly 15 % of the respondents say they never turn to their parents in such cases. Despite some distance from the opinions and advices of adults that teenage children often demonstrate, their complete refusal to share personal issues with their parents testifies to the inappropriate nature of family relationships.

Almost as much – about 75 % of respondents in the face of life difficulties and personal problems seek support for their friends, while the number of these children who make it constantly is significantly lower than those who always rely on their parents in such situations – the difference amounts to 17 %. The number of persons who never seek assistance from their friends is only 8 %.

Not a small number are those who often or permanently seek support for their teachers in difficult circumstances or personal problems – 43 % of respondents, which generally indicates rather significant confidence in their relationship. At the same time, almost 23 % never share similar problems with their teachers: such a distance from the students is hardly neutral because it is obviously capable of exerting negative impact on solving the problems directly related to their learning activities.

By comparing the distribution of respondents' answers to the demand for support from the headmaster and the school counselor, a quite indicative situation can be outlined: much more often, students prefer to comment on their personal problems with headmasters rather than counselors. *Nearly 62 % of respondents*

never addressed counselors in the presence of such problems (compared with 51 % in the first case).

29. When I have difficulties/ challenges at school I turn to: (My parents/care-givers), (My friends), (My teachers), (Head master), (School counselor)

With one or other problems at school, the majority of respondents are looking for help from their parents – always doing it 267 people or 57 %. Practically just as much they are looking for the support of friends. At the same time, a smaller number of respondents – 206 people or only 44 % of the students surveyed – are looking for similar assistance from their friends constantly.

Almost 60 % of respondents turn to teachers on a regular basis, 27 % rarely do, and never 14 %. *The fact that almost every 7 children do not demonstrate their readiness to discuss their problems at school with their teachers is a rather disturbing sign.* Generally, more than half of the respondents – about 56 % – often, or rarely, are recruited to the Head master's help. At the same time, only 43 % of respondents turn to the school counselor (Fig. 13). This once again speaks of a rather reserved attitude of the students towards the counselor's activity, which obviously reveals the low degree of effectiveness of their cooperation.

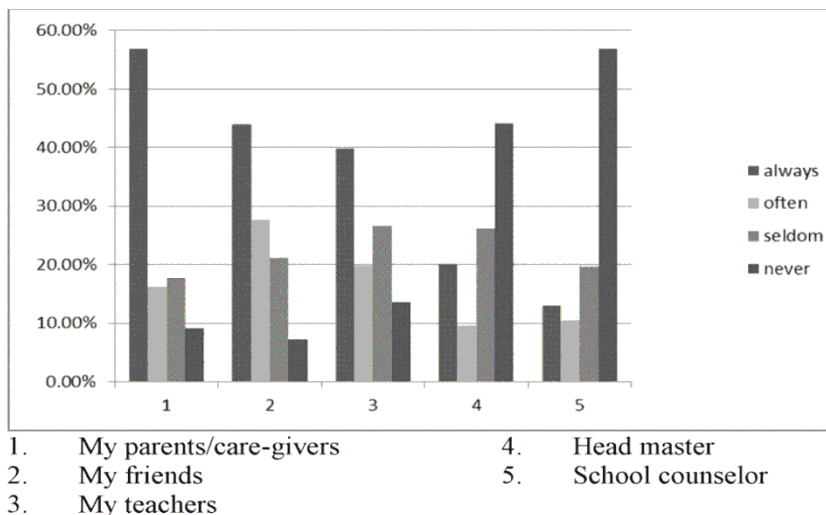


Fig. 13. When I have difficulties/ challenges at school I turn to

XIV. Time spent when not in school

30. When I am not at school I usually: (Stay at home), (Go out with friends), (Help my parents), (Go to work)

The obtained data indicate that the majority of the students surveyed – 75 % stay mostly at home when they are not in school. 86 people or 18 % less often do this, and 30 people or just over 6 % of respondents never stay at home if/when they skip school. They can be assigned to the more risky contingent respectively.

In school-free time, little more than half or 55 % of respondents prefer to go out with friends, with almost a third doing it rarely, and 16 % never.

While modern high-tech tools enable children to engage in intensive communication in a remote manner, however, a total lack of direct contacts at extra-school time should be seen as a very unfavorable trend. Such self-closure (which may be related to a number of objective and subjective reasons) that leads to certain forms of social exclusion is capable of causing both serious personal problems and a number of difficulties related to school life and learning. That is why the children, who demonstrate this type of distance, should be very carefully approached by the class teacher and the school counselor.

The significant number of respondents – 302 people or almost 65 % notes that when they are not in school, they mostly provide help to the household. Not so few students – *about 14 % of the respondents who are engaged in work after the hours* (Fig. 14). Undoubtedly, this can be seen as one of the risk factors for early school leaving. *The hard socio-economic situation, which is typical of poor families (especially the Roma minority) often, determines the need to use child labor on a permanent basis.* These are various activities in the field of agriculture, collection of raw materials and waste, home care and care for ill relatives, the elderly people, and the younger siblings. If the intensity of student's labor activity increases, this leads not only to serious difficulties in preparing for the lessons but can also cause difficulties, related to a visit to the school institution as a whole.

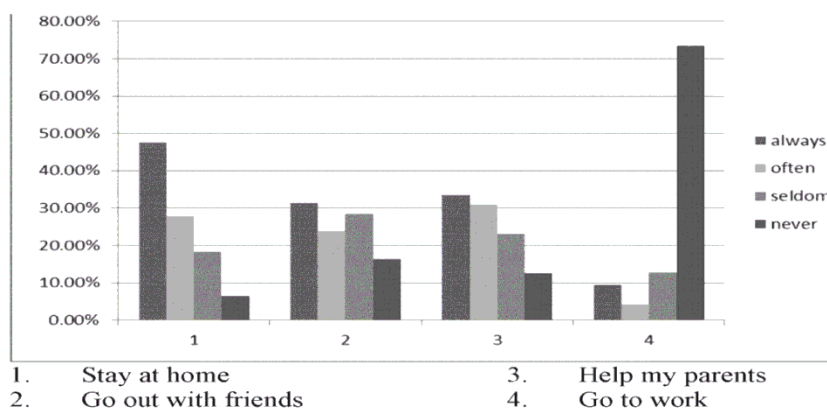


Fig. 14. When I am not at school I usually

XV. Taking part in out of school activities

31. I take part in out of school activities such as: (Sports clubs), (Music formations), (Group dances), (Foreign language classes), (Science classes), (Modeling – avio-modeling, boat-modeling, rocket-modeling), (Theater classes), (Art courses), (Religious activities), (Volunteering)

Concerning the involvement of the students in out-of-school activities, the data show the following: a significant number of them – 203 people or 43 % regularly or frequently attend sports clubs, while almost 38 % of respondents never carry out such activities. In connection with musical activities, the situation seems

even worse – practically 2/3 of respondents or 66 % are not involved in such forms of work. An almost identical picture is emerging with regard to children's participation in dance groups – about 64 % of respondents never be involved in such groups.

Despite the high popularity of foreign language learning, the level of attendance is not high here – only a quarter of respondents do it often or regularly. As many as 285 people or almost 61 % do not do (and it would be better to say – they have no opportunity to carry out) similar activities. Even less often, children are involved in science classes – 325 people or almost 70 % are not covered at all. Extremely low are also covered forms of out-of-school work like modeling – 4/5 of the students surveyed or 81 % have no contact with them. Only 17 % of respondents participate in the theatrical activity on a regular basis and 74 % do not participate at all.

The situation with art activities is slightly more favorable, but here too, the total number of uninvolved reaches 270 people or 58 %. In religion clubs, only 69 children or about 15 % are covered on a regular basis. Somewhat better things about volunteering: a total of 125 people or 27 % of respondents are actively involved in such initiatives. In general, *the high share of the students, which don't take part in extracurricular activities, clearly testifies to the weakness and narrow range of additional education and training in the field of the Bulgarian educational system.*

XVI. Factors contributing to success at school

32. Doing well in school is related to: (Familial factors), (Individual factors), (School related factors), (Teacher related factors), (Peer related factors), (Social Environmental factors – neighborhood)

Reflecting on conditions for higher academic success in school, students surveyed definitely attribute more weight to the family environment – almost 85 % have expressed full and partial agreement on this issue. It is curious that even more respondents – almost 91 % believe that the personal role is the decisive role in this case. Absolutely the same percentage of people surveyed – again about 91 % said they had a full or partial agreement on the importance of teachers. A total of 377 people or 80 % of respondents associate high success rate with school factors to a definite or lesser degree. 261 people or 68 % of respondents are totally or partially convinced that their classmates contribute significantly to better school results.

At the same time, less than half – about 42 % believe that social environment factors are of a great importance. It is clear from the analysis of free answers that what is mentioned most often, namely persistence in learning, hard work and concentration in class, has a direct relation to personal qualities and characteristics. In view of the data obtained, the following conclusion can be made: *the most profound impact on school success, according to respondents, has the personal qualities of the student, the teachers and the family.*

XVII. Friends drop out school and their profile

33. How many your friends have dropped out of school?

The answers to this question clearly reveal a very disturbing tendency related to a high percentage of school dropouts in Bulgaria. A total of 126 people or 27 % of respondents noted that several people from their close friendship had left the school system prematurely. And 50 people or about 10 % in turn share that they have more than 5 friends who have dropped out of school before graduating.

34. Students who leave school earlier: (Come from disadvantaged families), (Come from ethnic minorities), (Come from families with problems), (Have family responsibilities – working, caring for siblings, etc.), (Have learning difficulties), (Have no interest in learning), (Do not have supportive parents), (Have conflict with the law), (Have a difficult relationship with teachers), (Have a difficult relationship with students), (Tend to get married), (Are involved in politics).

Taking into account the degree of importance of one or other reasons leading to early school leaving, the profile of the drop-out student can be outlined. According to the respondents, the core of this profile includes the following characteristics: first, *problem family* – this opinion shares 352 people (75 % of the respondents) – *These results are in line with a number of other studies* [Teneva, 2017], secondly, *lack of interest in learning* – 349 people 74 % of respondents), thirdly, *low socio-class origin* – such a view supports totally or partially 343 people (73 % of respondents) (Fig. 15).

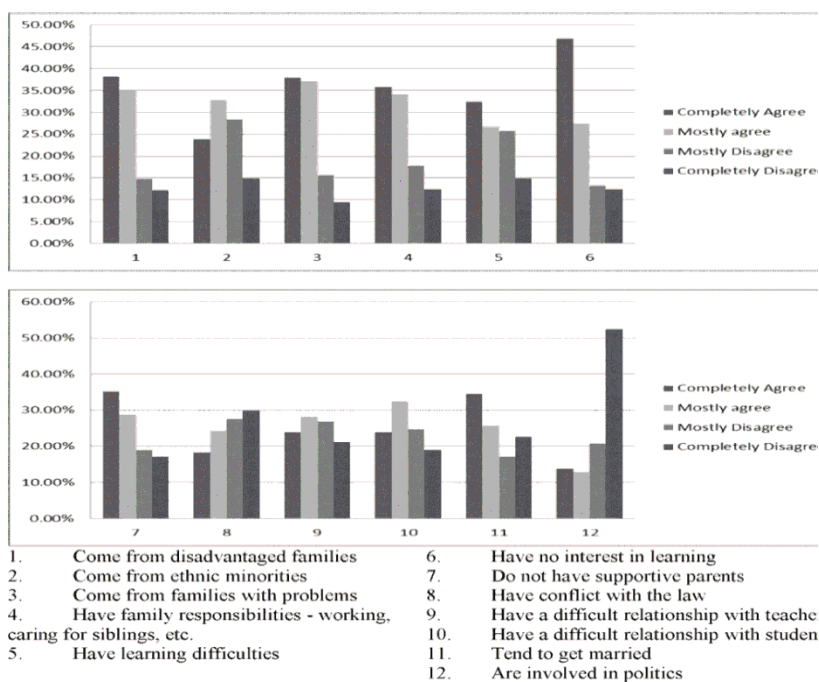


Fig. 15. Students who leave school earlier

The second most important group comprises the following features: labor engagement – 328 people (70 % of the respondents) hold this opinion, lack of the parental support – 300 people (64 % of the respondents), early marriage – 283 people or 60 % of students surveyed agree to this.

The third group combines such features as: learning difficulties, this opinion shares 278 people (59 % of the respondents), belonging to ethnic minority communities – 266 people (57 % of respondents), negative relations with classmates – 264 (56 % of respondents) and poor relations with teachers, such a view supported fully or partially 244 people (52 % of the respondents). Less than half – 200 people or 43 % of respondents see conflict with law as a feature inherent in the reported profile, and only 126 people or 27 % of respondents perceive policy involvement as a significant feature.

XVIII. Factors influencing the life goals

35. In order to reach your goals in life, you ought to: (Have education), (Work a lot), (Have support from family), (Have luck), (Have good economic conditions), (Strive for your goals)

It is noteworthy that the absolute majority of students surveyed – 444 people or almost 95 % express full or partial agreement on the importance of education to achieve individual life goals. This means that in the respondents' system of values the education takes a very high place. Such a value orientation creates a favorable ground for the formation of enhanced motivation for learning, the question is how motivation could have a lasting and sustainable character and should not be disturbed by applying the inadequate evaluation system, approaches, which reveal insufficient respect for the child's individual characteristics, etc.

Almost the same number – 443 people associate the successful achievement of life goals with hard and intense work. A large number of respondents – 404 people or 86 % – is serious about luck, but the proportion of people who are totally agreeable here is significantly smaller. Familiar support also plays a huge role in the opinion of 437 people or 93 % of the respondents. The importance of good financial standing is recognized by 427 persons or 91 %. As an even higher number of respondents – 444 people or 95 % bind successful realization of the life goals with a high degree of purposefulness of the individual. All this proves that the respondents generally attribute high value to the realization of the target life program not only for certain external causes and factors, but also for the personal qualities and traits of character that are inherent in the individual.

Conclusion

Finally, summarizing the results, several main conclusions can be drawn:

1. The opinion of the surveyed students on a number of issues clearly highlights the leadership role of teachers both in terms of their academic success and a number of other important aspects of their school life, affecting not only their social but also their personal modus of existence. In addition, the importance of this role is even greater when it comes to children experiencing some or other serious learning difficulties and problems, children at risk, children from low-status social groups and others who are at risk of early school leaving. That's why it is neces-

sary to look for new ways and approaches [What works in ... , 2003] through which the teachers could provide additional resources for the inclusion of the most «problem children» in the school community so that their difficult adaptation can to be successful.

Here too, a very important question arises: what should be the nature, form and extent of the requested assistance and support. It is clear that the existing approaches, which broadly include traditional forms of teaching and standard additional measures such as core subjects consultations, is oriented towards an average student and appears to be inadequate when working with such children who have more serious educational deficits (children with special education needs, children from ethnic minorities or other disadvantaged groups).

In order to overcome the registered deficits in a timely manner and to minimize the potential risks of dropping out of school, systematic work for identification (supported by appropriate teacher training forms) of the most endangered children and students is needed. It's also necessary to combine the differentiated approach to this category of students and group work with the other children in the classroom along with intensification, individualization (or «personalization of education» through smaller class sizes, more personalized settings, and individualized learning plans as characteristics that lowered dropout rates) [Dynarski, Gleason, 2002] and diversification of the implemented forms of teacher aids activities, counseling, correctional and compensatory teaching, including additional activities in extracurricular time, consultations [Moving beyond dropout ... , 2003], especially on subjects from a compulsory curriculum, consultations of parents, teachers, curriculum adaptations for students, adaptation of the didactic materials, etc. Teachers should also be actively supported by pedagogical counselors (still missing in more than half of Bulgarian schools), psychologists, resource teachers and assistant teachers, especially for schools with a high percentage of students from minority communities. The different forms of cooperation and partnership with the representatives and structures of the local community and civic society as a whole should be intensively developed.

2. Both the outlined profile of the dropout pupil and a number of other aspects of the study refer to a striking trend in respondents' attitudes: recognizing the family as one of the key factors for a normal (or, on the contrary, distorted, dysfunctional) development of the child's educational trajectory. In this respect, in order to prevent or correct in time the emerging difficulties of the students in the training process, it is important in each school to operate a flexible system of collecting information about the family environment of the trainees, making social assessment of families identifying the children of the risky families and building appropriate organizational arrangements for attracting parents from these families to closer forms of interaction and cooperation with teachers and other representatives of the pedagogical community.

3. The data accumulated during the survey show eloquently that respondents demonstrate a high level of positivism and trustworthiness towards their peer friends and classmates as well as openness to their support, included on issues directly related to the educational activities. All this speaks of the need to intro-

duce flexible peer-guiding procedures (peering, cross-age tutoring) and other forms of systematically planned and organized support by the pupils themselves and their representative bodies.

4. An exact opposite is seen in the role of the counseling pedagogues: there is a lack of high opinion of respondents about their work and the contribution to solving problems of early school leaving. In view of this, it is important to undertake a detailed consideration and analysis of the causes of their poor efficiency and, then to create new ideas and approaches aimed at changing their vision and the way of working towards the development of the maximum relevance of the activities carried out by them towards the needs of the students.

5. The high assessment of practical lessons in respondents' answers clearly strengthens the focus on practice-oriented learning patterns, career guidance and career counseling. It becomes clear that much more attention needs to be paid to the practical aspect of the learning process and the acquisition of professional skills capable of preparing pupils for life in the conditions of a super-dynamic and radically changing under the impact of ICT and the globalization world.

6. An extremely unfavorable picture emerges in the analysis of the involvement of respondents in different forms of extracurricular activities. Despite the slight improvement of the general situation in Bulgaria in recent years, there is still a high degree of unevenness in their supply (depending on the type of the settlement, the type of school, the motivation and commitment of the pedagogical team, etc.), lack of conceptual integrity with regard to their thematic orientation, which would contribute to the optimal development of the national-civic identity of the pupils, and some sporadic realization (in the framework of the conducted survey 1/4 of respondents share that they are not included in absolutely no activities).

It is of paramount importance to build efficient state and municipal educational policies on expanding the range of extracurricular forms and ways of working with children, creating the necessary organizational conditions for their implementation and, above all, providing opportunities for all pupils to be involved in such activities. The same applies to extracurricular activities in the context of their optimality and accessibility.

In conclusion, it should be noted that only by providing a wide range of services related to educational support and specialized non-educational assistance to ESL children and their families by optimally combining the activities and efforts of all active subjects directly or indirectly related to the process of education and training in the community is possible to achieve the maximum level of social synergy needed to create truly effective, flexible mechanisms and tools for the inclusion of these children in the school.

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Феномен отказа от школьного обучения в Болгарии: тенденции и детерминанты. Часть 2

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Аннотация. Данное исследование, осуществленное в рамках международного проекта по программе ЕС Erasmus + на тему «Учителя, проявляющие эмпатию и поддержку, – ключ к качеству и эффективности образования», посвящено проблеме отказа от школьного обучения и фокусируется на изучении характеристик и профиля индивида, коррелирующих с мотивацией к непосещению школы. В статье анализируются тенденции и детерминанты, которые приводят к отвержению учеником школы или ученика – школой в Болгарии. Широко дискутируются результаты эмпирического исследования мнения учащихся по поводу феномена, связанного с отказом от школы. Акцент при этом ставится на механизмах инклюзии и разнообразных формах поддержки учащихся, находящихся в группе риска, которые помогают им приобщиться к жизни школьного сообщества.

Ключевые слова: образование, школьное сообщество, ранний отказ от школы, инклюзия, образовательная интеграция, дети группы риска, дети низкостатусных социальных групп.

Для цитирования: Лавренцова Е. В., Славчев А. Д. Феномен отказа от школьного обучения в Болгарии: тенденции и детерминанты. Часть 2 // Известия Иркутского государственного университета. Серия Психология. 2018. Т. 25. С. 59–75. <https://doi.org/10.26516/2304-1226.2018.25.59>

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Дата поступления: 23.01.2018

Received: January, 23, 2018