Monitoring
School Dropouts

Albania
Kazakhstan
Latvia
Mongolia
Slovakia
Tajikistan

Monitoring School Dropouts

Albania, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Mongolia, Slovakia, and Tajikistan

Dear Teacher,

My son is slow in learning and thus it is impossible to force him to learn. So, I'm taking my son off with me. We live in a rural area and look after other's livestock for a living. It's hard to take my son to the school all the time. Bye.

Quote from a mother's note to the school administration
in Bayantumen soum, Dornog aimag, Mongolia

The Dropout Monitoring Project

Editors:

Virginija Būdienė
    Education Policy Center, Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University, Lithuania
Indra Dedze
    Education Support Program, Open Society Institute, Budapest, Hungary
Mercedes del Rosario
    Teachers College at Columbia University, New York, USA

Research consultant:

Bardhyl Musai
    Center for Democratic Education, Albania

Country project coordinators:

Albania   – Bardhyl Musai, Center for Democratic Education, Albania
Kazakhstan – Zhanar Rakhimzhanova, Educational Policy Analysis Center
                    at the Education Center "Bilim-Central Asia"
Latvia   – Indra Dedze, Education Support Program, Open Society Institute,
                    Budapest, Hungary
Mongolia   – Bolormaa Tsetsegee, Mongolian Education Alliance
Slovakia   – Zuzana Šranková, Education Policy Center
                    at Orava Association for Democratic Education, Mongolia
Tajikistan   – Nodir Amonov, Educational Reform Support Unit PULSE, Tajikistan

Data processing:

RAIT Ltd.

Management support:

Loreta Paukstyte
    Education Policy Center, Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University, Lithuania
Zuzana Šranková
    Education Policy Center at Orava Association for Democratic Education, Slovakia

Monitoring School Dropouts

Albania, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Mongolia, Slovakia, and Tajikistan

Overview and Country Reports

2007

OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

The views and opinions expressed in this book are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Open Society Institute.

Contents

Acknowledgments

Our special thanks go to the reviewers of the country reports, participants of in-country round table discussions, project partners, and other contributors who helped to make country studies more valid and relevant to local realities. Finally, we would like to thank the OSI education grant fund RE:FINE for supporting the international and in-country advocacy activities of the Dropout Monitoring Project.

International team of the Dropout Monitoring Project

Preface

Virginija Būdienė and Indra Dedze

The importance of education in modern society is increasing rapidly. More and more, higher levels of education are required even for jobs with lower levels of qualification. At the same time, the enrollment rate in most former socialist countries has tended to drop. Over the past 12 years, the enrollment rate in Latvia has dropped from 92 percent to 86 percent, and in Mongolia over the same period it fell from 90 percent to 79 percent (UNDP, 2005). How can this tendency be explained? How accurate are these figures? Why are fewer young children attending school and what are the reasons behind this trend?

Monitoring School Dropouts is a report based upon studies carried out in six countries. Members of the nongovernmental Network of Education Policy Centers from Albania, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Mongolia, Slovakia, and Tajikistan[1] volunteered to explore factors contributing to school dropout by participating in the Dropout Monitoring Project. The project gathered information from existing resources, provided a critical look at existing data, and attempted to explore factors contributing to school dropout "on the ground." A template designed for a survey carried out in Albania (CDE, 2003) served as a basis for the local survey instruments in all six countries.

The exploratory research conducted by the respective Education Policy Centers is rare in the field and includes interviews with dropout children and their parents and teachers.

This monitoring report consists of an international overview that places the problem in global perspective, and six chapters providing country summaries. The report examines the context, scope, causes, and consequences of dropping out early from school. Full-text country reports and supporting materials are available online at http://www.edupolicy.net/EN.php. The international overview provides highlights of the key issues and related policy problems regarding nonenrollment, misreporting on nonattendants, and the consequences of dropping out of school. The country chapters examine factors and current policies, look at survey findings, and provide a set of recommendations for policymakers. The dissemination of key findings from country monitoring studies is intended to open discussion and advocate for more specific information gathering. The findings can also inform national legislative bodies, ministries of education, school administrators, local authorities, and other policymakers in reviewing existing policies, formulating new policies, and monitoring trends over time.

Universal Primary and Compulsory Schooling

Issues such as universal enrollment, acquisition of basic education, and education quality attract a lot of attention from international intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. They recognize that better education is fundamental to economic and social development, the elimination of poverty, and the life success of every individual. By monitoring school dropouts, the Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute intends to contribute to international and in-country discourses on equity and quality of education, alongside the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, UNESCO initiatives on Education for All, European Union development of education benchmarks, and studies of student achievement by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

The UN Millennium Project has identified practical strategies to eliminate poverty by investing in human capital and infrastructure, and promoting gender equality. In 2000, it issued eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015.

Two of the MDGs are directly related to education:

► Achieve universal primary education. Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.

► Promote gender equality and empower women. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) leads efforts to help countries integrate the MDGs into their national development frameworks. Evaluations in 2005 of progress toward the goals revealed that the situation of universal primary education is declining in former Soviet Union countries in Europe.

Table 1.

Major trends of MDGs in CIS countries

Goals	*Europe*	*Asia*
Universal primary schooling	declining	on track
Girls' equal enrollment (primary)	met	on track
Girls' equal enrollment (secondary)	met	met
Literacy parity between young women and men	met	met
Women's equal representation in national parliaments	recent progress	declining

Source: UN Statistics Division, UNDESA 2004, as cited in *Investing in Development*, UN Millennium Project, 2005.

In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in education, the following interventions are required:

► provision of school facilities (e.g., infrastructure, teachers, supplies);

► subsidies for girls or in some countries for boys (e.g., Mongolia);

► incentives for unmotivated, disaffected children.

The last two goals are as important as adequate school buildings and materials. Children who are from poor families, live in rural areas, or are from ethnic and linguistic minorities are less likely to attend school. Girls' education is strongly associated with better welfare at the individual, family, and society level. Educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school, thus breaking the cycle of poverty.

The Education for All (EFA) Framework of Action was established in 2000 under the initiative of UNESCO at the World Education Forum in Dakar. Unlike the MDGs, Education for All covers much more than formal primary education. It includes expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable groups and disadvantaged children; ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs; achieving a 50 percent improvement in adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for adults; and improving all aspects of the quality of education so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes, especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills, are achieved by all. The quality of learning is and must be at the heart of Education For All.

The European Union (EU) agreed to three priority benchmarks that examine the extent to which compulsory schooling and the postcompulsory phases of education and training equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and competences that they will need to be successful in contemporary society and today's knowledge economy. The three benchmarks are as follows:

1)   Reducing levels of early school leaving.
2)   Raising participation rates at the upper secondary level.
3)   Improving literacy and basic competences at age 15.

The European target is that by 2010 an EU average of no more than 10 percent of early school leavers should be achieved. In the European priority benchmarks, early school leavers are defined as people who have left school with only lower-secondary education, in the 18–24 age cohort. The Commission of the European Communities' report *Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training* (EC, 2005) provides the best available evidence on progress toward these benchmarks. In 2004, eight EU countries already had ratios of early school leavers below the European benchmark; Poland (5.7 percent), Czech Republic (6.1 percent), Slovakia (7.1 percent), Denmark (8.1 percent), Sweden (8.6 percent), Finland (8.7 percent), Austria (9.2 percent) and Lithuania (9.5 percent).[2] Forthcoming studies should explore not only formal numbers of early school leavers and dropouts, but also the importance of social inclusion, particularly in terms of achieving greater access to schooling for currently marginalized groups such as immigrants, ethnic minorities, and those with special educational needs. Indicators used in many international reports mainly concern aggregate educational outcomes rather than distributional outcomes (i.e., how evenly educational achievements are dispersed).

Aims of the Dropout Monitoring Project Surveys

The country reports presented in this publication contribute the voices of dropouts, parents, and teachers from the grassroots level. They provide a better understanding of the reasons why too many children in these countries do not complete school.

Universal enrollment is an issue that raises questions about students who never enter education institutions, who drop out or who are pushed out of school. This phenomenon must be examined in depth, not only by examining official enrollment statistics.

The six country studies conducted for the Dropout Monitoring Project identified problems and raised issues in relation to nonattendance and dropping out of school. They did not attempt to document best practices; "what works" in this area of education policy practice will require further study.

Problems of Nonattendance and Dropping Out

Many young people make decisions in their early years that can affect not only their personal welfare, but also their societies as a whole. Some students fail to complete school and may become marginalized, unemployed, or otherwise underprivileged instead of becoming productive members of society.

In Latvia, for example, children who do not receive compulsory schooling are those who

► do not start attending primary school when they reach the compulsory age because either they are not registered at birth, or they cannot be located (as they live in another place of residence than where registered), or the parents simply do not take them to school;

► are excluded from schools at age of 18, but by that time have not completed compulsory schooling;

► have moved to a vocational school without finishing their primary (compulsory) education and are discharged from there; and

► finish school with the report card only, without receiving a certificate of completing primary (compulsory) schooling (Vilciņa, et al., 2005, p. 55).

Some children and adolescents in their attempts to seek their identity and independence do not find schooling appealing. And, as a result, their life quality suffers and they find themselves at the margins of the society.

Objectives of the Project and Its Surveys

The Dropout Monitoring Project aimed to analyze national policies about the enrollment of compulsory-school-age children, and to explore first-hand information on what causes nonattendance and dropping out.

The aims of the project surveys were the following:

► Examine national policies and legal bases regarding access, retention and completion of compulsory school.
► Assess the content and implementation of existing regulations and legislation.
► Identify the scope and depth of the school dropout problem.
► Assess the actual influence of different factors.
► Develop recommendations based on the findings.
► Raise awareness about the issue of school dropouts.
► Provide background for advocacy process on the issue.

The intent was to examine the phenomenon by approaching dropouts and their parents and teachers directly.

This report discusses the magnitude of the problem, and what causes it. The country studies reveal that the official statistical data on the number of dropouts and not-enrolled children are inaccurate, are collected inconsistently, sometimes misreported and leave policymakers and administrators unaware of the real scope of the problem. The report finds that the main reasons for dropping out of the school are poverty, lack of motivation, various family factors, the school milieu, and poor academic achievement.

Limitations of the Surveys

Surveys conducted in six countries encountered a number of limiting factors: difficulty reaching dropouts themselves, different definitions of dropouts in different countries, diversified survey instruments, limited funding, and small samples. Due to these limiting factors, the studies can not be considered internationally rigorously comparative. They are, nevertheless, of utmost exploratory value as case studies, and they shed light into underexplored phenomenon of school dropouts by exploring the situation on the ground.

The studies were conducted using a survey framework developed by the Education Policy Center in Albania that focused on the affective aspects of the school experience of

students. Using this framework, questionnaires were designed for dropout and nonattending students, their teachers and their parents. The questionnaires were adapted as necessary by the participating countries to suit their particular conditions. As such, questions deemed irrelevant were not used and other questions were asked instead. Only a few regions within the participating countries were covered, as this was an exploratory and small-scale endeavor. Sampling sizes ranged from an average of 500 (Albania and Mongolia) to 100 (Tajikistan), too small to consider the surveys national. The stratification of the sampling frames varied because it was extremely difficult to find and interview a dropout child and his/her parents and teachers. As a result, caution is advised when making cross-country comparisons about the survey results. In addition, beyond these limitations, the report covers actions required to achieve the goals of the monitoring study. National and international rules and regulations must be scrutinized, and efforts should be made to inform the wider public about the findings. Advocacy activities also are discussed.

Definitions of Dropouts

One of the main challenges of the monitoring initiative was to identify the objects of the study. The notion of dropout children is not new and international organizations such as UNDP, UNESCO, OECD, and the World Bank have attempted to define it. As it was discovered, definitions vary. OECD (2002) defines a "dropout" as a student who leaves a specific level of education system without achieving first qualification. According to UNESCO, "dropping out" or "early school leaving" is understood as leaving school education without completing the started cycle or program. Among the most well-known definitions is the one given by Morrow (1987):

> A dropout is any student previously enrolled in a school, who is no longer actively enrolled as indicated by fifteen days of consecutive unexcused absences, who has not satisfied local standards for graduation, and for whom no formal request has been received signifying enrolment in another state-licensed educational institution. A student death is not tallied as a dropout.

In addition to these international definitions, national education documents were searched for official definitions of dropouts and connected terms (e.g., nonattendees, non-registration, truancy). It appears that an official definition does not exist in all countries. In some countries, the above definitions can be applied directly. In other countries, different national agencies use different definitions of school dropouts. The teams conducting the

country studies concluded that there is no one single definition that is used across all of the countries and could serve in common for the study.

This situation raises several questions: Can existing definitions serve the monitoring needs? Are they shared by various agencies in the country? Does the term "dropout" have adequate meaning in the local language?

For the purposes of the study, the country survey teams attempted to come up with a definition that would reflect the phenomena of children for some reason not coming to school. Returning to the international definitions listed above, it would seem natural to ask if one of these might be valid for the purpose of the study. Many national definitions, on the other hand, are rather vague and not always suited to the reality of the dropout situation.

In **Latvia**, for example, Morrow's definition was not useful due to the strong presence of social pedagogues who are actively looking for students who are not attending school, and persuading them to go to class. These students attend classes for a day or two, and then disappear again. In Latvia, the study used two terms:

1) "A child who has dropped out of the education process or a dropout" is a pupil who has not completed basic education and no longer attends school.

2) "Children on the verge of dropping out" are pupils who have not attended school for six months and thus are unable to meet the demands set for basic education (Dedze et al., 2005).

In **Slovakia**, translation of the term "dropout" into the Slovak language itself presented problems and required thorough explanation and clarification of the definition. Perhaps this uncertainty of terms suggests that this topic requires further study and more attention in Slovakia. Therefore, for the purposes of the study, the Slovak term most often used was "people without completed basic education." The word "dropout" in English was used to refer to students not attending school until its completion, as defined by local norms (Šranková et al., 2005).

In **Albania**, the study was based on this definition: "A dropout is a student who leaves school before its completion, for any reason other than death, without being enrolled in another school or institution" (Clements, 2001).

In **Kazakhstan**, students who do not attend school are accounted for by two agencies: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Information provided by the two agencies differs considerably. This is attributed to different record-keeping criteria. The Ministry of Education counts children who miss school for 10 or more days. The Ministry of Internal Affairs regularly conducts spot-checks to detect children who regularly do not attend school. During such actions, children who miss school without any valid excuse are entered into the record system. In addition to discrepancies in the interdepartmental statistical data,

there is hidden nonattendance when children are "pushed out" of the system of education due to medical reasons or because they have lagged behind in their progress (Kalikova and Rakhimzhanova, 2005).

In **Mongolia**, the definition of dropout officially refers to children who quit after attending a period of formal schooling. In reality, it varies depending on who is defining it. The Ministry of Education defines dropouts as children at the age of compulsory basic education (currently 7 through 16 years of age) who are not attending school. For local school officials, dropouts also include students who were never enrolled in the school as well as those who did not finish secondary school. For teachers, dropouts are children who never attended school, children who incurred prolonged unexcused absences and were dropped from the list, or children who simply quit school. For both children and parents, dropouts are those who have neither secondary education nor secondary higher education (Rossario et al., 2005).

These examples demonstrate why it was not possible to apply an international definition of school dropouts across studies in all six countries. Various linguistic challenges made it impossible to simply translate, i.e., adequate terms could not be found in the local language, or the term was understood differently by various organizations or persons within the country. Agreement on a common definition of "school dropouts" was particularly difficult.

All of the countries that participated in the studies agreed that school dropouts are children in the compulsory school age who are either

► not in school at the end of school year,
► not finishing the last grade at the compulsory school level,
► not registered for the new school year, or
► have not received a certificate of education for their respective age group.

In some countries, a more specific definition was created.

Contributing to Understanding, Stimulating Debate

Monitoring reports produced in the six countries will serve as an important source of information for policymakers about issues relating to school dropouts. The reports describe the reasons why this phenomenon occurs and provide recommendations about what actions should be undertaken to keep children at school. It is clear that preventing children from leaving school early would require the combined efforts of policymakers, school boards,

teachers, students, and parents. With *Monitoring School Dropouts*, the Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute and the Network of Education Policy Centers attempt to contribute to a better understanding of the reasons for school dropout, to stimulate debate on this problem, and to encourage national and international organizations to join forces in order to prevent students from making early decisions about their education that can be harmful to their future.

References

Birdsall, N., Levine, R., Ibrahim, A., and et al. (2005). *Toward universal primary education: Iinvestments, incentives, and institutions.* UN Millennium Project. Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/tf_education.htm.

CDE (2003). *School dropout predictors and consequences. Research study in five districts in Albania.* Albania, Tirana: Center for Democratic Education.

Clements, B.S. (1991). Cited in Prevatt, F. (2001) *School dropouts/truancy.* Florida State University. http://www.fsu.edu/~truancy/litreview.html.

Dedze, I., Kruzmetra, M., Lazdiņa, S., and Mikiško, I. (2005). *Factors hindering completion of basic education in Latvia.* Latvia, Riga: Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS.

EC (2005). Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities. SEC (2005) 419. http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/progressreport05.pdf.

ERSU (2005). *School dropouts: challenges and ways of addressing them. Country survey Tajikistan.* Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Education Reform Support Unit PULSE.

Kalikova, S. and Rakhimzhanova, Z. (2005). *Problems of non-attendance and dropping-out of school among 5–9 grade students of secondary schools of general education in the Republic of Kazakhstan.* Almaty: Education Policy Analysis Center.

Morrow, G. (1987). In Husen, T. and Postlethwaite, T.N. (eds.) *The international encyclopedia of education.* Vol. 3, p. 1603. Pergamon.

Musai, B. and Boce, E. (2005). *Albanian dropout case report.* Albania, Tirana: Center for Democratic Education.

OECD (2002). *Education at a glance*, OECD Paris.

Rossario, M. del, Donrov, B., Bayarsaihan, B., Tsetsegee, B., et al. (2005). *The Mongolian Dropout Study.* Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: Mongolian Education Alliance.

Šranková, Z., Kadlečikova, Z., Maslova, M., et al. (2005). *School dropouts—reasons and consequences. Monitoring of the OSI related centres for education policy.* Slovakia: Center for Education Policy.

UN (2000). *Millennium development goals.* http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/.

UN (2005). *Investing in development. A practical plan to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.* Overview. New York: UN Millennium Project. http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/overviewEngLowRes.pdf.

UNDP (2002). *Human development report 2002.* http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2002/en/pdf/complete.pdf.

UNDP (2005). *Human development report. Human development data. Net primary enrollment ratio.* http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/indicators.cfm?x=115&y=1&z=1.

UNESCO (2000). *Education for all: Meeting our collective commitments, the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26–28 April 2000.* http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/dakfram_eng.shtml.

UNESCO (2005). *Education for all: The quality imperative. Global Monitoring Report 2005.* Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

Vilciņa, A., Kurlovičs, G., Viksna, S., and Muraškovska, I. (2005). "Primary education for children outside the educational system." In: Dedze I., Heyneman, S., Austers, I., and Lune, E. (eds.) *Education reforms in Latvia: underpinning integration and prosperity. Annual report on education 2003/2004.* Latvia, Riga: Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS. http://www.politika.lv/polit_real/files/lv/gada_pars_izgl2004_EN.pdf.

Notes

1.   Education Policy Centers have been established in more than 25 countries through the Education Support Program, an initiative of the Open Society Institute.

2.   Conflicting data were reported on the scope of early school leavers and dropouts. The more detailed analysis of official country school enrollment statistics provided in dropout country studies calls for caution regarding the consistency of these figures. This problem might be dependent on formal official methodologies. The reader must be careful to avoid an over optimistic assessment of some of the data.

Executive Summary

I)   **Problems with data**. Surveys from the Dropout Project show that there are no reliable, comparable, and consistent data on school nonattendance and dropout.

> ►   *Problems with data collection.* Data collected both by local and international agencies were not gathered in the same way and during similar times in the school calendar. Definitions of "nonattendance" and "dropout" differ not only among countries but within countries because data are collected by different agencies, based on different methodologies and different concepts of what or who a dropout is.
>
> ►   *Manipulation of enrollment and attendance figures.* Some of the Dropout Project surveys signaled a rising trend among schools to manipulate their enrollment and attendance figures, keeping children on the register while in reality they have ceased attending. These children are, therefore, not counted in dropout statistics. In this way, schools whose revenues depend upon per-capita payments from the government inflate their attendance figures to collect more money. Teachers' jobs may depend on "official" rather than actual enrollment figures; and a school's prestige in the authorities' eyes may be at risk if a considerable number of students drop out or do not attend.

2)	**Overall rates of nonattendance.** All surveys from the Dropout Project show that there are considerable numbers of children who have never enrolled in school at all, who attend irregularly, or who have dropped out before the end of the compulsory education period. The surveys show that, over all the countries studied, about 10 percent of primary-school-age children are not in school. The project surveys also show that there is a slight gender discrepancy at the primary school stage, with more boys attending school than girls by a small margin. Even in the best-performing countries in the survey, more than 5 percent of the primary-school-age group is not in school.

3)	**Factors affecting rates of dropout and nonattendance.** The surveys identified the following factors that affect dropout and nonattendance:

►	*Poverty.* The Dropout Project surveys show that poverty is the main reason for most nonregistration, nonattendance, irregular attendance, and dropout. In countries making the transition from a communist to a democratic, market-based system, the combined effects of social and economic disruption have caused enrollment rates to fall and education budgets to shrink. A 2004 report estimates that of the 44 million children living in former communist countries, 14 million live below national poverty lines (ICDC 2004).

Most of the surveys show that inability to pay for school supplies and other direct costs charged to families are a contributing factor to dropout rates. The Mongolia survey notes that, especially for poor families with four or more children, the cost of sending children (boys in particular) to school often makes the family decide it is better to keep them at home, where they can be useful in herding or taking care of family members. In the Slovakia sample, 63 percent of dropout children are from families with four or more children, and 97 percent of these families have net incomes below 500 EUR per month. The Latvia survey mentions that a large part of Latvia's population lives under adverse economic conditions. The Kazakhstan survey shows that 63.8 percent of families surveyed have incomes below the equivalent of about 150 EUR per month; also, slightly above 50 percent of the families surveyed have three or more children.

►	*Working children.* The surveys make it clear that the need to work for money or to help at home is a major reason why children drop out of school or attend irregularly. The Albania country report quotes a UNICEF study (2000) that found 31.7 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 were working in the city of Dürres alone, and that 60 percent of boys over the age of 10

were working.[1] The Latvia survey reports that 7.7 percent of the youngsters in the sample are permanently involved in paid employment and that 29.7 percent occasionally take on paying jobs. In Mongolia, nearly 200,000 children have dropped out of school since the start of the transition in 1990. Most of this dropout is among working children, especially boys who reside in remote areas where access to education is a formidable challenge (Mongolia Dropout Study, 2005).

Motivation to continue studying is undermined when, as the Tajikistan study reports, children discover that by engaging in petty commerce, it is possible to earn a decent living and that by providing small services at the market a little boy can earn more than a top-level teacher. Agricultural work is much less lucrative. Research in Tajikistan found that children harvest 40 percent of Tajikistan's cotton and that, on average, children in cotton-growing areas work between 60 and 90 days per year for pay that does not contribute significantly to their families' income. More than 87 percent of children interviewed said that picking cotton had a negative effect on their schoolwork; 67 percent said it had a negative effect on their health (International Organization for Migration, 2004). Local education authorities and schools say they are powerless to enforce attendance during the harvest.

► *Lack of motivation.* The Dropout Project surveys show that children drop out of school because they lack motivation to continue. They are bored, uninterested, and believe that what the school offers is irrelevant to their present lives as well as their aspirations for the future. Disaffection is most frequent among adolescent boys, for whom the attractions of life outside school, as well as the necessity to earn money, are strong forces. The Latvia study shows that disaffection can start even in primary school. In findings across the project surveys, it is striking that schools and teachers do not consider that they themselves may create conditions or set requirements that "push out" disadvantaged or low-achieving students. One of the surveys reports a comment that NGOs are more successful in motivating students "because they use interactive methods."

► *Distance from the child's home to school or lack of transport.* The surveys show that some children drop out of school because they live a significant distance from school or lack transport to school. The situation is exacerbated by double- and triple-shift school days that require students to travel to and from school at inconvenient times, especially when children from the same family have to attend at different times.

► *Family moving or emigrating.* Significant numbers of children never enroll in school in places where there are large numbers of refugee children, internally displaced children, nomadic children, or children with special needs in remote communities.

► *Poor health of student or parent.* The surveys show that it is often possible for a child to overcome one obstacle (e.g., the need to help at home), but that the risk of dropping out rises exponentially if there are additional obstacles (e.g., the imposition of school fees, a period of poor health, and/or the death of a parent).

► *Poor academic achievement.* Precursors of dropout often include irregular attendance and truancy, poor academic performance or exam failure, and being required to repeat a grade (especially if it happens more than once), the surveys indicate.

► *Influence of friends who are themselves truants or dropouts.* Youngsters whose friends have already dropped out—or are earning money—are more at risk, especially among boys in towns or cities.

► *Bullying by fellow students (especially relevant to Roma children).* Nonenrollment, nonattendance and early dropout are frequent problems with Roma children. This is not only because of poverty or cultural/language difficulties, but because these children are often met with hostility by their classmates, their teachers, and the non-Roma community.

> It is important for school systems, school directors, teacher training programs, and teachers to take a critical look at their policies, regulations and—in particular—their own attitudes toward at-risk children, and to make sure no child is "pushed out" of education.

► *Teacher or school unfriendliness.* Many of those interviewed for the surveys said that teachers had negative, punitive, and repressive attitudes toward low-achieving and nonattending children. Conflicts with teachers and breaches of discipline are frequent among at-risk children. Many at-risk children also do not receive much support at home, and one third of them say they never discuss their problems with parents.

► *Other factors.* Dropout may also be affected by school closures due to lack of heating and teacher absences, the surveys show. Other factors include problems in the child's home environment such as divorce, alcohol use, lack of parental

support, early marriage, and living with other relatives or neighbors because parents are working abroad.

4) **Roma children, children with special educational needs, and street children.** The Dropout Monitoring Project surveys show that laws compelling all children between specified ages (typically 7–15) to attend school are not consistently enforced for Roma, children with special educational needs (SEN), and street children. This is also true for children living in poverty and children who work.

► *Roma.* There are almost no statistical studies of Roma dropout. Data are often unreliable because not all Roma children identify themselves as such, because ethnicity is not routinely recorded, and because it is illegal to enquire about ethnicity in official questionnaires. In Slovakia, the project team reports that Roma constitute an estimated 10 percent of the country's population (2002) but that Roma pupils are "30 times more likely to drop out, 14 times more likely to repeat grades, and 5 times more likely to receive unsatisfactory marks" (Šranková and Maslová, 2005). The Slovakia survey concludes that a combination of political, institutional, socioeconomic, and personal factors lead Roma students to drop out of school. Moreover, school officials inappropriately place many Roma students in special schools and classes from their first years in the education system, which effectively forces these children out of the mainstream education system. This has far-reaching effects on their lives, because many of these children leave the school system with only a basic education or none at all (Sobotka, 2001).

► *Special educational needs (SEN).* Reliable data on school enrollment of children with special educational needs are difficult to find because the definition of "special needs" varies widely and because few countries have reliable ways of identifying, registering, and monitoring SEN children. Consequently, compulsory education laws are only lightly enforced with SEN children or not enforced at all, particularly where local schools and communities are unable or unwilling to accept them and where families cannot manage to get the child to school every day. In some of the project countries, SEN policy is still largely based on a traditional, collectivist approach emphasizing the role of the state. Its main features are (1) emphasis on institutional, publicly financed care rather than on family-based support; (2) little attention paid to other than medically diagnosed mental, physical, or developmental handicaps; (3) large, closed or semiclosed institutions such as orphanages and special boarding schools.

Since 1991, countries participating in the Dropout Monitoring Project have shown a rapid increase in the numbers of children identified as having special needs. The numbers are still rising, partly because the definition of "special needs" is now broader and because children previously considered uneducable are now gradually being included in the system. In Latvia, for example, only about 0.5 percent of compulsory school-age children are now not in school due to disability (OECD, 2001).

These facts raise the question whether some education systems are using institutionalization as a way to deal with, and perhaps escape responsibility for, children with special needs. Although nearly all disabled children in Latvia are now in some type of educational programs, the number of children up to three years old who were in institutional care in Latvia rose by 67 percent between 1989 and 2001.

► *Street children.* The problem of runaways and minors living without parental supervision is growing in many countries; it is therefore no surprise that the social turbulence of the transition has created a similar situation in former communist countries. The surveys do not focus specifically on street children, although some dropout children may no longer live with their families. In Latvia, a survey done in Riga in late 1997 found that only 23 percent of street children said they did not attend school at all; the others said they did attend, although many were at least one year behind their age group (HSSWSP, 1997). Several children reported that they did not like to go to school because teachers and the other children made fun of them or did not accept them.

5) **Enforcement of compulsory education laws.** The surveys reveal a punitive and repressive attitude toward children who discontinue or reject schooling. School systems and schools in the Dropout Monitoring Project countries do not seem to accept that they need to change and adapt. Their point of view is that if a child does not fit in, then the child is to blame; and if the child cannot be blamed, then it must be the parents, friends, or alcohol or drugs. In none of the studies was there recognition that schools themselves might play a large part in creating dropout or push-out conditions. The surveys found several unacceptable practices in dealing with nonattending pupils or dropouts, including intimidation, arrest, and placement in institutions for juvenile delinquents or even in orphanages.[2]

Summary of Recommendations for Policymakers

► Legislatures and policymakers should ensure that public education is free of charge at the point of use—at least during the compulsory stage. Direct charges create a pattern of economic exclusion of poor children. In many areas, this pattern is made worse by laws that restrict the provision of free education to citizens.[3]

► Legislators and policymakers should scrutinize and, if necessary, work to align laws on compulsory education with international human and child rights law so there are no legal or informal barriers that exclude children from exercising their rights. Alignment of education, child labor, and child protection laws is also a priority.

► Policymakers should ensure that children who have dropped out of school or are not attending school are treated fairly and with respect. Enforcement of compulsory attendance should be approached in stages, starting with the parents, the school, and teachers—and only applying legal force when all else fails.

► Ministries of education must set standards for schools, monitor education quality, and find other ways to retain influence on regional and local provision, both in terms of access and of quality for all. Quality assurance requires reliable data, expertise, trained staff, and funds. Ministries of education must develop reliable data on nonattendance and dropout.

► Ministries of education must scrutinize education policies and practices to identify and remove possible sources of "push-out." Forms of push-out include unnecessary selection exams; "heavy" academic curricula that place too much emphasis on high achievers; policies on grade repetition, formal or informal fees or charges; relating teacher salaries to student results; and negative attitudes toward slow learners, minority children, and handicapped children. Ministries of education should also identify and correct exclusionary policies related to the imposition of school fees and textbook fees, overloaded curriculum designs that favor high achievers or better-off children who can afford special tuition, and selective exams that foster early selection into specialized or prestigious schools.

► Ministries of education should authorize inspectors and local education authorities to collect accurate data. Ministries can establish regular and reliable data-collection systems and design valid, reliable ways to assess student learning both nationally and

internationally to make sure no child leaves school without the basic competences necessary for living a decent life.

► Ministries of education should establish alternative and second-chance opportunities for children who are struggling in school or have already dropped out. There are many good examples, many of them run by NGOs, but their funding is often insufficient and uncertain over time. A more systematic, state-funded approach supporting small, community-based youth outreach or "drop-in" centers, part-time or evening schools, work-school, and supervised apprenticeship programs would encourage youngsters to return to the education process. It would also help identify at-risk pupils and prevent them from dropping out in the first place.

► Municipalities and local authorities should work closely with schools in enforcing school attendance by children required by law to be in school. Local authorities should provide schools with accurate, timely information about children who will reach school age by the start of each upcoming school year so that schools are able to determine if these children actually register.

► Municipalities and local authorities should monitor not only enrollment but daily school attendance. Local authorities should frequently monitor actual school attendance, especially by children from vulnerable groups such as working children, special needs children, Roma children, children of other minority groups, and children living without parental protection. Such local authorities may include, if necessary, social workers or other community services for families and children.

► Municipalities, local authorities, and school officials should involve the police or juvenile courts in dropout or nonattendance cases only as a last resort, if at all. Punitive measures often make matters worse, especially if they are aimed at children themselves or at families whose economic or social circumstances are already difficult. In particular, children who drop out or do not attend school should not be brought to court, segregated in institutions for delinquents, or otherwise removed from their families unless there exist compelling reasons, as in the case of an abusive or violent home environment. Early involvement by social workers or other support personnel is a far more effective way of ensuring school attendance. In Latvia, for example, schools that have a social pedagogue or school psychologist have much better attendance and completion records than schools that do not have such specialists.

References

Education Support Program (2005). *Mongolia dropout study*.

HSSWSP (1997). *Project "Child in the Street."* Riga: Higher School for Social Work and Social Pedagogy 'Attistiba' and the Centre for Criminological Research.

ICDC (2004). *UNICEF–ICDC Social Monitor Report 2004.* Florence: ICDC.

International Organization for Migration and Educational Reforms Support Unit PULSE, Tajikistan, (2004). *Children in the cotton fields.* Dushanbe: International Organization for Migration.

OECD (2001). *Review of National Policies for Education: Latvia.* Paris: OECD.

Sobotka, E. (2001). "1 + 1 = 3: Roma in the Slovak Education System," quoted in Tomaševski, K., *Education denied*, 2003.

Šranková, Z. and Maslová, M. (2005). *School Dropouts—reasons and consequences, Slovakia.* August 2005, quoting a 1993 report by Koptova, A. and Lacko, M., *Human rights and civil rights of Roma in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.*

Notes

1.   This estimate includes all children performing any paid or unpaid work for someone who is not a member of the household. See Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2, 2000, UNICEF, http://www.ucw-project.org.

2.   In Slovakia, child benefits can be withheld if a student has more than 15 hours of unexcused absences in one month. This may be a successful measure if the non-attendance is due to lack of care or discipline, but if it is due to severe family poverty or the need for the child to work, cutting benefits can harm the whole family—including other children.

3.   Croatia reported in 2001 that primary education is free and compulsory, but only for citizens. Those without citizenship have no right to free education, and "undocumented" Roma or refugee children may not go to school at all. United Nations, 2001. See Katarina Tomaševski, 2005, "Globalizing What—Education as a Human Right or as a Traded Service?" in the *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 12(1). pp. 1–78 for an excellent discussion of these issues.

Part I

International Overview

Chapter 1

School Dropouts: Disadvantaged, Disaffected, Disappeared

Johanna Crighton

'Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.'
(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, Article 26)

This study is not merely about statistics. It is not enough to measure the size of the problem of nonattendance or dropout, or to count—however accurately—how many youngsters of compulsory education age are not in school. The key point is that all these children should be in school; and since they are not, where are they? And who are they? Why are they not where society intends them to be, for their own good as well as for the good of society? Once we have a clearer understanding of these questions, we can start to think about answers—answers that go beyond the simple responses of compulsory schooling laws, enforcement, and data collection on school attendance.

The Nature of the Problem

Compulsory education has a long history, and this overview sets out some of the main "uses" of compulsion that have served over the centuries to justify it. Modern thinking, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), places greater emphasis on education as a basic right for all than it does on education as a duty to society or to the state. A survey by the World Bank (2003) showed 116 countries with a constitutional guarantee of the right to education and, among these, 95 countries stipulated that education should be free.

But the plain fact is that not all children are able to, or indeed choose to, exercise this basic right. In at least 25 countries of the world, there is no specified age for compulsory education. As of 2004, at least 33 states had no minimum age for employment; in 44 countries girls could be married earlier than boys; and in at least 125 countries, children could be taken to court and risk imprisonment for criminal acts at an age between 7 and 15 (also the most common age range for compulsory education). In some countries, children are legally obliged to attend school until they are 14 or 15 years old, but a different law allows them to work at a younger age, to be married at the age of 12, or to be put in prison from the age of 7. The legal situation of children is unclear and contradictory. Even the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which defines a child as "every human being below the age of 18 years," goes on to say that this definition holds "unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."

Although this study concentrates on basic (primary and lower secondary) schooling, rising skill demands have made upper secondary qualifications the minimum credential for successful entry into the labor market, and the foundation for advanced training and education. While many countries allow students to leave the education system at the end of lower secondary education, young people without upper secondary credentials tend to face severe difficulties in the job market, and their lifelong earning capacity is reduced. OECD statistics confirm that on average those with less than upper secondary schooling are more likely (37 percent of population 25–64 years) to be unemployed than those with upper secondary or high school (20 percent) or higher education (13 percent) qualifications, although the differentials vary from country to country (OECD, 2004, pp. 162–163). Earnings of people with less than upper secondary education tend to range from 60 percent to 90 percent of the earnings of high school graduates (general and upper vocational education).[1]

Some general observations can be made here:

► Worldwide, the most common number of compulsory education years is 9 (44 countries); 31 countries require 8 years; and 24 require 10. The shortest period is 4 years (Saõ Tome and Principe) and the highest 13 years (The Netherlands).

- ► Where there is a discrepancy between the legal school-leaving age and the minimum employment or marriage age, children's educational interests may not be protected from early labor or family obligations (Melchiorre, 2004).
- ► In general, compulsory education is provided fee-free, although it is increasingly common that parents are expected to pay for books, supplies, food, or uniforms.
- ► There is no consistent link between a country's affluence and the number of years of education it legally requires. For example, Canada and the Congo both require 10 years; The UK, Kazakhstan, and Armenia require 11 years; Kyrgyzstan, Finland, and New Zealand, 10; Italy and the Sudan, 8; the United Arab Emirates and Afghanistan, 6.
- ► Some countries specify the completion of a certain level of education (e.g., primary or basic school), or the attainment of minimum state standards, as well as the number of years of compulsory education.

The uses of compulsion

The notions of compulsory education (and thus "dropout") result from the widespread assumption that it is always better that children should be *in* school rather than out of school. The following section takes a closer look at this assumption and asks, "Better for whom?" The answer seems to be that both society and the individual benefit from education, because both social order and individual well-being are essential for a socially stable and economically productive society. But this does not, in itself, explain why nine compulsory years are better than four or six; or indeed why low-quality compulsory schooling for nine years is better than high-quality home-based education or self-education for six years. So who benefits from compulsion, and on what grounds can it be justified?

If participatory citizenship is necessary for the mutual long-term benefit of the state and the individual, it is in the common interest to make explicit both the right to impose education (on the side of the state) and the duty to be educated (on the side of the individual). Whether the compulsion is legal or merely socially persuasive, whether there is an element of coercion and on whom, whether there are specific horizontal (e.g., across social groups, ability, or gender) or vertical (by age or number of years) limits to the compulsion, and whether specific curriculum content or levels of achievement are made mandatory will depend on the social and political climate of the state, on its available resources, and on the particular "uses of compulsion" historically and socially acceptable to it.

The most common uses of compulsion can be roughly classified into three groups, admitting some overlap among them: (1) those that benefit the state politically; (2) those that benefit the state economically and socially; and (3) those whose main object is to benefit the individual. The first group—those that benefit the state politically—might include the need

to ensure a common background, language, and citizenship for a diverse population, and to instill certain principles held to be basic to the state's identity and national security. The second group—the uses of compulsion for the economic and social benefit of the state—might include the need to ensure the passing on of traditional skills and to train people in new skills needed to adapt to changes in society,[2] and to keep young people and nonworking people "off the streets" and reduce juvenile crime. The third group—the uses of compulsion for the benefit of the individual—might include the wish to ensure the intellectual development of children, and to enable them to pursue worthwhile individual goals, such as happiness, effective freedom, social mobility, material well-being, or participating in the political process; to curtail abuses in the employment of children and protect their health; and to implement a philosophy of equal opportunity and achievement (compulsory education for all guarantees that disadvantaged groups cannot be excluded). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) broadly reflects these values.

Given such a long list of "uses," there is no easy way to decide whether compelling children to attend school is "a good thing." Some of the uses seem benevolent enough. Surely we do not want children working in mines or in unhealthy factories. Surely we do want them in school, which will foster their talents and prepare them for life. But what if a child must work full time to help support the family, as is the case for growing numbers of children in Mongolia? Or what if the compulsion is not to protect the child, but to use the schools to indoctrinate, or to deliver certain types of trained manpower, as in a centrally controlled economy?

Clearly, the usefulness, as well as the acceptability, of uses will vary according to place and time. The forced apprenticeship of orphans is no longer acceptable in modern-day society, nor is the automatic institutionalization or exclusion of children with special needs. At the same time, some consider compulsory schooling laws to be an affront to individual liberty; and even those who accept the notion of compulsory education may not accept the notion of compulsory schooling. Or, there is often disagreement about the content or duration of the compulsion, or about who should make the key choices, or about the practices of enforcement and penalties.

During the drafting of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[3] in 1947, a huge controversy was triggered by suggestions that education should be both a right and a duty. Several delegations argued that it was contradictory to say that education was a right but then to add that it was compulsory; one delegation held that it was "dangerous" to include the word compulsory, because it could be interpreted as acceptance of the concept of state education. An early vote taken to delete the word "compulsory" saved it...but by just one vote.[4] The same controversy was repeated during the final negotiations; the compromise was to retain "compulsory" education, but only for children, and only at the primary school

level.[5] This illustrates that compulsion in education is not a universally agreed principle, but that it is open to debate on philosophical (liberty), legal, and political grounds. Nevertheless, it is now widely accepted that children are, on the whole, better off *with* legally guaranteed compulsory primary schooling than without it. This consensus is reflected in many important international agreements and national laws adopted since 1948.

Compulsion for what?

Most compulsory schooling laws require only attendance. Since attendance does not equal either instruction or education, these laws attach an unreal importance to "being in school." Also, they may confuse the "quantity of schooling"—often referred to as "seat-time"—with the quality of education offered there. If, on the other hand, we were to abandon all compulsion and make schooling entirely voluntary, we would almost certainly risk excluding children whose poverty, ethnicity, gender, handicap, or minority language places them on the margins of society.

In terms of equal life chances for all, it seems that children are better off with compulsory schooling laws than without them. But mere attendance, without quality or achievement, cannot be the goal of compulsion.

The question of quality

The notion of "quality" in education is even harder to define than "dropout." It appears from the surveys and from international experience that a perceived or actual lack of quality in schooling is a key factor in truancy, irregular attendance, and dropout (UNESCO, 2005). Particularly among teenagers, "lack of motivation" often translates as "boredom." Also at this stage, students' workload tends to increase as more subjects are added and examinations loom. Bored or overburdened students do not perform well; they fall behind, have arguments with their teachers and parents, and eventually the lure of freedom wins out over the duty to sit in class.

Serious studying does, of course, require effort and determination by the students, and schools shouldn't turn themselves into perpetual discos or reduce curriculum content to easy sound-bites. This is actually not what youngsters want. They want to be interested, engaged, and active: they want their teachers to value them, and they want to believe that their school work is relevant to their future plans. This last issue is important. Motivation for school attendance will be low where youth unemployment is high, where youngsters live

in families where nobody has a job, and where their prospects of breaking out of the poverty trap appear slight. Among the unemployed in Moldova, for example, the poverty rate for those with no education or one to four years of primary education is only slightly higher (at 32 percent) than for those with a university education (27 percent). Those with a secondary education make up two-thirds (64 percent) of all unemployed (World bank, 1999). The level of education thus seems to offer little benefit. Also, having a job does not guarantee an escape from poverty: 45 percent of working age persons in Moldova are classified as poor, yet two out of three are employed.

School "climate" is also an important factor. Negative teacher attitudes, especially toward slow learners or children from disadvantaged backgrounds, are frequently mentioned by dropouts and their parents as reasons for not remaining in school. In some countries corporal punishment in schools is considered normal practice, and children (especially "problem" children) are often beaten by teachers even if officially such punishment is not allowed. In addition, families belonging to an ethnic minority, including Roma, feel that their children are often targeted not only by teachers but by police. The parent of a child at a minority-language school in Kyrgyzstan put it this way:

> Our kids are at the mercy of the police these days. We are traditionally seen as beggars and for many in the community, this is our primary occupation. Our children don't know their rights and can't defend themselves in front of the police, who are under orders to discourage begging. (quoted in Eversman, 1999, p. 26)

The question of motivation

Motivation and engagement are the "energy base" of learning. They also affect quality of life during adolescence and can influence whether young people will be successful in pursuing further learning or labor market opportunities. Negative attitudes toward school can lead to disruptive behavior, poor attendance, low academic performance, and the decision to drop out. On the other hand, research shows that if students become involved in their school work or extracurricular activities, and develop strong ties with other students and teachers, they are more likely to do well in their studies and complete compulsory schooling.

OECD studies of young people's attitudes toward their schools have confirmed that attitudes are powerful determinants of school survival.[6] Two indicators were used in these studies: a sense of belonging within the school community, and participation in school life. Fifteen-year-old students were asked about their attitudes toward school. In 20 of the 28 OECD countries participating in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2000), more than one quarter of students said that school was a place to which they did not want to go. In Belgium, Canada, France, Hungary, Italy, and the United States, this proportion ranged, in order, from 35 percent to 42 percent. In almost half of the coun-

tries, the majority of students also agreed or strongly agreed that school was a place where they felt bored.[7]

Does it matter that so many children do not like being in school? Yes. "Lack of motivation" is cited by teachers and parents, but also by students interviewed for this study, as a major cause of poor academic performance leading to truancy leading to irregular attendance leading to dropout. But what does "motivation" mean, and if the lack of it drives children out of schooling, how can motivation be created and fostered? Incentive, inspiration, stimulus, and enthusiasm are some of its ingredients. So are drive, purpose, self-esteem, and the sense of doing something worthwhile. Is it that classrooms and lessons fail to provide these? Are teaching and learning a lacklustre enterprise, a dull chore to get through? In particular, is the common response to at-risk children one of punishment rather than incentives to do better?

The negative, punitive, and repressive attitudes toward low-achieving and nonattending children may not necessarily remedy the problem. Indeed, the more severe the response (e.g., placing children in facilities for "delinquents," categorizing their behavior as "deviant," or taking them away from their families), the less likely it is to motivate them, and the more likely it is to make them feel ever more resentful and alienated. If society has the right to legally compel children to become educated, then it also has the duty to ensure that such an infringement of the child's liberty is justified and to good purpose. Merely demanding that children know their place and sit still in it for the prescribed length of time is not "education." It will not, by itself, inspire or stimulate learning.

The affective aspect of school attendance receives remarkably little attention in the laws, regulations, and school policies relating to truants and dropouts. Their feelings, aspirations or sense of self-esteem are of no account, but it is exactly those affective aspects that determine whether a child remains in school past the age of 13 or 14.[8] Given the large investment that countries make in their school systems, it is not acceptable that so many students are unhappy in school, do not like learning, and end up rejecting what schools have to offer. Not only are negative attitudes associated with poor academic performance, but also students who are disaffected with school are also less likely to engage positively with their communities and with productive work in later life. Of course, the links between attitudes, motivation, and performance are complex and often reciprocal. But schools and education systems need to support academic quality, academic performance, and students' sense of belonging: merely assuming that enforced attendance will somehow produce these other factors is clearly false.

The Dropout Monitoring Project

The Dropout Monitoring Project initiated national surveys of dropout and nonattendance patterns in Albania, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Mongolia, Slovakia, and Tajikistan. The goal of the Dropout Monitoring Project was to gather information from existing resources, provide a critical look at existing data, and explore factors contributing to dropout rates. This overview places the findings of the national dropout project surveys into a regional and international context to provide the historical, philosophical, and legal underpinnings that support attendance policies during compulsory education. Following the definition of terms and explanation of the sampling strategies used in the study, the overview explores the key issues, trends, and related policy problems regarding nonenrollment and dropping out of school and its consequences. It examines factors and current polices, looks at findings of studies, and provides a set of recommendations for policy makers.

Definitions

The issue of legal compulsion in education is, of course, essential to the notion of "dropout." Youngsters leaving school beyond compulsory education age can be better described as "early school leavers" or "noncompleters." Similarly, children who never enroll at all cannot be called "dropouts." The definition of "dropouts" and related terms differ across Dropout Project countries and according to the perceptions of particular groups (teachers, officials, parents, students). The Mongolia Dropout Project survey makes an important observation:

> The definition of dropouts varies depending upon who is defining it, although officially it refers to children who quit after attending a period of formal schooling [But] . . . people understood the concept of 'dropout' differently. . . . [F]or teachers, "dropouts" were children who did not go to school at all or missed their lessons for a quite long time, for the officials, "dropouts" were children who did not accomplish secondary school education, and for children and their parents, "dropouts" were children who had neither lower secondary education nor postcompulsory (upper secondary) education.

The Dropout Monitoring Project surveys (see Annex 1 for country-specific details) sought to use the following definitions:

Table 1.

Frequently Used Terms

Term	Description	Remarks
Truancy	Truants are students of compulsory school age who are not in school for the required number of lessons, classes, or days in the school calendar.	Truancy is more "occasional" than irregular attendance. Truants may "skip" one or more class periods during the day, but attend others. Parents are frequently unaware that their children skip lessons or leave the school grounds without permission.
Nonattendance	Students who are registered in a particular school but do not attend classes for long periods of time for unexcused reasons, but who are not deleted from the school register.	Broad definition is used, as the definitions of nonattendance differ across countries or attendance is not regulated at the national or local level. For example, "nonattendance" means 15 hours of unexcused absence in one month in Slovakia, and more than 40 days during the academic year in Latvia.
Irregular attendance	Students who are registered in a particular school but do not attend school classes regularly.	For example, students who are absent from 10 to 20 days during the academic year in Latvia.
At-risk (of dropping out)	Students who are exposed to factors that increase the risk of not completing compulsory education.	Risk factors that enhance the probability that the child might drop out of the process of acquiring basic education. For example, Nonattendees, irregular attendees, students repeating a grade, socially and economically underprivileged students and other vulnerable groups. "Vulnerable groups" are different in different countries, due to specific factors such as migration, ethnicity, and traditions.
Dropout	Dropouts are students of compulsory school age who are either: • not in school at the end of the school year, not finishing a grade at the basic (compulsory) school level; • not registered for the new school year; • have not received the certificate of basic education for the respective age group.	Compulsory school ages or grades (years) differ in different countries. Note: In the Latvia survey, 3.2 percent of surveyed students were over 18 years of age.

Table 1.

Frequently Used Terms *(continued)*

Term	Description	Remarks
Noncompletion (early school leaving)	Share of the population who are not in education or training and who have not completed lower secondary or compulsory education and do not have a first qualification.	Early school leavers: share of the population aged 18–24 with only lower secondary education or less and not in education or training.[9] (In the literature this term is used more for students who do not continue after compulsion ends, e.g., those who do not continue after the age of 16 or in upper secondary grades 10–12.)
Nonenrollment or nonregistration	Children of compulsory education age who were never enrolled (registered) in a school. (Home-schooled children may be included in this category, even though they are "in" education.)	Technically, these children are not "dropouts" but they may not receive (any or some) compulsory education. Children with disabilities, and children of minority, nomadic or poor families can be most vulnerable.

Importantly, the study distinguishes between two forms of nonattendance, which are quite different in their source, but similar in their outcome. The first is self-exclusion by children through truancy, poor attendance patterns, and dropout; the second is exclusion by schools for disciplinary reasons, because of low achievement or academic failure, by the use of selective practices such as in-school streaming or tracking by ability, or by the use of selective examinations that are often biased against poor or otherwise marginalized children (i.e., push-out). Both dropout and push-out tend to be interrelated. For example, a low-achieving child may soon acquire a negative self-image, which can then be reinforced by being placed in a low-ability track, or being excluded from entrance procedures into the "better" lower secondary schools (Crighton, 2004).

In the Dropout Project countries, it has proved difficult to obtain accurate statistical figures on dropout and even more difficult to obtain a realistic picture of push-out by schools or other excluding factors such as school fees, textbook fees, overloaded curriculum designs, or selective exams. These factors strongly affect a child's school survival, but official statistics (if they exist) do not identify them as such. Therefore, the study has primarily focused on collecting qualitative data to make cross-country comparisons regarding the factors behind drop out and push-out.

Sampling and study design

The Dropout Project study is rare in this field as it included interviews with dropout children and their parents and teachers. Samples were relatively small (ranging from about 500 pupils in Albania to about 100 in Tajikistan), and sampling frames were not always stratified in the same way (see Table 2). Nongovernmental Education Policy Centers from these countries participated by setting up national teams to conduct surveys, voluntarily using a template modelled on the sampling approach and questionnaires designed for a 2003 survey in Albania, adapted as necessary to local conditions. The surveys were conducted in 2004–2005 and national reports were produced, peer-reviewed, and finalized in 2005. Some questions on the basic ("Albanian") questionnaires were not relevant in other countries, and were either deleted or modified. Pupils surveyed were dropouts or nonattendees (see country reports for details). Pupils in both categories were included in the survey because it was difficult or impossible in some cases to differentiate between the two. In most countries, additional interviews and focus group interviews were conducted (see full text country reports). Therefore, caution is advised in making cross-country comparisons of the survey results.

Table 2.
Design of Dropout Project Country Surveys

Country	Target age group	Interviewed	Regions
Albania	Age 7–17 years	551 pupils, 293 teachers, 296 parents	Tirana, Vlora, Dibra, Korça, Shkodra
Latvia	Age 14–18 years	287 pupils, 166 teachers, 130 parents	Riga, Jelgava, Daugavpils, Jekabpils
Slovakia	Age 12–16 years	233 pupils, 233 teachers, 233 parents	Bratislava, Rimavska, Dolny Kubin, Martin, Sobota, Presov
Kazakhstan	Age 11–16 years	200 pupils, 54 teachers, 53 parents	Almaty, Aktau, Pavlodar
Mongolia	Age 8–16 years	350 pupils, 76 teachers, 95 parents	Ulanbaatar, Khovd, Uvurkhangai, Dornogobi
Tajikistan	Age 11–18 years	102 pupils, 100 teachers, 113 parents	Dushanbe, Sogdiy, Khatlon, DRS (Shakhrinav)

Enforcement of compulsory education: Prevalence of punitive measures

All countries participating in the Dropout Project specify a period during which a child is legally obliged to be educated, although not necessarily "schooled" (see Table 3). Of the countries involved in this study, Albania, Latvia, Mongolia, and Tajikistan require 9 grades of compulsory education, while Slovakia and Tajikistan require 10 and 11 grades of compulsory education respectively. Worldwide, laws often make a distinction between "education" and "schooling." In particular, many countries oblige parents to ensure that children are "educated" but allow them to educate their children at home or in a variety of alternative settings, provided that the child's education is acceptable by state norms.[10] In former socialist countries, however, educating children at home rather than in school is still relatively rare. For most children in the Dropout Project countries, "education" means "going to school." Generally speaking, schooling proceeds at a steady pace of one grade per year and covers a nationally prescribed set of subjects (and often sets specific attainment targets or standards by grade and subject).

There may be some flexibility in the system. In Kazakhstan, for example, the Law on Education allows correspondence/evening schools, family education, self-education, and external studies, which must comply with mandatory state standards.[11] Gifted children may be allowed to progress more rapidly through the grades, and curriculum options may be adjusted to suit the interests or abilities of individual students. The Czech Republic in 1998 formally recognized home schooling and in Slovakia changes to the law are expected that will formalize home schooling as an acceptable alternative.

Countries differ in where they place the responsibility for attendance (see Table 4). The younger the child, the more likely it is that the parents are legally responsible for making sure their child is in school, regularly and for the entire prescribed length of time. Older students and adolescents are more likely to make their own decisions, and may be subject to penalties themselves. Sometimes persistent truants may be brought to court and either their parents may be fined or imprisoned, or they themselves may be placed in special programs for "delinquents." They even may be removed from their families and put in a juvenile detention facility or an orphanage, as reported in the Kazakhstan study. In particular, the Kazakhstan survey refers in several places to children "being sought by police" or "under investigation." Some interviewees express the need to enforce attendance with the help of "migration police" (to keep track of families that move from one place to another). The Kazakhstan's Dropout Project team says that the Almaty City Akimat has set up a Center for Temporary Isolation, Adaptation and Rehabilitation of the Juvenile (CTIARJ), where "vagrant children 12–18 years are kept as well as children (under 14) who have committed a crime." The report also describes a National Center for Difficult Adolescents, for youngsters excluded from regular schools "due to different kinds of violations" as well as youngsters

who have left orphanages (ages 16–18) who are supposedly being trained to enter the labor market.

Table 3.
Aspects of Compulsory Education in Dropout Project Countries

Country	Duration of compulsory education(in grades)	Compulsory education age range	Regulations regarding home schooling
Albania (a)	9	6–16	Regulations state that parents can be fined if children are not "in school for no reason." Home schooling might be acceptable as a "reason."
Kazakhstan (b)	11	6/7–(17)18	Implicit in regulations that allow "self-education" and "family education."
Latvia (c)	9	7–18	Parents must ensure that the child is "educated" according to "the abilities of the child."
Mongolia	9	7–16	No regulations.
Slovakia (d)	10	6–16	Law specifies "education," not "schooling." Proposed Draft Law on General Education (2005) includes articles about home schooling.
Tajikistan	9	7–16	Law specifies "education," not "schooling."

Notes: (a) In Albania, the new requirement of 9 years of compulsory education became effective as of 2004 according to a decision of the Council of Ministers (Ministry of Education and Science, Tirana, 2004).
(b) The concept of "school-leaving age" is not in the law (as of 2002). General secondary education through grade 11(12) is compulsory.
(c) Students can leave school from age 15 if they have completed nine grades.
(d) Compulsory education age range could be 7–17 in case of deferred school entrance on parent request or school psychologist recommendation.

A punitive and repressive attitude toward children who, for one reason or another, discontinue or reject schooling is also common in other Dropout Project study countries. The expectation is that the child must adapt to the school; the school is not obliged to adapt itself to the child. If a child doesn't "fit," then the child is to blame; and if the child cannot

be blamed, then it must be the parents, or bad influences from friends, or alcohol or drugs. In none of the studies was there the recognition that the school itself might play a large part in creating dropout or push-out conditions. But in truth, the school is often the problem rather than the solution. Forcing children to stay in an unwelcoming, poor quality, or inappropriate school environment is unlikely to be effective in terms of learning; and if an already troubled child is faced with (say) the police, or is picked up and put in a school for "delinquents," a detention center, or an orphanage, his/her attitude toward education is not going to improve.

Of course, there must be rules of discipline, and there must be standards of achievement. But schools can have a friendly, supportive "tone of voice," and still be disciplined places where good learning happens. Segregating and "labelling" already troubled young people in this negative way is likely to violate their rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is also unlikely to have any positive results; on the contrary, it may well increase their feelings of resentment, injustice, and alienation from civil society, leading to severe problems in adult life. The surveys did show that where there is good communication among the school, the teachers, the families, and the students, at-risk situations can be identified early and dropout prevented.

Table 4.

Enforcement and Penalties in Participating Countries

Country	Legal responsibility?	Who enforces? Who takes measures?	Methods used?	Penalties?
Albania	Parents	Local government	Counselling, then penalty	Fines (Art. 59 of the Law on Education) Article 41 of the Albanian Law "Regulations of the Public Schools:" If a student between the ages of 6 and 16, the age of compulsory school, is absent from school without reason or stops going to school, his/her parents are charged with an infraction of the law and fined from 1,000 to 10,000 Albanian leks.

Country	Legal responsibility?	Who enforces? Who takes measures?	Methods used?	Penalties?
Kazakhstan	Parents (Law on Education, Art. 38)	Local government	School teachers and administrators meet and talk with parents. Extreme measures can be used in case of neglect of the child by parents, e.g., exclusion of parental rights and placing children in children's home/ orphanage.	Fines, according to Code on Administrative Offense, Art. 111
Latvia	Parents (Law on Education, Art. 58.2.)	Local government	It is up to local government to decide how to continue the work with the family. Parents may be summoned to appear before the Administrative Committee, family may be helped by a social worker.	The Administrative Committee decides what kind of penalties should be applied: a warning or a fine (in accordance with the Administrative Offense Code, Art. 173). Some local governments restrict the opportunities of parents to receive additional social benefits (e.g., the low-income family benefit); however, penalties of that kind are not reflected in rules/regulations.
Mongolia	No provisions	No provisions		No provisions
Slovakia	Parents	School principal reports, local social office takes measures.	Redirecting child benefits from parents to local government office. In extreme cases, often accompanied by child abuse, parents can be brought to court for negligent care of their children who then can be sent to children's homes.	If a child has more than 15 hours of unexcused absences in one month, parents don't receive child benefits for that month.
Tajikistan	Parents, according Chapter 4, Article 42 "Law on Education"	Local government	Counselling, then penalty	Parents are legally responsible for making sure their child is in school (Law on Education).

Available statistics: Lack of reliability and comparability

Former socialist countries have an admirable record for getting a very high proportion of children into primary school, with net enrollment rates (NER)[12] generally around the 90 percent mark on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). For the countries participating in this study, the rates (UNESCO, 2002–2003) were 95 percent for Albania, 91 percent for Kazakhstan, 87 percent for Slovakia, 86 percent for Latvia, and 79 percent for Mongolia (see Table 5). This still means, however, that a significant percentage of primary school-age children are not in school. There is also still a slight gender discrepancy at the primary stage, with boys having the advantage over girls by a small margin (more boys are in school than girls). By ISCED levels 2/3, the difference is practically eliminated or indeed slightly in favor of girls, except in Tajikistan where 45 percent of all students enrolled in ISCED levels 2/3 are girls compared with 48 percent in ISCED level 1.

However, the findings of this study revealed that the official statistics may not necessary provide accurate data on school nonattendance and dropout. Behind the official count, moreover, there often is a large shadow of "hidden" dropout. One persistent problem experienced by all participants in the Dropout Monitoring Project was the scarcity of reliable data. This is a common problem in all countries, partly because different definitions are used, partly because data are gathered in different ways at different points in the school calendar, or because data sometimes refer to student enrollment and sometimes to student attendance, or because those responsible for providing the data are reluctant (or unable) to give accurate information. In addition, the growing use of per-capita formulae for school financing may give school directors a powerful incentive to keep students on the school register even if they no longer attend. In Mongolia, for instance, school budgets depend on the head count of enrolled ("registered" not necessarily "attending") students.

"The politics of statistical information" is perhaps the greatest obstacle to obtaining an accurate view of the size of the problem, especially where a "blame culture" persists, or where school funding may depend on the number of students enrolled and attending. Disincentives in the system prevent the accurate reporting and remediation of nonattendance. In some countries, school budgets may depend on enrollment numbers; teachers' jobs may be at risk if class sizes fall below the norm; and the prestige of the school in the eyes of the authorities may be at stake if a considerable number of students do not attend or drop out. Mongolia is a glaring example, with a difference between the highest dropout estimate of 68,000 by an international agency as compared to the lowest estimate of 12,000, from an official source.

Table 5.

Enrollment in Dropout Project Countries, UNESCO 2005

Country	ISCED 1, 2002–2003				
	Enrollment	% Female	Gross enrollment ratio	Net enrollment rate	Repeaters
Albania	252,829	48	104	95	3%
Kazakhstan	1,120,005	49	102	91	1,558
Latvia	103,359	48	94	86	2%
Mongolia	238,676	50	101	79	1%
Slovakia (p)	284,312	49	101	87	3%
Tajikistan	694,930	48	111	…	2,080

Country	ISCED 2/3, 2002–2003				
	Enrollment General programs	% Female	Gross enrollment ratio All programs	Net enrollment rate All programs	Repeaters % General programs
Albania	376,107	48	81	77	4
Kazakhstan	1,976,390	50	92	87	–
Latvia	236,949	50	95	88	1
Mongolia	295,874	53	84	77	–
Slovakia (p)	456,029	50	89	87	1
Tajikistan	922,795	45	86	**83	1

Source: *Global Education Digest 2005. Comparing Education Statistics Across the World.* UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Montreal, 2005. http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/ged/2005/ged2005_en.pdf.

Symbols and footnotes: ... No data available
Data in *italics* refer to 2001/02
(p) Data for 2002/03 or later years are provisional
** UIS estimation
– Magnitude nil or negligible

Enrollment: Number of pupils or students officially enrolled in a given grade or level of education, regardless of age. Typically, these data are collected at the beginning of the school year.

Repeaters: Pupils enrolled in the same grade for a second or further year.

Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER): Number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for the same level of education. For the tertiary level, the population used is the five-year age group following on from the secondary school leaving age.

Net Enrollment Rate (NER): Number of pupils in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

Percentage of female students: Number of female students in a given level of education as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled at that level of education.

Percentage of repeaters: Number of pupils who are enrolled in the same grade (or level) as the previous year, expressed as a percentage of the total enrollment in the given grade (or level) of education.

Similar discrepancies appear in other surveys of the Dropout Monitoring Project. The Albanian study reports that according to the Ministry of Education and Science, school dropout numbers were highest in 1991–1992 (6.31 percent) and decreased to 2.3 percent by 2001. According to UNICEF, however, only 82 percent of children who enroll in grade 1 continue to grade 5. Other Albanian sources state that more than 35 percent of students between the ages of 10 to 14 drop out, mostly because of poverty but also (and this is significant) because of poor school quality (Musai, 2003). The authors of the Albanian study conclude that "the declared dropout numbers do not coincide with the real numbers . . . which were significantly higher."

According to the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science (MES) data for the 2003–2004 study year, 2,943 students were detected who did not attend school for more than 10 days without a valid reason. This means that the rate of nonattendance and quitting school in Kazakhstan is 0.1 percent, according to the official data. The MES also states that 2,341 of these children returned to school. In 2002–2003, the Kazakhstan Statistical Agency showed that there were 1,120,005 children of primary school age, in contrast to the MES data for the same year, which shows 1,103,675 children actually in primary schools. The difference is more than 16,000 children or about 1.4 percent of the age group. If the Statistical Agency figures are correct, where are those children? One suspects that the "missing" children never enrolled in school at all, and therefore do not show up in MES nonattendance and dropout figures for Kazakhstan.

In most countries of the study, "tracking" problems were reported in terms of the accuracy of data collection. In Kazakhstan and Mongolia, for example, the school director is responsible for monitoring registration and attendance, but the way in which this is done can be haphazard. In Kazakhstan, it appears that directors make "monthly spot-checks" of attendance, which seems hardly reliable. In Tajikistan, schools are responsible twice a year for recording and registering children who reach compulsory school age (7 years), but there seems to be no systematic way to monitor actual attendance. In Latvia, local authorities are responsible for registering children, but the schools are responsible for ensuring attendance. This task falls in particular to the social pedagogue, in schools that have one. The school administration decides what kind of information it collects and how often. Some schools regularly record student absences, review each case, and have policies for immediate and follow-up action with the help of specialists. But other schools in Latvia collect nonattendance information only once a year, and count only those children who have been "absent from more than half of their lessons without valid reason."[13]

Furthermore, all countries of the study reported inconsistencies in who is, and is not, included in official data. First, there are children who reach compulsory school age but never enter school at all. Examples are refugee children, children with special needs, and children in nomadic or remote communities. Sometimes these children are included

in "nonattendance" figures, sometimes not. Secondly, some statistics cover only the compulsory schooling grades, while others include youngsters who fail to complete (noncompulsory) upper secondary, or those who do not attend preschool.

To summarize, most country studies revealed that current data collection methods do not accurately record school nonattendance and dropout, and fail to describe the reasons for nonattendance. Data are currently collected through school directors according to an "either/or" format: either the child is in school or is not in school, without reference to factors that contribute to poor attendance patterns. School directors, while sympathetic to the challenges children face in attending school each day, can offer few supportive measures to help the children stay in school through difficult times. Disincentives in the system itself prevent accurate reporting and remediation of nonattendance. A few of these disincentives were mentioned above: school budgets may depend on enrollment numbers, teachers' jobs may be at risk if class sizes fall below the norm, and the prestige of the school vis-à-vis the authorities. Some countries found that attendance records were being falsified at the school level to hide the numbers of children not attending school—both on a permanent and day-to-day basis. A case study of nonattendance and dropout in Kyrgyzstan (Eversman, 1999), provides a useful diagram explaining incentives to falsify or suppress school records of nonattendance (see Figure 1), which might apply also to other countries in the region.

Figure 1.
Incentives to Falsify or Suppress Records of Non-attendance
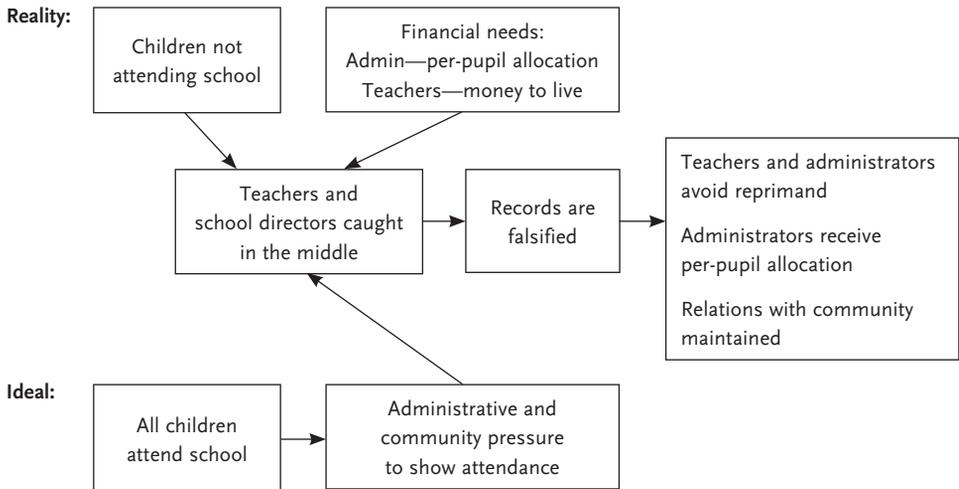
Source: Eric Eversman, "School Attendance in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan." 1999. UNICEF, Bishkek, p.17.

The overall conclusion to be drawn here is that the surveys were unable to discover reliable, comparable, and consistent data on school nonattendance and dropout. Like is not compared with like; data are not gathered in the same way and at similar times in the school calendar; and definitions of "nonattendance" and "dropout" differ not only among countries but within countries as data are collected by different agencies. It is therefore pointless to pretend that valid cross-national comparisons can be made, as long as their statistical bases are unreliable. Despite these limitations, the study presents important information regarding the characteristics of school dropouts as well as those at risk of dropping out and/or nonattending, and examines factors causing school nonattendance and dropout in a variety of settings.

The Disadvantaged, the Disaffected, and the Disappeared

The findings of this study reveal that there is a "core" of children of compulsory school age who are not in school, either because they never enrolled in the first place (these are mostly children with special needs, and children in remote areas or with difficult family conditions), or because—for a variety of reasons—they either reject schools or are rejected by schools. They tend to fall into three categories, with considerable overlap among them: the disadvantaged, the disaffected, and the disappeared.

The disadvantaged

Poverty is the main reason for nonregistration, nonattendance, or irregular attendance, and dropout, according to the surveys conducted for the Dropout Project. It has long been acknowledged that, in any country, poverty reduces the chances of children's access to, and survival in, education. In transition countries, the combined effects of social and economic disruption caused enrollment rates to fall and education budgets to shrink. Evidence suggests that both trends adversely affected the poor. A 2004 survey estimated that of the 44 million children living in former communist countries, 14 million live below national poverty lines (UNICEF, 2004).

The main reason for nonregistration, nonattendance or irregular attendance and dropout is poverty.

The increasing incidence of direct charges, even in compulsory primary education, victimizes the children of the poor—and those without parents—because they cannot afford to pay for books, materials, transport, meals, or supplements to teacher salaries or school building maintenance. Obviously, these children are unlikely to be able to pay even small amounts. As country-by-country data shows, "direct charges" are known by a variety of names to conceal the fact that they are charges for education that should be provided free of charge. These charges can be prohibitively high, and prevent children from enrolling or force them to drop out before they complete compulsory primary school.[14] In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, of 20 countries that legally guarantee free compulsory primary education, 13 charge school fees of some kind.

The pattern of countries that tolerate "direct charges" shows that these charges themselves are poverty-driven. None of the 34 members of the EU, the European Economic Area, or the OECD reported charges in compulsory primary education, with only two exceptions (The Netherlands and New Zealand, where voluntary parental contributions for some school activities are permitted). Poorer countries often find themselves unable to maintain their chronically underfunded school systems without charging formal or informal fees. As the Dropout Project surveys confirm, dropping out seems to be occurring more frequently among the poor. Other studies support the same conclusion. In Bulgaria, the drop in basic enrollment rates was sharpest among children in the lowest 20 percent of family income; in Moldova, absenteeism among poor children has risen as children drop out to join the labor force. At the same time, normal public expenditures on education have dropped substantially. The dramatic rise in the cost of education for private households has especially hurt the poor. The cost of textbooks and school supplies, for example, falls more heavily on low-income families, especially where there are several children in the household.

Most of the Dropout Project surveys cite inability to pay for school supplies and other direct costs charged to families as a contributing factor to dropout. The Mongolia survey notes that, especially for poor families with four or more children, the cost of sending children (boys in particular) to school often makes the family decide it is better to keep them at home, where they can be useful herding livestock or taking care of family members.[15] In the Slovakia sample, 63 percent of dropout children came from families with four or more children, where the net income of 97 percent of these families is below 500 EUR per month. The Latvia survey does not include poverty in the set of dropout factors but focuses more on affective aspects such as self-esteem, although the survey mentions that "a large part of the population [in Latvia] lives under adverse economic conditions." A similar emphasis on affective factors is found in the Kazakhstan survey, although here, too, the majority of families in the survey (63.8 percent) have incomes below 25,000 tenge (approximately 150 EUR) per month, and just over 50 percent of the families have three or more children.

Attainment in education tends to be a good predictor of a person's economic status in later life: on the whole, the "undereducated" are disproportionately represented in the ranks of the poor. The lower the level of education, the greater the risk of poverty. In many transition countries, however, the link between poverty and education is less clear. In troubled economies, the level of educational attainment appears to provide little insurance against the risk of poverty. This observation does not imply that education is irrelevant: rather, it indicates that some of these economies are malfunctioning.

In terms of access and "survival" in education, the poor have been adversely affected by both the fall in family income and the reduction in state support to children (e.g., child allowances, support to single parents, help for children with special needs, free health care). Inequalities in access and survival have emerged on grounds of income, ethnicity, and location (e.g., the results of decentralization to municipalities). All available international research emphasizes that it is important to preserve educational access and school survival for children in poor families. The main reasons are (1) the risk that poverty will be transmitted from one generation to another, creating a permanent "underclass" of poor and unemployed; (2) excluding the poor from education represents a loss to society and to the economy; and (3) children excluded by poverty from education face a higher risk of social problems, health problems, and alienation from mainstream society.

This section highlights four groups of disadvantaged children of compulsory education age. They are Roma, working children, children with special educational needs (SEN), and street children. The laws compelling all children between specified ages (typically 7–15 years) to be in school are not consistently enforced for these four groups. This lack of enforcement is due to a variety of reasons ranging from prejudice (Roma and street children) to the system's inability to provide appropriate support (SEN children) and the necessity for children to contribute to family income (working children). But these are also the same children most at risk of life-long disadvantage, and therefore governments must review their laws and policies to make sure there are no unnecessary barriers keeping these children from exercising their educational rights.

Roma

Enforcement of compulsory attendance is patchy, partly because Roma communities are socially, economically, and often geographically isolated from the majority population. And partly because of a perception that, as a group, Roma parents do not value education and Roma children are either "less intelligent" or less willing to learn than their non-Roma counterparts. Attendance by Roma children is not considered a serious issue in the Dropout Project countries, except for Slovakia. It is also considered a serious issue in countries outside the project, including Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Romania, where there

is a great deal of debate and controversy about access to, survival in, and achievement in schools by Roma children.

In some of these countries, it is common to find a disproportionately large percentage of Roma in schools for the mentally handicapped (Zoon, 2001). The basis for such placements is often purely prejudicial, but officially justified on grounds of (highly questionable) criteria such as weak command of the majority language or difficulty coping with school rules. In Slovakia, for example, institutionalization and dropout among Roma youth with learning difficulties or behavior problems are higher than in the majority population. Also the practice in many schools of placing Roma children in separate classes affects the children's self-esteem and reinforces their sense of isolation and inferiority (Šranková et al., 2004).

Data is difficult to find. There are almost no statistical studies of Roma dropout. Also, not all Roma children identify themselves as such, and ethnicity is not routinely recorded or cannot legally be included in official questionnaires. Ministries of education often have no reliable data, and data available from unofficial sources vary considerably, tend to be anecdotal, and lack verification. This in itself indicates an essential lack of political will to ensure compulsory education for all, not just for some. A recent attempt to compile data on Roma attendance in South Eastern Europe (SEE) found that in 8 of the 11 countries in SEE, data on primary school completion for Roma children was "unavailable" (Bassler, 2005; Education Support Program, 2006). Data were available for Bulgaria, Romania, and Serbia; the percentage of Roma who completed compulsory education, out of the average estimated population, was 35 percent, 25 percent, and 27.5 percent, respectively.

The Slovakia Dropout Project team reports that Roma constitute an estimated 10 percent of the country's population. It finds that Roma pupils are "30 times more likely to drop out, 14 times more likely to repeat grades, and 5 times more likely to receive unsatisfactory marks" (see Slovakia chapter in this volume). Their report concludes that "a combination of political, institutional, socioeconomic and personal factors lead to Roma students dropping out of school." They observe the following:

> It is widely known that many Roma students are unfairly placed in special schools from their first years of schooling, which has far-reaching effects on their future lives. Practically, they are forced out of the standard school system, and consequently— while they do fulfil the conditions of compulsory education—they leave the school system either without completing basic education or with basic education only.

Working children

Another group of youngsters on whom compulsion is only lightly enforced are those who participate in the labor market. Many children of school age find it necessary to earn money

to help support their families, and although there are both international conventions and national laws regulating child labor, certain sectors of the economy (e.g., agriculture) depend heavily on child labor. The Albania survey quotes a UNICEF study (2000) according to which 31.7 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 were working; in the city of Dürres alone, 60 percent of boys over the age of 10 were working.[16] The Latvia survey found that 7.7 percent of the youngsters in the sample are permanently involved in paid employment. However, 29.7 percent take on occasional paid jobs.

A study of children in the cotton fields in Tajikistan, to cite another example, found that 40 percent of the cotton is harvested by children and that on average children in cotton-growing areas work between 60 and 90 days. However, they are paid very little; the report concludes that schoolchildren's contribution to the family budget "is not significant."[17] Local education authorities and schools say they are powerless to enforce attendance during the harvest. To make up for missed classes, they can shorten the winter holidays, but this is not enough to cover the missed curriculum, and children fall behind unless they can pay for additional tutoring. More than 87 percent of children interviewed said that picking cotton had a negative effect on their school work; 67 percent said it had a negative effect on their health (IOM & ERSU "Pulse," 2004).

In some countries, as has been stated earlier in this report, there are conflicting laws about compulsory education and about the minimum age for employment or indeed the minimum age of marriage. The Dropout Project surveys, however, make it clear that the need to work for money or to help at home is a major reason why compulsory school-age children drop out or attend irregularly. There are alternative pathways such as evening schools, correspondence schools, or "self-study," but in reality these alternatives require a great deal of perseverance on the part of the student. The Tajikistan country report states that, among dropout children interviewed for the survey, nearly 75 percent of the children cited poverty and the need to work as the main reasons for dropping out. In Mongolia, nearly 200,000 children have dropped out of school since the start of the transition in 1990. Most of this dropout is among working children (especially boys) who reside in remote areas and who face enormous economic difficulties. Access to education is a formidable challenge for those children who are responsible for herding their family's livestock, often in communities quite distant from one another and the school (320 km in some cases).[18] The Tajikistan report also found that any motivation to continue studying is undermined when children discover that they don't need an education to earn money in petty commerce and that even small service jobs may pay as much or more than a teacher earns. As a result, the report states, "Most citizens are not sure that getting a good education will guarantee a good job."

Special educational needs (SEN)

A third category of children at high risk of nonenrollment, nonattendance, and dropout are those with special educational needs. Here, it is even more difficult to find accurate data, firstly because the definition of "special needs" varies widely, and secondly because few countries have reliable ways of identifying, registering, and monitoring SEN children. Consequently, compulsory education laws are only lightly enforced on SEN children, or not enforced at all—in particular where local schools and communities are unable or unwilling to accept them, or where families cannot manage to get the child to school every day.

Internationally, the proportion of children with special needs varies greatly. Finland reports 18 percent, Italy and Spain fewer than 2 percent. This disparity shows that there is no shared notion of what "special needs" are; it also demonstrates different political and social priorities. Following the highly influential Warnock report (UK 1978), it has been widely accepted that on average between 15 percent and 20 percent of all students will have "special needs" at some time in their school careers (Volpi, 1999). Therefore, if a country reports an exceptionally low number of children identified as having SEN, searching questions should be raised. Identification of "special needs" can have strong discriminatory undertones. The Czech government in 2000 reported to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that 75 percent of Roma children are routed to special schools, which means they cannot continue into secondary schools or acquire vocational qualifications. A 2001 report on similar policies in the Slovak Republic noted:

> The State, which is responsible for the education of all children, has for years been shifting Roma children . . . into special schools for the mentally handicapped [because of their limited knowledge of Slovak language on entering school]. . . . Those Roma children who finish special remedial schools for the mentally handicapped at best find themselves a place in a special occupational training school for blue-collar workers. At worst, they see another side of social exclusion—long-term unemployment (Sobotka, 2001, p. 153).

The international literature on SEN often recommends early diagnosis and appropriate placement as the best way to ensure equal educational rights. In some countries, however, diagnoses are based on superficial and unsophisticated assessments, and placement means institutionalization; in such cases, the long-term consequences for children can be severe. In many former socialist countries, including some covered by the Dropout Project, however, SEN policy is still largely based on a traditional, collectivist approach emphasizing the role of the state. Its main features are: (1) emphasis on institutional, publicly financed care rather than on family-based support; (2) little attention paid to other than *medically* diagnosed mental, physical, or developmental handicaps; (3) large closed or semiclosed institutions (orphanages, special boarding schools).

Reliable data on the numbers of children formally in special education during the Soviet period are scarce. Even scarcer are any data on special needs children who, during those years, fell through the educational net altogether, or who struggled and failed in regular schools where they were expected to cope with regular curricula. Some children never went to school at all, especially in rural areas where "going to school" was hard enough for ordinary children. Since 1991, changes are evident in both quantity and quality of special needs education in the Dropout Project countries. Figures show a rapid increase in the numbers of children identified as having special needs. Numbers are still rising, partly because the definition of "special needs" is now broader, and partly because children previously considered uneducable are now gradually being included in the system. In Latvia, for example, only about 0.5 percent of compulsory school-age children are now not in school due to disability (OECD, 2001).

A final concern about SEN policy in the region is that, contrary to expectations, the total number of young children in institutional care has risen during the first decade of transition. The rate of children 3 years old and younger in infant homes has risen, often sharply, in a large number of the 27 countries covered by UNICEF's Social Monitor 2003. Table 6 shows wide variations in the number of children in institutional care, from 802 per 100,000 for children up to 3 years old in Latvia to 54 in Tajikistan. The question then arises whether some countries use institutionalization as a way to deal with (and forget about?) inconvenient children. To cite the example of Latvia again, although nearly all disabled children are now in [some type of] educational programs, the number of children 3 years old and younger in institutional care rose by 67 percent between 1989 and 2001.

Table 6.

Children in Infant Homes, DO Project Countries (per 100,000 population aged 0–3)

Country	1989	2001	2002
Albania[19]	62.4 [1994]	79.6	n/a
Kazakhstan	123.4	283.7	271.8
Latvia	522.9	876.1	802.9
Mongolia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Slovakia	194.5	280.1 [1996]	n/a
Tajikistan	61.4	52.1	54.5

Source: Innocenti Social Monitor 2004, UNICEF. http://www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/pdf/sm2004/sm2004.pdf.

Street children

It is, of course, not true that children who drop out of school will inevitably end up as street children or juvenile delinquents. Many work hard at supporting themselves or their families, and in some cases the education they were receiving was of poor quality or would not, had they stayed in school, have offered them any worthwhile advantage. It is also true, however, that some children fall through the social net and end up in the streets or in trouble with the police. "Truancy is the kindergarten of crime," it has been said, with only slight exaggeration.[20]

The problem of runaways and minors living without parental supervision is growing in many countries, especially in large cities like London, Moscow,[21] and Naples; it is therefore no surprise that the social turbulence of the transition has created a similar situation in former socialist countries. While each country is in a slightly different situation, many issues are common: the lack of reliable data; the lack of a clear definition of "street children"; and the consequences for children of living in the street, e.g., poor education, social exclusion, and risks of illness, crime, abuse, and child trafficking.

Statistics on street children are often drawn by inference from the numbers of children who do not attend school, confusing the issue of truancy with the issue of street children. But some common features do emerge from the data that are known. The majority of street children are boys; most are between 14 and 17 years old, although there are also growing numbers of younger children, some under 10 years old. They tend to be attracted to city life, partly because there are more places to hide from adult eyes and more opportunities to obtain money and food. Some children are from displaced, refugee, or Roma families, without social ties to the local community. Some are from linguistic minorities for whom regular schooling, employment, and community acceptance are problematic. Some have been in state care or have run away from care institutions, sometimes after experiencing abuse or neglect that make them mistrust adults and adult institutions—including schools. Many are found near railway or bus stations, markets, and shopping centers where small-scale buying and selling, begging, and stealing are easier. All these children are at constant risk: of trouble with the police, of alcohol and drug abuse, and of physical abuse and sexual exploitation. All these children are undereducated, and in danger of being permanent "outsiders" without access to regular employment or a future in mainstream society.

The Dropout Monitoring Project surveys do not focus specifically on street children, although some of the dropout and at-risk children may no longer be living with their families. In Latvia, a survey done in Riga in late 1997 found Latvian-speaking and Russian-speaking children about evenly represented among street children.[22] Their ages ranged from 5 to 15 years, with an average age of 11. They often lived in groups of about 8 to 10 children, with strong internal hierarchies defined by age and physical strength. Most widely represented

(45 percent of the total) was the 9–11 age group, with 12–15 year olds a close second at 40 percent. Most of the children were from Riga itself, but about 10 percent had come to the city from elsewhere in Latvia. A majority came from broken families, and a small but increasing number were runaways from orphanages or other institutions (17.6 percent in 1996, up from 14.3 percent in 1991). Most children in the Riga survey (68 percent) said their families knew where they were; indeed, 74 percent reported that they returned home at night, while the others slept in bus shelters, railway stations, or in the city markets where they could get some food or money by begging. Most were adept at eluding the police, and most reported enjoying life in the streets more than life at home although they still relied on their families for shelter and for an occasional change of clothes. The impression is that, although these children did not have the advantage of a stable family life, many of them had *chosen* life in the street rather than being forced into it in order to survive.

As for school attendance, only 23 percent of street children in the Riga survey said they did not attend school at all; the others said they did attend, although many were at least one year behind their age group. Several children reported that they did not like to go to school because teachers and the other children made fun of them or did not accept them. Because these children still had links with school, family, and other social networks, outreach programs in selected urban schools could be a useful way to reengage them in education—perhaps providing an open learning center with staff trained to work with socially marginalized or "problem" children.

The close link between "children not attending school" and "street children" is clear from recent research.[23] School avoidance among street children is very high, and is cited by many children themselves as one of the main reasons why they left home. Lack of school success, finding the curriculum too difficult, hostility from pupils and teachers, boredom, and the cost of books and school clothes are the most frequently mentioned factors. Also, after the events of 1989–1990, few schools are now able to offer the kind of after-school activities, sports, and clubs that could attract at-risk youngsters to school life and that were part of complementary education under the previous system. The reasons why children take to the streets are several, but there are a number of common factors. First, there are social and economic causes such as poverty, unemployment, poor housing, displacement, lack of basic social and welfare assistance, and the "attractions" and relative anonymity of modern city life. Second, there are family factors: conflict, divorce, alcohol, and drug abuse, and the necessity for both parents to work long hours in order to survive. Third, there are factors related to school: the pressures of school work, expectations of teachers and parents, and lack of success that lead to low motivation in students, and a sense of frustration and failure. Finally, there is a perception (often shared by parents) that the education offered by schools is of low quality, and that the content of the curriculum is irrelevant to these children's lives and their need to earn a living.

The disaffected

Lack of motivation is the second most frequently mentioned reason in the Dropout Project surveys that children are truant, attend school irregularly, or drop out completely. They are bored, uninterested, and think that what the school offers is irrelevant to their present lives as well as their future aspirations. Disaffection is most frequent among adolescent boys, for whom the attractions of life outside school, as well as the necessity to earn money, are strong. But, as the Latvia study shows, disaffection can begin in primary school, from about grade 4 onwards reaching a peak in the first six months of grade 9.

The second most frequently mentioned reason that children are truant, attend irregularly or drop out of school is lack of motivation. This translates into boredom, lack of interest, a perception that what the school offers is irrelevant to their present lives.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, recent studies (OECD, 2001, 2003, 2004) have confirmed that attitudes are powerful determinants of school survival, especially as reflected in a sense of belonging within the school community and participation in school life. The present study of nonattendance and dropout in the former socialist countries confirms these findings. For example, one of the Dropout Project countries observed that "one-third [of students interviewed] do not intend to improve in their school work, 42.6 percent feel uncomfortable at school, and 42.5 percent are not sure that school training will guarantee the best future." Most countries of the study reported that conflicts with teachers and breaches of discipline were frequent in at-risk groups, many students did not receive much support at home, and one-third of them never discussed their problems with parents.

Many of the interviewees for the Dropout Project surveys mention teachers' negative, punitive, and repressive attitudes to low-achieving and nonattending children. These attitudes are clearly counterproductive. Indeed the more severe the official response (e.g., placing children in facilities for "delinquents," categorizing their behavior as "deviant," or taking them away from their families), the less likely it is to motivate them and the more likely it is that their self-esteem will suffer and they will feel resentful and alienated. One startling example of *de facto* push-out was reported by the Mongolia team: A teacher's salary can be reduced if a certain number of her students receive a failing mark (F). Not only is this policy unsound because there is no clear causal relationship between a student's performance and a teacher's effort, but it gives teachers a powerful reason to exclude low achievers from their classes, and to concentrate on the more able children and those who take part in educational Olympiads.

The affective aspect of school attendance receives much attention in the survey interviews, but remarkably little in the legislation, regulations, and school policies relating to truants and dropouts. Their feelings, aspirations, or sense of self-esteem are of no account: yet it is exactly those affective aspects that determine whether a child remains in school past the age of 13 or 14. In one of the surveys for this study, there is a comment that NGOs are more successful in motivating students "because they use interactive methods." Is there any reason why schools cannot do the same? It is important for school systems, school directors, teacher training programs, and teachers to take a critical look at their policies, regulations, and in particular their own negative attitudes toward at-risk children, and to make sure no child is "pushed out" of education merely for the convenience of the school.

It is important for school systems, school directors, teacher training programs, and teachers to take a critical look at their policies, regulations, and in particular their own attitudes toward at-risk children, and to make sure no child is "pushed out" of education.

At the same time, self-exclusion by students through occasional truancy, irregular attendance, and dropping out is a serious problem, and at least part of the "blame" must rest with them and with their families. The Albania study shows clearly that early discouragement and low self-esteem can lead to self-exclusion, through truancy and dropout. Furthermore, young people who drop out of school and leave home early show are more likely to become parents at a younger age and have more children than their more educated peers, and are more vulnerable to progressive isolation resulting from poor and segregated housing, lack of mobility and transport, and lack of access to basic services such as health care and further training/education. The Dropout Project surveys show that where there are good lines of communication among the school, the teachers, the parents and the students, potential attendance problems can be spotted early and resolved with the trust and cooperation of all parties. Early diagnosis and support are crucial.

The disappeared

These children are, by definition, hard to find, and even harder to reach in terms of ensuring their educational rights. First, some children never enroll in school at all. Even in the best-performing countries in the survey, upwards of 5 percent of the ISCED 1 (primary) age group is not in school. This percentage can be much higher where there are large numbers

of refugee children, internally displaced children, nomadic children, or children with special needs in remote communities. Moreover, changes in the socioeconomic conditions of a country can affect initial enrollment. In Mongolia, for example, UNESCO figures show that in 2002/03 only 79 percent of the ISCED 1 group was in school although historically Mongolia has had an excellent primary enrollment record.

Second, some children, for one reason or another, "disappear" from the school system. One reason mentioned in the Dropout Project surveys is the greater mobility of families now that migration within the countries is less controlled. Families move without informing the local authorities; local authorities and schools fail to forward school records; and the system loses track of the child. This may not, of course, mean that the child is no longer in education; children and young people may still be learning where home schooling and apprenticeships are available, but they have "disappeared" as far as the statistics are concerned.

Third, some of the surveys signalled a rising trend among schools to manipulate their enrollment and attendance figures, keeping children on the register while in reality they have ceased attending. Therefore, these children are not counted in dropout statistics, and their "disappearance" is concealed so that the school may continue to claim its per-capita financing as well as hide its attendance problems. Teachers' jobs may also depend on "official" rather than actual enrollment if there is a minimum class size (e.g., "there must be at least 20 children per class to justify the employment of a teacher"). Especially in secondary schools, it is common to find only half or two-thirds of youngsters officially enrolled in a class actually attending the class; the others, according to teachers, are "sick" or "in another classroom."

In all countries of the study there are children who never enroll in school at all or "disappear" from the school system. Waiting until they do not show up at the school door is simply too late.

Better, tighter administrative procedures can resolve most of these problems. The possible exception is the first group, children who never enroll at all. Here, early outreach can identify at-risk children and bring them into early contact with the school system. For example, early outreach might occur through maternal and child health care programs, social and financial support to poor families and single parents, and access to early childhood education. Waiting until children do not show up at the school door at the age of six or seven is simply too late.

Conclusions: Common Themes and Factors

The overall conclusion to be drawn from the Dropout Project surveys, as well as from the international literature, is that there are no reliable, comparable, and consistent data on school non-attendance and dropout. Like is not compared with like; data is not gathered in the same way and at similar times in the school calendar; and definitions of "nonattendance" and "dropout" differ not only among countries but within countries as data are collected by different agencies. So long as statistical bases are not uniform and reliable, it is pointless to pretend that valid cross-national comparisons can be made.

Despite the limitations of the study, a number of common themes emerge, and the same themes are consistently found in international studies of dropout and noncompletion of compulsory requirements. The most common factor in whether a particular child is, or is not, in school is family poverty. The second is lack of motivation (lack of interest) on the part of the student, especially among adolescent boys. Other factors include need to work or help at home; distance from school/lack of transport; family moving or emigrating; health (of student or parent); poor academic achievement; influence of friends who are themselves truants or dropouts; bullying by fellow students (especially relevant to Roma children[24]), teacher or school unfriendliness; and negative perception of the value of school education in finding a job or earning money.

The Dropout Project surveys also identify a number of "precursors" or risk factors that contribute to the likelihood that a child may eventually drop out. Among these, the most common are irregular attendance and truancy; poor academic performance or exam failure; being required to repeat a grade; problems in the child's home environment (divorce, alcohol use, lack of parental support) or other family factors like early marriage (especially girls) or living with other relatives or neighbors because parents are working abroad. Clearly, these factors are interrelated. For example, a child who is struggling academically may be "picked on" by other students or by teachers; sickness at home may lead to irregular attendance, which in turn leads to the child falling behind academically and perhaps having to repeat the year. Moreover, the factors are "cumulative." It is often possible for a child to overcome one obstacle (e.g., the need to help at home), but the risk of dropping out rises exponentially if there are additional ones such as the imposition of school fees, a period of poor health, and/or the death of a parent.

While most of the existing research concentrates on irregular attendance and dropout by students, much less attention is given to contributing factors that are not within the control of students or their families, such as school closures due to lack of heating, teacher absences, or double- or triple-shift school days that require students to travel to and from school at inconvenient times, especially when children from the same family have to attend

at different times. In the surveys, it is striking that schools and teachers do not consider that they themselves may create conditions or set requirements that "push out" disadvantaged or low-achieving students. Schools and school systems must accept that they, too, need to change if all children are to receive the level of education to which they are entitled by law and by international agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Education quality

The study revealed that compulsory schooling laws do not, by themselves, ensure that children of the specified age range are actually in school. All of the surveys for the present study show that there are considerable numbers of children who have never enrolled in school at all, who attend irregularly, or who have dropped out before the end of the compulsory education period. Compulsory schooling laws require only attendance, and because mere attendance does not equal either instruction or education, these laws attach an unreal importance to "being in school," and to that extent they confuse the "quantity of schooling" (often referred to as "seat-time") with the quality of education. Indeed the actual or perceived lack of quality in what schooling offers is one of the key reasons why parents withdraw children from school, or why adolescents decide to drop out. Obviously, law is not the key determinant of practice: there is a wide gap between what the laws (and international conventions on human and child rights) require, and the day-to-day reality of children's lives (Tomaševski, 2005).

School quality is of key importance.[25] It is loosely defined here as the excellence of content, teaching, classroom conditions, and relevance to a child's future life chances. "Motivation" for school attendance will be low where youth unemployment is high, where youngsters may themselves live in families where nobody has a job, and where their prospects of breaking out of the poverty trap appear slight. School "climate" is also an important factor. Negative teacher attitudes, especially toward slow learners or children from disadvantaged backgrounds, are frequently mentioned by dropouts and their parents as reasons for not remaining in school. In some countries, corporal punishment in schools is considered normal practice, and children (especially "problem" ones) may be beaten by teachers even if officially such punishment is not allowed. In addition, families from ethnic minorities, including Roma, feel that their children are often targeted not only by teachers but by other families in the community and even by the police. Once children feel they are not welcome, their self-esteem suffers and they will soon become disaffected and start having problems that lead to low achievement, poor attendance, and dropout.

Student motivation

All Dropout Project surveys conclude that "lack of motivation" on the part of students is a major factor in irregular attendance, low achievement, and dropout. But the question remains: Why does the motivation to learn decline so rapidly around grade 6–7? Are there unnecessary barriers in the system such as tests or an overload of curriculum material that demotivate and discourage students? Or is it a combination of factors, including physiological and psychological changes, as students reach their teenage years? Incentive, inspiration, stimulus, and enthusiasm are some of the ingredients of motivation. So are drive, purpose, self-esteem, and the sense of doing some worthwhile. Is it that classrooms and lessons fail to provide these? In particular, is the common response to at-risk children one of punishment rather than incentives to do better? If society has the right to legally compel children to become educated, then it also has the duty to ensure that such an infringement of the child's liberty is justified and to good purpose. Merely demanding that children know their place and sit still in it for a prescribed length of time is not "education"—it will not, by itself, inspire, or stimulate learning.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Given the lack of reliable and comparable data on nonattendance and dropout, one of the most urgent needs is the development of indicators, which would help policymakers better understand the scope and nature of school dropout and nonattendance in their countries. Indicators used by the Social Protection Committee of the European Union may be relevant in monitoring trends in nonattendance and dropout over time. These indicators address outcomes rather than the means by which they are achieved. The following methodological principles should be applied in determining indicators: (1) an indicator should capture the essence of the problem and have a clear and accepted normative interpretation and (2) the measurement of an indicator should not impose too large a burden on states, on schools, or on citizens. An indicator should be robust and statistically validated; responsive to policy interventions but not subject to manipulation; measurable in a sufficiently comparable way across states, and comparable as far as practicable with the standards applied internationally; timely and susceptible to revision; mutually consistent, and the weight of single indicators in the portfolio should be proportionate; and as transparent and accessible as possible to all institutions (such as schools) and citizens who are affected by them.

Once identified, these indicators should then be prioritized by placing them in three levels: primary, secondary, and special. Primary indicators would consist of a restricted number of lead indicators that have been considered the most important. Secondary indicators would support these lead indicators and describe other dimensions of the problem. Both these levels would be commonly agreed and defined indicators, used by all participating states. There may also be a third level of indicators that participating states themselves decide to include in their action plans, to highlight national specificities, and to help interpret the primary and secondary indicators. These special indicators would not be harmonized across participating states. On the basis of the above principles, the following could serve as indicators in monitoring nonattendance and dropout:[26]

Dropout, Primary Indicators (suggested)
1. Low-income rate, with low-income threshold set at 60 percent of median income (with breakdowns by gender, age, most frequent activity status, household type, and tenure status; as illustrative examples, the values for typical households)
2. Youth unemployment rate (e.g., among 17–24 year olds)
3. People living in jobless households
4. Early school leavers (defined as having left school before obtaining basic educational qualifications) who are not in further education or training

Dropout, Secondary Indicators (suggested)
5. Dispersion around the 60 percent median low-income threshold
6. Long-term youth unemployment, as a share of national unemployment rate
7. Persons with low educational attainment, defined as those without basic educational qualifications required for entry-level employment
8. Children of compulsory school age not enrolled in school and not participating in alternative forms of education (e.g., home schooling or apprenticeships)
9. Children of compulsory school age who are enrolled in school but either do not attend at all or attend irregularly (defined as missing on average more than "XXX" days per school year)
10. Young persons who do not proceed in either education or training beyond the required period of compulsory education

Dropout, Special Indicators (examples)
These could include country-specific conditions: gender issues such as early dropout by girls in Tajikistan or boys in Mongolia, Roma education in Slovakia, and national conditions such as legislative barriers in examinations, child labor, special educational needs, and teacher salaries.

In addition, accuracy and comparability of statistics could be improved by ensuring consistent collection and reporting of comparable data, developing indicators on literacy and numeracy (for example, as measured internationally by IEA literacy studies or PISA) as well as finding ways to monitor groups not living in "private households," especially the homeless but also those living in institutions (e.g., special needs schools, prisons, orphanages). Improved statistical data on school dropout and nonattendance will be invaluable for national legislative bodies, ministries of education, school administrators, local authorities and other policymakers in reviewing their existing policies, formulating new ones, and monitoring trends over time.

While improving the accuracy and comparability of statistical data on school nonattendance and dropout is crucial, some immediate steps should be taken to devise responses to the growing issue of school nonattendance and dropout across the region. Although any specific policy action is always country-specific, the following broad recommendations should be considered by policymakers, ministries of education, local authorities, schools, parents, and students as they address the complex issues of school nonattendance and dropout:

Legislative bodies and policymakers (parliaments and courts)

International human rights law defines education as a universal human right. National laws define education as compulsory (i.e., as a duty placed on children and parents) and also as a right. States are legally obliged to ensure that education is provided for all, which in turn implies that there must be no barriers to education of equal quality for all. Most national laws reflect this dual nature (education as a duty as well as a right) in making at least primary or basic schooling both compulsory and free of charge. However, education must mean more than merely enforcing attendance, especially where schools do not provide what youngsters need and where a high percentage (nearly half) of them say they do not want to be. Furthermore, education must be free of charge at the point of use, at least during the compulsory stage. This study reveals that direct charges (e.g., for school fees, materials, meals, supplements to teacher salaries, building maintenance) have become routine throughout the region due to chronic underfunding of the system. This creates a pattern of economic exclusion of poor children, in many cases made worse by laws that restrict the provision of free education to residents or those with residence permits.[27]

► *Laws should be scrutinized and revised, if necessary, to align with international human rights law* and to ensure that there are no legal or informal barriers that exclude children from exercising their rights. Alignment of education, child labor, and child protection laws is also a priority.

► *Regulations and enforcement practices should be scrutinized to ensure that children are treated fairly and with respect.* The Dropout Project surveys found several unacceptable practices in dealing with nonattending pupils or dropouts, including intimidation, arrest, and placement in institutions for juvenile delinquents or even orphanages. Enforcement of compulsory attendance should be approached in stages, starting with the parents, the school, and teachers; applying legal force should only be considered a last resort when all else fails.

Ministries of education

All countries in the region have adopted new laws on education since the early 1990s, to reflect the new emphasis on democratization and flexibility in educational provision. Many of these laws are now in their second or third cycle of revision, to accommodate realities such as falling birth rates, shrinking school networks, a shift from specialized vocational to general or alternative (often private) types of schooling. Decentralization of some responsibilities to regions or municipalities has also profoundly changed the powers of ministries to ensure that every child's right to compulsory and free education is respected at the local level. As a result, the lines have become blurred between state-funded and fee-paying education, and the lines between ministerial responsibility for all and local responsibility for some. Children, especially those from poor or disadvantaged groups, are often the losers (Klugman, 1997). Ministries must find ways to retain influence over regional and local education, both in terms of access and of quality for all.

► *Ensure equal provision for all.* Social and legal changes have meant that much of the day-to-day responsibility for educational provision has shifted away from the center. But ministries still have two key instruments for ensuring equity: setting standards and monitoring quality. Unfortunately, quality assurance requires reliable data, expertise, trained people, and money—all in short supply throughout the region.

► *Scrutinize education policies and practices to identify and remove possible sources of "push-out."* Examples include unnecessary selection exams; "heavy" academic curricula that place too much emphasis on high achievers; policies on grade repetition; formal or informal fees or charges; relating teachers' salaries to student results; and negative attitudes towards slow learners, minority children, and handicapped children.

► *Empower inspectorates and local education authorities to collect accurate data.* Ministries can set up regular and reliable data collection systems and design valid, reliable ways to assess student learning both nationally and internationally to make sure no child leaves school without the basic competences necessary for living a decent life.

▶ *Set up alternative and second chance opportunities for youngsters who, for one reason or another, are struggling in school or have already dropped out.* There are many good examples, many of them run by NGOs, but their funding is often insufficient and uncertain over time. A more systematic, state-funded approach of small, community-based youth outreach or "drop-in" centers, part-time or evening schools, work-school and supervised apprenticeship programs would encourage youngsters to drop back in. It would also help identify at-risk pupils and prevent them from dropping out in the first place.

Municipalities and local authorities

Municipalities and local authorities can take steps not only to enforce school attendance, but also to provide schools with accurate, timely information about children of school age.

▶ *Work closely with schools.* Depending upon their specific powers in enforcing school attendance by compulsory school-age youngsters, local authorities should provide schools with accurate, timely information about children who will reach school age by the start of the next school year, so that schools are able to check whether these children actually register.

▶ *Monitor not only enrollment, but daily attendance.* Local authorities should frequently monitor actual school attendance, working, if necessary, with social workers or other community services for families and children. They should monitor attendance especially by vulnerable groups such as working children, special needs children, minority and Roma children, and children living without parental protection. There is an incentive for school directors not to report nonattendance or dropout, because this might mean losing money, especially where schools are funded on the basis of student numbers. Most of the Dropout Project surveys found systematic underreporting of unexcused student absences, sometimes because there is no policy to monitor attendance, and sometimes because of political or prestige pressures.

▶ *Involve the police or juvenile courts only as a last resort, if at all.* Punitive measures often make matters worse, especially if they are aimed at children themselves, or at families whose economic or social circumstances are already difficult. In particular, nonattending children should not be brought to court, segregated in institutions for delinquents, or otherwise removed from their families unless there are compelling reasons to do so—for example, if the home environment is abusive or violent. Early involvement by social workers or other support mechanisms is a far more effective way of ensuring school attendance. In Latvia, for example, schools that have a social pedagogue (and possibly a school psychologist) have much better attendance and completion records than schools that do not have such specialists.

School directors and senior administrators

Real differences can be made at the school level. Strong leadership, care for every child, and initiative in providing timely help to at-risk children are key to high retention and completion rates. Most successful are early-warning systems that are quick to identify youngsters who are struggling with their school work, show early signs of disaffection with school such as irregular attendance and conflicts with teachers, or may have trouble at home. It is rarely effective to wait until the pupil is already in serious trouble, has missed a considerable amount of schooling, or has failed an exam or repeated a grade.

► *Set up a roll-call system whereby every teacher checks attendance at the start of each school day (or shift).* Teachers then inform the director's office of any absences, which can then be followed up immediately, as much for the safety of the absent pupil as for the attendance records.

► *Contact the pupil's family and follow up as necessary,* e.g., with the help of a social pedagogue or other member of school staff. Encourage close communication between the family, the school, and the teacher(s) involved.

► *Work in a positive, encouraging way with the at-risk pupil to determine the causes of the irregular attendance, and look for ways to avoid further problems.* If the school work is too difficult for the pupil, for example, arrange for remedial help or special tutoring until the pupil has caught up. If the main cause is conflict with a particular teacher or with other pupils, find ways to resolve the problem by discussing it with all those involved, either together or separately.

► *Help teachers to create a welcoming and friendly atmosphere in school, and try to encourage out-of-school clubs and activities that appeal to youngsters.* Research shows that pupils who feel a sense of belonging and participation are less likely to become alienated and dropout.

Teachers

Teachers play an important role in creating a welcoming and friendly atmosphere in school and developing a sense of belonging and participation among students who are likely to become alienated and drop out. Teachers should encourage and support students to remain in school by taking the following steps.

► *Listen, be aware, and show a positive, tolerant, and encouraging attitude toward at-risk children.* Low achievers are never ridiculed or labelled; teachers understand that their job is not to "select the best" but to provide quality education for all.

► *Be careful (especially in the early grades) to adapt lessons* so that children whose home language differs from the language of instruction are not disadvantaged or labelled unfairly.

- ► *Make no premature assumptions about academic ability or occupational choices.* Each child learns at her own pace, and all paths should remain open for as long as possible.
- ► *Keep a close eye on students showing signs of difficulty.* Look for lack of attention in class, sporadic attendance, low achievement, behavior problems, or nonparticipation in activities or on the playground. All these are warning signs that should be picked up early, and acted upon. Try to get to know the family, and encourage good communication among the school director, the family, the pupil, and the pupil's other teachers so that problems can be resolved quickly.
- ► *Take care not to overload students with unnecessary or repetitive homework, especially if it presumes that children have access to resources at home.* Be flexible in allowing students to make up lost work, or in giving special help if a student is struggling to keep up.
- ► *Use frequent, focused, diagnostic classroom assessment, followed by prompt, formative, non-judgmental feedback to ensure that no child is left behind.* Never use marking and grading to "punish" problem behavior.

References

Surveys Conducted for this study as part of the Dropout Monitoring Project http://epc. objectis.net/Projects/Drop-outs

Albania
Albanian dropout case report. 2005. Tirana: Center for Democratic Education.
School dropout: Predictors and consequences. 2003. Research study in five districts of Albania. Tirana: Center for Democratic Education.

Kazakhstan
Problems of non-attendance and dropping-out of school among 5–9 grade students of secondary schools of general education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. 2005. Almaty: Education Policy Analysis Center.

Latvia
Factors hindering completion of basic education in Latvia. 2005. Riga: Public Policy Centre "Providus."

Mongolia

Mongolian dropout study. 2005. Ulaanbaatar: Mongolian Educational Alliance.

Slovakia

School dropouts—reasons and consequences, Slovakia. 2005. Bratislava: Education Policy Center at Orava Association.

Tajikistan

School dropouts: challenges and ways of addressing them. 2005. Dushanbe: Education Reform Support Center "Pulse."

Selected bibliography

Acemoglu, D. and Angrist, J. (1999). "How large are the social returns to education? Evidence from compulsory schooling laws." MIT Dept. of Economics Working Paper No. 99–30. http://ssrn.com/abstract-237472.

Ainscow, M. and Haile-Giorgis, M. (1998). "The education of children with special needs: Barriers and opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe." Innocenti Occasional Papers No. 67. Florence: UNICEF/International Child Development Centre.

Bassler, T. (ed.). (2005). *Learning to change: The experience of transforming education in South East Europe.* Open Society Institute. Budapest/New York: CEU Press.

Berryman, S. (2000). *Hidden challenges to education systems in transition economies.* Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

Blasco, M. (2004). "Teachers should be like second parents: Affectivity, schooling and poverty in Mexico." In *Compare,* Vol. 34, Number 4, December 2004, pp. 371–394.

Crighton, J. (2004). "The role of education in combating social exclusion." Background paper for the Intergovernmental Conference on Making Europe and Central Asia Fit for Children. Sarajevo: UNICEF.

European Commission, Employment and Social Affairs (2003). *National action plans on social inclusion 2003–2006.* Brussels: European Commission. http//europa.eu.int/comm./employment-social/news/napsincl2003

Eversman, E. (1999). *School attendance in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan.* Bishkek: UNICEF.

Fägerlind, I. and Saha, L.J. (1983). *Education and national development: An international perspective.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Forum of African Women Educators (FAWE) (2000). "A statistical overview of the status of dropout in countries of the East and Southern African region (ESAR)." Nairobi: FAWE.

Godfrey, M. (2003). "Youth employment policy in developing and transition countries —prevention as well as cure." Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

Hunt, T. and Read, T. (2000). "School textbook provision in Azerbaijan." Baku: OSF.

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2003). *Working out of poverty*. Report of the ILO Director General. Geneva: ILO.

Klasen, S. (1999). *Social exclusion, children, and education: Conceptual and measurement issues*. Munich: University of Munich, Department of Economics.

Lines, P. (1985). *Compulsory education laws and their impact on public and private education*. Denver: Education Commission of the States.

Melchiorre, A. (2004). *At what age are school-children employed, married and taken to court?* Paris: UNESCO Right to Education Project, www.right-to-education.org.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. "The rights of the child." Fact sheet No. 10. Geneva: OHCHR-UNOG. Web site http://www.unhchr.ch/html.

EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program. (2003). "Monitoring minority protection: Equal access to quality education for Roma." Draft. Open Society Institute, EUMAP.

Open Society Institute for Education Policy. (1999). *Multicultural education and the education of minority pupils*. Budapest: OSI/EIP.

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) (2004). *Education at a glance*. Paris: OECD.

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) (2003). *Student engagement at school: A sense of belonging and participation. Results from PISA 2000*. Jon Douglas Willms, ed. Paris: OECD.

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) (1998). *Overcoming failure at school*. Paris: OECD.

Ramirez, F.O. and Boli-Bennett, J. (1982). "Global patterns of educational institutionalization." In Altbach, P.G. et al., ed., *Comparative Education*. pp. 15–36. New York: Macmillan.

Randall, L. and Anderson, J.B. (eds). (1999). *Schooling for success: Preventing repetition and dropout in Latin American primary schools*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe Publishers.

Rimkeviciene, V. (2001). *The cost of pupils' non-attendance and school year repetition*. Vilnius: OSF.

Sobotka, E. (2001). 1+ 1 = 3: Roma in the Slovak education system. *Central Europe Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2, January 15, 2001.

Srankova, Z., Higo, Y., and Lafuente, C. (2004). *Education sub-sector review: Slovakia*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University; and Slovakia, Center for Education Policy, Orava Association.

Tomaševski, K. (2003). *Education Denied: Costs and Remedies.* London/New York: Zed Books.

Tomaševski, K. (2005). Globalizing what? Education as a human right or as a traded service. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies,* Winter 2005, Vol. 12 Issue 1. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

UN Commission on Human Rights. Katarina Tomaševski. (2000, 2002). *Reports from the Special Rapporteur on the right to education.* UN Docs. E/CN.4/2000.6 and E/CN.4/2002.60. New York: United Nations.

UNESCO/Institute for Statistics (2005). Comparing education statistics across the world. *Global Education Digest 2005.* Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/ged/2005/ged2005_en.pdf.

UNESCO/International Bureau of Education (1951). *Compulsory education and its prolongation.* Report to the XIVth International Conference on Public Education. Paris/Geneva: UNESCO/IBE.

United Nations (1989). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.* New York: United Nations.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2003). Education as a preventive strategy against child labour. Evaluation Working Paper of UNICEF's Global Child Labour Programme. New York: UNICEF.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2003). *Children in institutions: The beginning of the end?* UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Innocenti Insight Series No. 8. Florence: IRC.

Van Dycke, N. (2001). Access to education for the poor in Europe and Central Asia: Preliminary evidence and policy iImplications. Technical discussion paper. Washington: The World Bank, ECSHD.

Volpi, E. (1999). *Inclusive education at work.* Paris: OECD.

Volpi, E. (2002). Street children: Promising practices and approaches. *WBI Working Papers.* Washington: The World Bank Institute

World Bank, Foundation SPACE, Ineko and Open Society Institute (2002). *Poverty and welfare of Roma in the Slovak Republic.* Bratislava: The World Bank.

Zoon, I. (2001). *On the margins: Roma and public services in Romania, Bulgaria and Macedonia.* New York: Open Society Institute.

Annex 1

Country-Specific Definitions and Regulations

Term	Albania	Kazakhstan	Latvia	Mongolia	Slovakia	Tajikistan
Compulsory education age	From age of 6 to 16 *Source: Pre-university law, nr. 7952, date 21.06.1995*	From age of 6/7 to 17/18 *Source: Constitution of RK, Article 30; Law on Education, Article 4 and 24*	From age of 7 to 18. Compulsory preschool education from 5 or 6 years of age *Source: Law on Comprehensive Education*	From age of 8 to 15 *Source: Law on Primary and Secondary Education, 7.2* Note: From 2004 every child has to be enrolled in school when he/she reached the age of 7. *Source: Ministry of Education, Law of Education 12.4*	From age of 6 to 16 or 10 grades From age of 7 to 17 in case of deferred school entrance—on request from parent or school psychologist *Source: Act No 29/1984 Col. on the network of elementary and secondary schools (i.e. Law on Education) and its amendments, Article 3 on compulsory school attendance*	From age of 7 to 16 or 9 grades *Source: Law on Education*
Compulsory education grades	1–9 grades including: • 1–6 grades —primary • 7–9 grades—lower secondary *Source: Decision of Council of Ministers, nr. 538 date 12.08.2004*	1–11(12) grades including: • 4 grades at primary school • 7 (8) grades at secondary school *Source: Law on Education, Article 24*	1–9 grades (basic/ primary education) *Source: Law on Comprehensive Education*	1–8 grades (primary education delivered in 5, basic education in 9, and full secondary education in 11 years) *Source: Law on Education 3.1.2; 6.2; 6.3*	1–10 grades including: • 9 grades at elementary school (1–4 primary, 5—lower secondary) • 1 grade at secondary *Source: Act No 29/1984 Col. on the network of elementary and secondary schools (i.e. Law on Education) as amended, Article 6*	1–9 grades including: • 4 grades at primary school • 5 grades at secondary *Source: Law on Education*

Term	Albania	Kazakhstan	Latvia	Mongolia	Slovakia	Tajikistan
Excused/ unexcused absence	Not regulated at national and local level	Excused absence: 3 days (without medical certificate, but with note from the parents explaining the reasons). Unexcused absence (truancy)—without any medical certificate or other proven cause	Parents for students in grades 1–4 can ask for excused absence and non-attendance if they provide reasonable arguments and organize home teaching. According to school rules, parents can excuse their child's absence from school for 1–3 consecutive days, sometimes there are exceptions Source: Instruction of MoES (IZM 27.11.2003. instrukcija nr.7)	Health reasons/ the inability to continue study was determined by medical committee, participation in Olympiad or similar events organized at school, aimag, national and international levels (based on teachers decision to admit to the next level or repeat the grade) Source: Law on Primary and Secondary education 20.1.3	Based on school statistics record: excused/unexcused absences. Parents can excuse their child from school for 5 consecutive days any number of times during school year	Excused absence: 3 days (without medical certificate, but with note from the parents explaining the reasons) Unexcused absence (truancy)—without any medical certificate or other proven cause

Country-Specific Definitions and Regulations *(continued)*

Term	Albania	Kazakhstan	Latvia	Mongolia	Slovakia	Tajikistan
Non-attendance	Not regulated at national and local level	Child does not attend school in the case that he/she has a medical certificate prescribing home study. Certificate is issued by a commission consisting of 5 medical specialists headed by director of polyclinic	Nonattendance of school's 1–4 forms is allowed in special cases when parents can argue child has special needs and they can provide home teaching. *Source: Instruction of MOES (IZM 27.11.2003. instrukcija nr.7)* Child can miss classes if he/she has medical certificate prescribing home study. Medical certificate is issued by a pedagogical medical commission or family doctor *Source: Instruction of MoES (IZM 26.05.2000. instrukcija nr. 8)*	Missing classes, irregularly attending classes due to lack of appropriate living conditions	If the child has more than 15 hours of unexcused absences in one month, parents don't receive governmental child support benefits for that month, but the benefits go to the social welfare department at the municipal level *Source: Act No. 600/ 2006 on child benefits and on amendment and addition to the Act No. 461/2003 Col. on social insurance and Act No 596/2003 on state school administration and school local government, Article 5*	If the child missed more than 25 days of school consecutively and has no medical certificate, the school has the right to expell him/her from school

Term	Albania	Kazakhstan	Latvia	Mongolia	Slovakia	Tajikistan
School Enrollment/ intake	August 31 for every 6-year-old child. In special cases the parents or school can postpone the enrollment for one year based on a medical examination *Source: Pre-university Law, nr. 7952, date 21.06.1995*	In accordance with the Law on Education, children must enroll in school after reaching the age of 6 or 7 *Source: Law on Education, Article 24*	Children are enrolled in school upon his/her parents' or his/her own request (in case if she/he is 16 years old). Parents can ask to postpone enrollment for a year, if child has health problems confirmed by family doctor *Source: Instruction of MoES (IZM 27.11.2003. instrukcija nr.7)*	Every child has to be enrolled in school when they reach the age of 7 *Source: Law on Primary and Secondary Education, 2002. (Took effect September 2004)*	In September for every 6-year-old child, unless parents/school psychologist request school enrollment deferral *Source: Act No 29/1984 Col. on the network of elementary and secondary schools (i.e., Law on Education) and its amendments, Article 3 on compulsory school attendance*	Children must enroll in school when they become 7 years old *Source: Law on Education*
Non-enrollment	n/a	Not enrolling in school is allowed only in the case of proven medical reasons	Not allowed	No official definitions for nonenrollment	n/a	Not enrolling in school is allowed only in the case of proven medical reasons

Country-specific definitions and regulations *(continued)*

Term	Albania	Kazakhstan	Latvia	Mongolia	Slovakia	Tajikistan
Repetition	All grades except first and second grade. Pupils repeat grades if they fail more than three subjects *Source: Pre-university Law, nr. 7952, date 21.06.1995*	Students repeat grade if: • At the end of the year he/she failed in two subjects (the final mark for the year of studies in this subject is "2") • he/she did not attend school for the whole year without valid reason	Students repeat the grade if: • From grades 1 to 4 his/her marks at the end of the year are below 4 or unsatisfactory • From grades 5 to 8 and grades 10 and 11 his/her marks at the end of the year in some subjects are below 4 or unsatisfactory The teachers board makes decision on school repetition. Parents are informed five days before decision so they can attend meeting *Source: Instruction of MoES (IZM 27.11.2003. instrukcija nr.7)*	• At the end of the year, if pupil received "F" mark in subject they can study for a period and take another exam. If they receive a "D," they can be admitted to the next level. If they receive an "F" the second time, the F mark will be registered in a private document with notice of hearing about the grade, and an explanation of reasons for failure. The principle will make a decision based on teachers, pupil and parents agreement and on the schoolteachers' committee *Source: Regulation on assessment and evaluation of secondary school pupil's knowledge, skills and behavior– 5.11 of order No.259, 1998 by the Minister of Education*	• All grades can be repeated • 1st grade can be repeated only once • Child repeats a class if he/she fails in at least 1 subject. Committee exam can be requested if child fails 1 subject. If child receives unsatisfactory mark (5) from more subjects, child automatically repeats the grade *Source: Methodological guideline of the Ministry of Education of the SR 2489/1994 on evaluation and grading of elementary school pupils*	Students are left to repeat the grade if: • At the end of the year he failed in 3 subjects (the final mark for the year of studies in this subject is "2") • Did not attend school during the whole year without proven cause

Term	Albania	Kazakhstan	Latvia	Mongolia	Slovakia	Tajikistan
Repetition (continued)				• Excused absence due to bad health, family difficulties are reasons for repeating the grade. Based on the teachers committee decision, pupils can be admitted to the next grade; made to repeat the year; graduated; or expelled *Source: Law on Primary and Secondary Education 20.1.3*		

Country-specific definitions and regulations *(continued)*

Term	Albania	Kazakhstan	Latvia	Mongolia	Slovakia	Tajikistan
Reasons for deleting a pupil from school registry before reaching compulsory education age	In case of emigration confirmed by local government authorities and school director or medical cases based on a medical report. *Source: School law, instructed by Ministry of Education, 2002*	Deleting a pupil from school registry before the age of 16 is done in exceptional cases by relevant institution of educational administrators for the following reasons: • breaking the law • repeated violation of the school regulations *Source: Law on Education, Article 24*	Every child has the right to be accepted in school in his/her district. Deleting pupil from a primary/compulsory school registry before age of 18 is allowed: • If a student is receiving the education in another country and is absent for more than a year, he is deleted from the school registry within two weeks time. The school informs parent about this and guarantees to enroll student upon return. • If a student has changed a school and it is approved by documents from the new school. *Source: Instruction of MoES (IZM 27.11.2003. instrukcija nr.7)*	Repeating a grade. Deleting also occurs if family difficulties require transfer to another school.	It is not possible to delete a pupil from school registry during his/her compulsory education age (only in case of death, moving out of country, etc.). Every child has the right to be accepted in school of his/her district. Parents can select school for their child in other district if the school agrees to accept child from outside of district. School can refuse a child or transfer the child if he/she does not live in the school district. *Source: Act No 596/ 2003 on state school administration and school local government*	Deleting a pupil from school registry before the age of 16 occurs in exceptional cases by decision of relevant educational administrators for the following reasons: • breaking the law • repeated violation of the school regulations

Term	Albania	Kazakhstan	Latvia	Mongolia	Slovakia	Tajikistan
Conditions for graduating from compulsory education	If the pupil has received satisfactory points (ranging from maximum of 10 to minimum of 5) and has passed final exams in literature, Albanian language and math, the pupil receives compulsory education certificate	As established by the government of Kazakhstan, educational institutions, including schools, which are licensed and carry out educational programs, can issue a state recognized document ("svidetelstvo" or "attestat") certifying the completion of basic or secondary level of education to pupils who successfully pass final examinations. Pupils who do not meet these criteria can obtain a certificate of attendance. The state recognized document is required for continuing studies at the next level of the education system *Source: Law on Education, Article 16*	If student has unsatisfactory marks in no more than three subjects by the end of grade 9. If student has unsatisfactory marks in more than three subjects he receives a report card only, but not a certificate of basic education *Source: Instruction of MoES (IZM 27.11.2003. instrukcija nr.7)*	• After completing the 8th grade, if the pupil has satisfactory marks in all subjects and passes the final exams in math and Mongolian language, he/she receives a certificate of compulsory education. • If the pupil has unsatisfactory marks in three or more subjects and/or didn't pass the final exams, he/she receives a report card but not a certificate of basic education	Compulsory and basic education do not overlap in Slovakia. Compulsory education is 10 years, which means a child needs to be in school for 10 years of compulsory schooling. It is possible for a child not to complete basic education during the 10 years of compulsory education *Source: Act No 29/1984 Col. on the network of elementary and secondary schools (i.e. Law on Education) and its later amendments*	If the pupil has received satisfactory marks and has passed the final exams, the pupil receives a compulsory education certificate

Country-specific definitions and regulations *(continued)*

Term	Albania	Kazakhstan	Latvia	Mongolia	Slovakia	Tajikistan
First qualification requirements (Full basic education)	The same as compulsory education	The pupils who have completed 9 or 11 grades of school must take final state examinations. The results of the examinations are certified and documented by the state *Source: Law on Education, Article 16*	Completion of the 9th grade of primary (basic) education *Source: Law on comprehensive education*	• Basic education certificate (an educational certificate that officially documents the citizen's acquired educational level and professional qualifications) *Source: Law on Education 9.1* • Pupils fulfilling the basic education content standard receive basic education certificate. • Pupils fulfilling the secondary education content standard receive secondary education certificate *Source: Regulations on handing down educational certificates to graduates of secondary and professional educational organizations 2.1–2.2.*	Completing 9 grades of elementary school (reaching first qualification) (Slovak grades 1-4 correspond to primary education, Slovak grades 5–9 correspond to lower secondary level of education) *Source: Act No. 29/1984 Col. on the network of elementary and secondary schools (i.e., Law on Education) and its later amendments*	Completion of the 9th grade of basic education

Annex 2

Statistics on Enrollment in Dropout Project Countries, UNESCO 2005

Albania (o)

	ISCED 1 2002–2003	ISCED 2/3 2002–2003
Enrollment (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	252,829	376,107
% Female	48	48
Gross enrollment ratio	104	81
Net enrollment rate	95	77
Repeaters (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	3 %	4 %
Survival rate to last grade 2001/02 to 2002/03	...	
Dropouts, all grades (%), 2000[*]	10.0 (y)	
Out-of-school children, 2001[*]	7,200 (z)	

Kazakhstan

	ISCED 1 2002–2003	ISCED 2/3 2002–2003
Enrollment (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	1,120,005	1,976,390
% Female	49	50
Gross enrollment ratio	102	92
Net enrollment rate	91	87
Repeaters (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	1,558	–
Survival rate to last grade 2001/02 to 2002/03	98	
Dropouts, all grades (%), 2000[*]	5.2	
Out-of-school children, 2001[*]	122,300	

Latvia (o)

	ISCED 1 2002–2003	ISCED 2/3 2002–2003
Enrollment (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	103,359	236,949
% Female	48	50
Gross enrollment ratio	94	95
Net enrollment rate	86	88
Repeaters (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	2 %	1 %
Survival rate to last grade 2001/02 to 2002/03	98	
Dropouts, all grades (%), 2000[*]	3.2	
Out-of-school children, 2001[*]	14,700	

Mongolia

	ISCED 1 2002–2003	ISCED 2/3 2002–2003
Enrollment (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	238,676	295,874
% Female	50	53
Gross enrollment ratio	101	84
Net enrollment rate	79	77
Repeaters (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	1 %	–
Survival rate to last grade 2001/02 to 2002/03	92	
Dropouts, all grades (%), 2000[*]	11.5	
Out-of-school children, 2001[*]	32,700	

Statistics on Enrollment in Dropout Project Countries, UNESCO 2005 *(continued)*

Slovakia (p)

	ISCED 1 2002–2003	ISCED 2/3 2002–2003
Enrollment (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	284,312	456,029
% Female	49	50
Gross enrollment ratio	101	89
Net enrollment rate	87	87
Repeaters (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	3 %	1 %
Survival rate to last grade 2001/02 to 2002/03	98	
Dropouts, all grades (%), 2000[*]	1.7	
Out-of-school children, 2001[*]	36,500	

Tajikistan

	ISCED 1 2002–2003	ISCED 2/3 2002–2003
Enrollment (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	694,930	922,795
% Female	48	45
Gross enrollment ratio	111	86
Net enrollment rate	...	**83
Repeaters (For ISCED 2/3—general programs)	2,080	1 %
Survival rate to last grade 2001/02 to 2002/03	99	
Dropouts, all grades (%), 2000[*]	3.5	
Out-of-school children, 2001[*]	15,700	

Source: Global Education Digest 2005. Comparing Education Statistics Across the World. Montreal, UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Note: *Source: Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report 2005—The Quality Imperative, available at http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35939&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html*

Symbols and footnotes: (y) Data are for 1999/2000
(z) Data are for 2000/2001
(p) Data for 2002/03 or later years are provisional
(o) Countries whose education data are collected through UOE (UNESCO/OECD EUROSTAT) questionnaires
... No data available
Data in italics refer to 2001/02
** UIS estimation
– Magnitude nil or negligible

See Glossary on p. 90 for explanation of terms.

Glossary for UNESCO tables

Enrollment: Number of pupils or students officially enrolled in a given grade or level of education, regardless of age. Typically, these data are collected at the beginning of the school year.

Repeaters: Pupils enrolled in the same grade for two or more years.

Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER): Number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for the same level of education.

Net Enrollment Rate (NER): Number of pupils in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

Percentage of female students: Number of female students in a given level of education as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled at that level of education.

Percentage of repeaters: Number of pupils who are enrolled in the same grade (or level) as the previous year, expressed as a percentage of the total enrollment in the given grade (or level) of education.

Survival rates to grade n: Percentage of a cohort of pupils (or students) enrolled in the first grade of a given level or cycle of education in a given school year who are expected to reach a given grade (n).

Out-of-school children: Children in the official school-age range who are not enrolled.

Notes

1.   Females still earn less than males with similar levels of educational attainment, both in OECD and non-OECD countries, and the gap shows little sign of closing.

2.   This is commonly pointed to as having been the main driving force for early compulsory education laws: the need to create a large pool of literate manpower in an industrial economy. However, there is no clear causal link between industrialization and compulsory mass schooling. The fostering of citizenship seems historically to have provided a far stronger reason for compulsory education than the training of manpower for industrializing nations. Sweden (1842), Denmark (1814), and the United States (as early as 1642 in Massachusetts) had compulsory education laws long before they industrialized. Some (Austria, 1774; Spain, 1838; Greece, 1834) never industrialized at all, at least not on a national scale. More likely, the initial driving force for compulsory literacy was the need for social cohesion and stable citizenship.

3.   Article 26 states: "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory."

4.   UN Doc. E/CN.4/SR 68 (1948).

5.   In the early drafts, terms such as "primary, elementary, fundamental, basic" education were used, often interchangeably, often translated between official languages with much difficulty. These difficulties were resolved and the word "primary" agreed upon.

6.   See, for example, *Student Engagement at School: A Sense of Belonging and Participation* (OECD, 2003); and *Education At A Glance*, (OECD, 2004).

7.   For data, see www.pisa.oecd.org.

8.   For younger children, the influence of disaffection is less strong, partly because they have less power to make their own decisions about going to school, and partly because younger children, up to about grade 4, tend to retain more of a sense of interest in, and enthusiasm for, learning and are less likely to have major conflicts with teachers.

9.   Structural indicator used by Euro stat, Labour Force Survey.

10.   A number of countries require parents or guardians to ensure that their children are educated, but do not insist that this happens in state or private schools. In the United States and the UK, for example, "home schooling" is increasingly popular with parents who are dissatisfied with the quality, content, or methods of formal schooling. Laws often require that such arrangements are in line with state standards, but parents are not normally required to have teaching credentials, and supervision by local authorities is light or nonexistent.

11.   In addition, the law (Article 20) also allows for special facilities for "persons with deviant behavior" and special institutions for children who (on the basis of a court decision) systematically violate school rules, commit a crime, or for "rude and repeated violation of the educational organization Charter." By contrast, in Latvia expulsion from school is a rare and complex procedure, and even year-long absentees cannot legally be expelled. School directors can, however, try to persuade parents to withdraw or transfer a child.

12.   Net enrollment rates (NER) refer to the number of children in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

13.   This procedure is set out in Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, No. 439.

14.   Poor children often have to work to pay for their own primary schooling. Globally, only 10 percent of child workers age 5–14 are also attending school (ILO, 2003).

15.   See, for instance, the so-called "Meat Requirement" (1996–2000) in Mongolia; to keep dormitories open, parents were required to contribute 70 kgs of meat (the equivalent of 2 or 3 sheep) per child per school year. Many herding families could not afford this; although the requirement was withdrawn in 2000, many children by that time had already lost several years of schooling, and were not likely to return.

16.   This estimate includes all children performing any paid or unpaid work for someone who is not a member of the household. See Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) (UNICEF, 2000), 2, , http://www.ucw-project.org.

17.   Less than 100 somonis total (77.3 percent of children) or between 100 and 200 somonis total (11.3 percent).

18.   *Mongolia Dropout Study* (2005), pp. 3 et seq.

19.   Data for 2000–2001 are estimates based on April 2001 census.

20.   Leeds (UK) Juvenile Court, "The Leeds Truancy Project," (1985).

21.   According to Moscow police figures at the end of January 2004, as many as 40,000 homeless children were living on Moscow's streets and in subway underpasses. Most of these (about 80 percent) came from regions outside Moscow, having run away from poverty or from alcoholic or abusive parents. The deputy mayor said their number had tripled since 2000. A Kremlin order in 2002 has apparently produced "a special police force to take these children off the streets." But because real street kids know just how to evade the authorities, the deputy mayor admitted that, last year "police mistakenly arrested about 10,000 minors who were simply walking without their parents and held them in police cells while checking their identity."

22.   *Project "Child in the Street"* Riga: Higher School for Social Work and Social Pedagogy 'Attistiba' and the Centre for Criminological Research (1997).

23.   For a comprehensive bibliography on street children, see http://www.geocities.com/joel-mermet/streetchildren.html (last updated August 2002).

24.   Nonenrollment, nonattendance, and early dropout are frequent problems with Roma children, not only because of poverty or cultural/language difficulties, but because these children are often met with hostility by their classmates, their teachers, and the non-Roma community. See 2004 study by Zuzana Šranková et al. on dropout among Roma children in Slovakia. Roma pupils in Slovakia are "30 times more likely to drop out, 14 times more likely to repeat a grade, and 5 times more likely to receive unsatisfactory marks." See also Ina Zoon, *On the Margins: Roma and Public Services in Romania, Bulgaria and Macedonia* (2001).

25.   For a detailed investigation of quality in education, see *Education for All Monitoring Report 2005: The Quality Imperative*, http://portal.unesco.org/education/en

26.   Note that these suggested indicators are compatible with the benchmarks agreed to by the Education Council of the European Commission.

27.   Croatia reported in 2001 that primary education is free and compulsory, but only for citizens. Those without citizenship have no right to free education, and "undocumented" Roma or refugee children may not go to school at all. United Nations (2001). See Katarina Tomaševski, "Globalizing What—Education as a Human Right or as a Traded Service?" for an excellent discussion of these issues.

Country Reports

Chapter 2

Albania

Bardhyl Musai and Elona Boce

Introduction

Overview of the dropout situation

Dropout research in Albania[1] emphasizes the link between dropout and factors such as poor economic conditions, low educational level of the family, employment of the child, obligation to parents, and the child's lack of motivation to continue going to school. The distance of the school from the village, especially in rural areas, has been another factor in the reduction in enrollment numbers (UNICEF, 2000). Ashton (2000) points to the involvement of children in agricultural tasks as a major reason behind dropout.

Design of the study

Sampling

Quota sampling was used to determine the dropout samples in the selected districts: (n=63 in Dibra, n=47 in Korça, n=78 in Shkodra, n=91 in Tirana, and n=22 in Vlora). These

districts were selected as the study sites because they were the areas where the incidence of dropout was most prevalent according to local education representatives, who were appointed as coordinators of the districts and were also in charge of the verification of the data collected.

The sample (n=301 dropout children) was composed of children aged 7 to 17 (x=13.84; σ=1.49). The percentages of dropouts were 45.5 percent girls and 54.5 percent boys, respectively. The dropout periods varied from 1996 to 2002.

The comparison group was composed of children attending school (n=150) and children at risk of dropping out (n=100).[2] Fifty percent of children attending school were girls and 50 percent were boys. The ages varied from 10 to 14 years old. For the at-risk group, 30 percent of the children were girls and 70 percent were boys. Their ages varied from 10 to 15 years old. Purposive sampling was used to select the children.

Instruments

Structured interviews, self-administered questionnaires, and observations were used in the study. The instruments measured the following categories:

► Individual attributes: attendance, academic performance, involvement in school activities, involvement in deviant behavior
► Family makeup: economic status, family composition, parental participation in school activities
► Peer influence: number of peers, dropout friends
► School environment: teaching quality, facilities and resources, effectiveness of the school policies and practices, school climate, teacher involvement

In particular, the instruments were administered as follows: a) interview with the dropout child; b) interview with parent of the dropout child; c) self-administered questionnaire for the teacher of the dropout child; d) interview with the child who attends school; and e) interview with the at-risk child. In order to assess the learning environment in the schools involved in the study, the Learning Environment Schedule (LES) was used. The LES was adapted from a version of the School Quality Index (1995), which is used to assess the quality and organization of the learning environment, physical premises and settings, well-being of the children, and classroom activities.

The interview instrument for the dropout child consisted of 37 items. The child was asked to give information about his peers, parents and family, employment, school, actual and previous physical, emotional, mental and social status, as well as the reasons why he/she dropped out of school.

The interview instrument with parents included 27 items. The parents were asked about demographic and economic information such as the child's birthplace, migration, economic status, family composition, employment, education, and reasons for child dropping out.

The questionnaire for the teacher of the dropout child was self-administered by the teacher. It had 32 items. The teachers gave general data about the child, on the behavior and attitudes of the child, his/her relations with the child and his/her parents, and the reasons for the child dropping out according to him/her.

Data collection

District coordinators identified the areas and schools where the dropout phenomenon was most problematic. After conferring with school directors, the number of dropout children from each school to be included in the study was defined. A list of their names and family addresses was also secured. School directors worked with the teachers to complete the questionnaire and to collect data on the dropout children. District coordinators completed the learning environment schedule. Data collection was carried out during February and March 2003. Interviews with children and parents were generally conducted in their homes; teacher questionnaires were completed at school.

Data processing

Data analysis and research report writing were carried out at the Center for Democratic Education. The Statistical Processor of Social Sciences (SPSS-11) was used for data analysis. Statistical analysis included frequency distribution tables, mean and standard deviation (when necessary), cross tabulation results among variables, and the Pearson correlation of coefficient calculation. The analysis was carried out with a group of 87 variables.

Findings and analysis

Dropout indicators: Attributes of dropout children

The study looked at a number of attributes pertaining to individual children before they dropped out of school: aggressiveness, a disorderly attitude and character while at school, behavior toward teachers and peers, violation of school regulations, smoking and/or use of drugs, the child's interest and motivation toward school, involvement in class, the child's belief that school guarantees a better future, satisfaction in academic results, repeating a grade level, attendance, entertainment in school, and sensitivity toward school failure.

Aggressive behavior displayed before the child dropped out of school was assessed through the teachers' impressions. Teachers observed the children's behavior in environments where they were freer, such as at play or on breaks. Past studies have discovered that aggressive behavior can be a dropout indicator, yet this was not supported by the results of this study. Aggressiveness was reported in only 1.7 percent of dropout children, though some teachers noted aggressiveness in 18.3 percent of students. In 74.4 percent of the dropout cases, teachers thought that the students were not aggressive. However, the reported number of aggressive boys was higher than that of aggressive girls. There was no relation between parental alcoholism and child aggressiveness. The fact that aggressiveness was reported at higher levels in boys could be explained through the "culturally based expectation that boys are more likely to be violent than girls" (Clark, 2003). This excludes the possibility that boys who drop out of school are particularly aggressive.

Teachers reported slightly higher numbers for disorderly conduct. There were twice as many boys as girls reported as having a disorderly character. Aggressiveness did correlate positively with disorderly attitude during schooling (0.451, p<0.01). Disorderly attitudes and character problems were generally not dominant among dropout children. On the other hand, gender differences were significant, which could support the explanation of why there were more male dropouts. The results on teachers' views about aggressiveness, disorderly behavior, and character problems showed significant positive correlation. This indicates that these factors are interrelated, i.e., the higher the aggressiveness, the higher the tendency for disorderly behavior or a character problem. Conversely, the correlation could further indicate that there is a potential connection between disorderly conduct and character problems and school dropouts.

Sixty-four percent of the children reported that they behaved decently with teachers during schooling, 24.6 percent of them reported that that they did not behave decently all the time, and 2.3 percent admitted that they were never good with any of their teachers. Teachers reported that 69 percent of the dropout students had not had any conflicts with them, 17.6 percent stated that disagreements were rarely reported, and 1.7 percent said that disagreements were frequent. The answers from teachers and students on disagreements could be correlated, although the relation was not particularly strong (0.138, p<0.05).

Disagreements between dropout children with school peers were reported by the dropouts themselves and their teachers. The highest percentage (47.8 percent) of children never had disagreements with their peers, while 41.2 percent sometimes had disagreements. Only 2.7 percent reported that they usually fought with friends. The children's answers correlated positively, but not strongly with the teachers' answers (0.205, p<0.01). The tendency to have disagreements with school peers was three times higher for boys than for girls in teachers' responses, but four times higher in the children's responses.

There was no difference among the number of children who reported disagreements with school peers and among those who did not. The difference was not significant compared to children who attend school. However, children at risk of dropping out reported higher levels of disagreements with school peers compared to actual dropouts. This led the survey team to consider disagreements with peers as a predicting factor.

Only 4.7 percent of the dropouts admitted that they usually violated school regulations, 44.5 percent admitted they sometimes did, and 39.5 percent never did. More boys than girls reported violations of school rules. The breaking of school rules seemed to predict dropout behavior. This was reported by half of the children who dropped out, especially boys. Violations were 1.5 times more frequent in dropouts than in nondropouts, but were 1.5 times less frequent in at-risk children. Nevertheless, the study did not assess the rule violation per se, but the perception that the child had about the violation. It was assumed that the child understood more or less what a "violation" was, based on school rules.

Teachers were asked if students smoked or took drugs. No drug use was reported in any of the cases. The teachers' and children's responses on smoking correlated positively, but the coefficient was not high (0.279, p<0.01). Nevertheless, the responses did not cover the same period because teachers responded about the period when the child was in school. Possession of guns was reported in only one case (0.3 percent).

According to teachers, 39.9 percent of the dropouts showed no interest toward school, 37.2 percent were somewhat interested, and 22.3 percent were interested. Average motivation for learning among dropouts was reported in 6.3 percent of the cases, random motivation in 41.9 percent, and low or no motivation was reported in more than half of the cases (50.5 percent). The number of girls with high motivation and satisfaction within school was slightly higher than that of boys.

Participation in class was reported as being frequent in 18.6 percent of the cases and rare in 44.9 percent of them. Only 35.5 percent participated randomly in class. Participation and completion of class work correlated positively with one another. A student who did not participate in class was less likely to complete work related to the class.

Nonparticipation in school life had been defined by other studies as a predicting factor for dropping out. In this study, it appeared that nondropouts were involved in extracurricular activities five times more than dropouts and 3.5 times more than at-risk children. Teachers reported that dropouts engaged in outside entertainment or leisure activities with school peers during their school hours.

Repeating a grade was observed in one third of the dropouts, which made the survey team consider repetition as an indicator for dropping out. Thirty percent of the dropouts were students who repeated a grade level while 69 percent did not. Fourteen percent of the students had regularly attended school, 45 percent somewhat regularly, and 40 percent very irregularly.

In most cases, the teachers reported very poor academic performance by the dropout children. Good results were reported in only five cases (1.7 percent) and moderately good results in 49 percent. Among the dropout children, 39.2 percent reported that they did not feel satisfied with their own results in school, 31.9 percent felt very unsatisfied, and 11.3 percent were satisfied. There was no significant gender difference concerning the level of academic results. More than half of the dropout children did not seem to worry about school failure. Children involved in the study had dropped out of school mainly in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades.

Family makeup

Thirty percent of the families of dropouts had migrated after 1990, while 68 percent had not. The mean number of children in those families was four ($\sigma = 1$). Sixty-nine percent of the families had four or more children. Ninety-three percent of the children had both parents, while 5.6 percent had only a mother, 0.7 percent had only a father, and another 0.7 percent had no parent. Ninety-two percent of the children lived with both parents, whereas 8 percent lived with one parent or grandparents. Five percent of the parents were divorced. Twenty percent of the parents had emigrated.

In the families of dropout children, usually one member was employed ($\sigma = 1$). In 21 percent of those families no one worked, and in 56 percent only one family member worked. In 16.6 percent two persons worked, and in 3 percent of the cases three persons worked. More than three persons were employed in 2.3 percent of the families. Fifty-eight percent of the families reported that their monthly incomes were less than 10,000 lek.[3] Twenty-six percent of them reported incomes of up to 20,000 lek, and only 7.3 percent reported that their incomes were more than 20,000 lek. Thirty-five percent of the families received social assistance, while 65 percent did not. Forty-three percent of the parents stated that their housing was sufficient for the family, whereas 55.5 percent thought otherwise.

Regarding the dropouts' fathers, 7.3 percent did not have any schooling; 6 percent had not completed basic education; 73 percent had completed basic education; 10.5 percent had completed secondary education; and 0.7 percent had university education. As for the dropouts' mothers, 13.3 percent had no education; 5 percent had not completed basic education; 77 percent had completed basic education; 3 percent had secondary education; and 0.3 percent had university education.

Fifty-four percent of the fathers were employed, while 44 percent were not employed. Seventeen percent of mothers were employed, whereas 82 percent were not employed. The most common jobs of dropout children's fathers were construction workers, farmers, guards, and informal traders. The most common positions for mothers were as farm workers, cleaners, informal traders, or other workers.

Alcohol abuse from family members was reported in 11 percent of the cases. Teachers and students alike responded to questions about the existence of family problems. It was found that there was no significant correlation between their answers, although it was noted that more teachers reported problems in dropouts' families than did dropout children themselves.

Thirty percent of dropout children reported that their parents were never interested in whether or not they did their homework. Another 45.8 percent reported that parents sometimes showed interest, and 12.6 percent of parents were usually interested. Also, 60.1 percent of the children interviewed said they never received help from their parents in completing their homework, while 5.3 percent reported that they frequently received help from their parents.

Parental interest in schooling was six times more frequent in nondropout children than in dropout children, and 4.7 times more frequent than in at-risk children. Parents assisting children in studying was reported to be twice as high in nondropout children compared with dropouts, and was 1.7 higher in at-risk children. Dropouts and at-risk children reported that their parents met their teachers five times less than nondropouts did. It should be noted that teachers reported more frequent disagreements with the parents of dropouts. Based on the results, the survey team inferred that parental involvement in a child's schooling can be a predictor of the child's positive attitude toward school.

More than half of the dropout children reported that their parents only sometimes met with their teachers. On the other hand, teachers reported even lower numbers of parents communicating with them. The teachers reported that 33.6 percent did not have good communication with the parents of dropout children, while 28.2 percent of them reported they did have good communication. More than one third of the dropouts did not regularly converse with their parents. This number was three times higher than in nondropouts and almost the same with at-risk children. The survey team therefore posited that lack of communication with parents could be a predicting factor for dropping out.

The majority of the fathers and mothers of these children completed only basic education, which supports the thesis that dropout children come from families with low educational backgrounds. Fathers' employment was three times higher than that of the mothers of the dropouts. However, a considerable portion of the mothers and fathers reported that they were unemployed, which underscored the difficult economic situation of these families.

The supposition that children whose parents were dropouts are most likely to drop out themselves was supported by the results of this study: A considerable number of dropout children had at least one parent. Having a father who dropped out increased the risk of a male child dropping out, but not a female child. The survey team correlated this with the supposed closer identification of boys with their fathers.

Peer influence

The mean number of peers of dropout children was three ($\sigma = 2$). About 29 percent of dropouts reported that all their peers attended school, 40 percent reported that only some of their peers attended school, and 26.6 percent reported that none of their peers attended school. Four percent of dropouts reported that all their peers were employed, 26 percent reported that only some of them were employed, and 62.5 percent reported that none of their peers were employed. School attendance and employment negatively correlated with each other (-0.310, $p < 0.01$).

The percentage breakout for children who reported that they had more than two friends was 45 percent for dropouts, 90 percent for nondropouts, and 87 percent for at-risk children. Hanging out with friends was twice as frequent for nondropouts compared to dropouts and 1.5 times more frequent than in at-risk children. Dropouts reported that the number of their friends who attended school was three times less than that of nondropouts. Dropouts had 1.5 times more friends who were employed than nondropouts had. This, it was surmised, suggests that peer influence could predict dropout behavior.

School environment

School environment was assessed by the following four factors: school organization, setting and physical environment, well-being of the children, and classroom activities.

The results revealed inefficient organization within the schools, with most of them not having clear and defined plans to improve their facilities, environments, or services. Student government was absent in most schools, resulting in poor representation of student interests in the school body. In addition, the school council (board) did not function in 40 percent of the schools, indicating that parents and the community are not involved in school life. Classroom conditions, such as the number of desks, space, climate, hygiene, and organization, also left much to be desired. The drinking water system and unusable toilets posed further problems.

The fact that children in most schools did not have an opportunity to participate in recreational activities could be related to the low level of satisfaction with school. Most schools lacked health programs and the ability to address the well-being of each child. The results also showed that a considerable number of schools did not promote group work activities, encourage critical thinking, or support other student-centered learning activities. Teachers did not require the use of the school library and its books, perhaps because schools have limited library resources or do not have updated books. It appeared that the materials used by teachers were not resources provided by the school.

All these factors, the survey team concluded, created a partially functioning and restrictive learning environment; an environment where there were no standards, where

the teaching and learning methodologies were wanting, and where student assessment was at best questionable. Given these factors, the overall school environment leaves little to the imagination; in short, conditions were conducive to dropping out.

Causes of dropout

The causes of dropout were reported by the teachers, parents, and the dropout children themselves. The responses from the teachers and parents correlated positively (0.973, $p<0.01$). The responses from the teachers and students correlated positively with each other (0.820, $p<0.01$). The responses from the parents correlated positively with those of the children (0.749, $p<0.01$).

There existed a strong positive correlation among the causes of dropping out as reported by teachers and parents. These answers could then be considered as determining factors. However, the correlation coefficient was likely to decrease between adult (teacher and parent) and children's responses. This was attributed to the probability that adults tended to be less straightforward than the children.

Poor economic conditions proved to be the main indicator for dropping out of school according to teachers and parents. Lack of willingness on the part of the child and lack of parental participation in the child's school activities were significant indicators as well. According to the children, however, lack of willingness and interest in school was the main reason for their dropping out.

Based on the results, the survey team has argued that the explanations provided by teachers, parents, and children on the causes outside the socioeconomic factors could be construed as value judgments. Thus, in this study, it was maintained that economic conditions could be the most observable factor behind the dropout incidence in Albania; this, of course, does not preclude the influence of the other indicators assessed in this study.

Recommendations

A.   General level (macro-level)
- ► Accelerate implementation of the national strategy for poverty reduction in accordance with the millennium objectives.
- ► Provide assistance to rural and suburban families.
- ► Set up and apply sustainable systems for data registry at the country level.
- ► Formulate policies that allow schools to have a data management system and provide basic data and standards on all students.
- ► Develop and implement a system for data gathering on dropouts and use this in order to identify at-risk children.

- ► Carry out research studies that inform teachers and the public about factors that lead a student to drop out.
- ► Ensure state and local policies that examine the consequences of success and nonsuccess of the school in performing their job. These policies should hand over the responsibilities to schools through a system that identifies progress and lack thereof found in the schools.
- ► Formulate curricula and teaching strategies that are specific to at-risk children.
- ► Build wider collaboration links with the community aiming at at-risk children services.

B.   Specific (micro-level)

- ► Intervene early in order to prevent dropouts—the timing of intervention is critical.
- ► Identify and focus on potential dropouts and check their progress.
- ► Train school staff to identify at-risk children.
- ► Select teachers who are interested in working with at-risk children.
- ► Select school staff based not only on subject area competence, but also on the quality and willingness to ensure a caring and respectful climate that responds to the child's needs.
- ► Encourage and support programs that motivate parents to participate in all levels of their child's education. The dropout problem is a community, economic, and social problem; families and community organizations should work together to develop a collaborative program for its prevention.
- ► Educate children so that they meet the demands of a developing society, and not simply to search for employment in the job market that requires few skills.
- ► Review policies and school procedures related to teacher-student communication, discipline, attendance, suspension, poor academic results, and repeated grade levels.
- ► Implement strategies to teach children basic academic skills, and reassess educational programs to meet the actual interests and long-term social and economic interest of the student.
- ► Create a positive atmosphere in the classroom and school. The student should feel part of the school and view it as a supportive environment that encourages the individual and cares about his/her success; at-risk children need positive reinforcement about their performance.

It is obvious that there is no quick and simple solution to the dropout issue. Dropout children have varied characteristics and need different programs to meet their needs. In order to be effective, programs should pay attention to at-risk children so that warning signs can be detected and addressed. At-risk children should be identified at a younger age and be continuously supported. Success in early classes decreases the possibility of dropping out. The key to reducing the dropout level is to help these children not be overwhelmed by feelings of alienation from school.

Curriculum should include basic educational skills, social skills, and experience-based skills. Moreover, the interrelated causes and various problems linked to dropping out need comprehensive models, which are based on the community with multicomponent services and programs.

Not all the factors related to dropout reduction are manageable by the school. Solutions, too, are not achievable only by the school. This is a problem of national gravity that requires the attention and cooperation of all sectors of the society. It requires resources that go beyond the school and solutions that extend beyond the classrooms. It requires nothing less than the combined and concerted efforts of students, parents, leaders, organizations, and state bodies.

References

Ashton, C., et al. (2000). *Global education project: Evaluation report for second phase.* Tirana: MOE, IPS, UNICEF, International Institute for Global Education, University of Toronto.

Bashkia, T. (2002). *Vlerësim i nevojave për informacion dhe shërbime sociale në qytetin e Tiranës.* Tiranë: UNICEF.

Beqiri, B. (2003). "Varfëria, 30% e shqiptarëve në skamje". *Gazeta Shekulli,* e diel, 27 korrik. 11.

Clark, M.E. (2003). *Aggressiveness and violence: An alternative theory of human nature.*

Dispozita normative për shkollat publike.

Elbasanit, Q.I. (2003). *Nxitja e zhvillimit rajonal nëpërmjet objektivave të R mijëvjeçarit.* Tiranë: UNDP.

Erikson, E.H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis.* New York: Norton.

Palomba, G., and Vodopivec, M. (2000). *Financimi, Efektiviteti dhe Barazia në Arsimin Shqiptar.* Banka Botërore.

Hazizaj, A., Pano, A., and Barkley, T.S. (1998). *Trokitja e analfabetizmit: Studim mbi shkaqet e braktisjes së shkollës nga fëmijët shqiptarë.* Tiranë: CRCA.

Musai, B. (1999). *Psikologji edukimi*. Tiranë.

Sondazhi i matjeve të standardeve të gjalla (1996), as cited by Palomba, G., and Vodopivec, M.

*Strategjia kombëtare e zhvillimit ekonomik dhe social. (*2003). Këshilli i Ministrave të Republikës së Shqipërisë. Tiranë.

*Strategjia kombëtare për zhvillimin ekonomik dhe social.(*2003). Këshilli i Ministrave të Republikës së Shqipërisë. Tiranë.

UNICEF (2000) *Raporti i MICS*. Tiranë.

UNICEF-Albania. (2000). *Assessment of social and economic conditions of districts in Albania.*

U.S. Department of State. Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs: Albania. (2005). Retrieved from: http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm. September 2005.

Çabiri, Y., and Xhillari, L. (2002). *Shqipëria dhe Objektivat e Zhvillimit të Mijëvjeçarit*. Qendra për Nxitjen e Zhvillimit Njerëzor. Tiranë.

Notes

1.   Area: 28,748 sq. km. (slightly larger than Maryland in the United States). Major cities: Capital—Tirana (700,000). Others—Durres (400,000), Shkoder (81,000), Vlore (72,000). Terrain: Situated in the southwestern region of the Balkan Peninsula, Albania is predominantly mountainous but flat along its coastline with the Adriatic Sea. Since the fall of communism in Albania in 1991, the country has played a constructive role in resolving several of the interethnic conflicts in south central Europe, promoting peaceful dispute resolution and discouraging ethnic-Albanian extremists. Source: http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm.

2.   Children at risk of dropping out are identified as potential dropouts because of the high number of consecutive absences but still are not declared to be dropouts.

3.   Clark, M.E. *Aggressiveness and Violence: An Alternative Theory of Human Nature* (2003.)

4.   Lek is Albanian currency; 1 US$ = 100.99 lek.

Chapter 3

Kazakhstan

Saule Kalikova, Zhanar Rakhimzhanova,
Aigul Tagatova, and Natalya Shilikbayeva

Introduction

Overview of the dropout situation

By law, dropout children do not exist in Kazakhstan. In reality, however, dropout children do exist. Some are officially recognized, while others are officially enrolled in schools but do not attend regularly. Most of the children not attending school are members of big families, and most of these families may be catagorized as low income and of low social status. The survey shows that the main reason for nonattendance is lack of interest in studying. Other reasons include poor performance in school, poverty, migration, conflicts with teachers and classmates, unfavorable school environment, and financial and health problems.

Information base

Statistical data on the issues of enrollment, dropout, and attendance of school-age children are collected by various organizations at different levels. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the State Statistical Agency, and others are involved in this process. Reports are then prepared according to an agreed form. The form provides the following criteria for the registration of school-age children:

► Children who are not enrolled in school due to illness and therefore are not legally obligated to attend school
► Children who are not listed with any educational establishment
► Children not attending school for 10 days or more a month
► Children who do not attend school due to migration or lack of interest in studying, or who are under investigation by the authorities

In accordance with the Dakar Framework on Education for All (EFA) of which Kazakhstan is a signatory, Kazakhstan has developed an integrated National Plan of Action on EFA that will go to 2015. One of the priority tasks of the plan is to ensure the full enrollment of school-age children in general secondary compulsory education. This requires the collection of a large amount of information at preschool and primary levels of education on enrollment, survival rate by grades, gender aspect, and age categories.

Based on the results of this study, however, data on attendance provided by the MIA and the MES were frequently irreconcilable. In general, MIA figures were several times higher than MES figures. This was due to the different methods used by each in calculating the number of children not attending school. In addition, the primary source of statistics collected by the MES is the school director who may have an interest in not reporting actual figures on nonattendance. Arguably, poor attendance is tantamount to poor performance, both grounds for the administrative punishment or dismissal of school directors.

In the process of this research, it also became evident that although data on nonattendance is regularly collected, the information usually is not published in the official statistics. Not only is the existing data inaccessible, but it is also unreliable because of an ambiguity in the use of such terms as "dropout," "nonattendance," and "nonenrollment." Furthermore, the data is insufficiently coordinated between different departments/ministries within the country and not comparable with international standards.

Design of the study

The purposes of the study were to identify the reasons for nonattendance and dropping out of school-age children from the general secondary schools of Kazakhstan, and to identify the degree of impact of different factors on this issue.

Research tools

► Quantitative method: survey questionnaire of students, their parents, and teachers
► Qualitative method: individual in-depth interviews
► Analysis of Kazakhstan's legislation on the full coverage of school-age students, nonattendance, and dropping out of students of general secondary schools
► Analysis of available statistics

The survey included 200 students at general secondary schools, 54 parents of the students, and 53 teachers. The results of this study are based mainly on interviews of nonattending students. In addition, 42 individual interviews were held with the following: 1 representative of the Department of General Secondary Education of MES; 4 representatives of city (district) departments of education; 15 managers of schools on educational work; 10 students who changed school due to the reason not related to the change of place of residence; and 12 regular students.

The target groups included the following:

► Dropout students: students who completely quit school for reasons not related to moving or exercising the right of free choice of school
► Nonattending students: students who are on the list in a given school, not attending classes for 40 days or more during the academic year for reasons other than being ill

The study was conducted in the cities of Almaty, Aktau, and Pavlodar as well as in neighboring villages: Raimbek and Zhetygen (Almaty oblast); Kzyl-Orda and Mangyshlak station (WKO); Moildy, Kemzhekol, and Leninsky (Pavlodar oblast).

Findings and Analysis

On collecting data on dropout and nonattendance

Spot checks are conducted once in August and once in January, to collect data concerning children's (6–17 years) enrollment, those who quit, and those who are not attending as provided for by Kazakhstan's MES rules 3.09.2001 N 701-2/645. The Rayon Department of Education (RDE) is responsible for organizing and controling this process. RDE representatives reported that monthly spot checks were only conducted three times a year in September, January, and March.

The RDE identifies where the children who quit school are continuing their training; the children's documents are supposedly kept by the new school. On migration, the RDE cooperates with the regional police departments, which keep records of people coming and leaving the country. However, the dropout survey team found a number of cases in which such identification could not be accomplished; the children were not found in their new schools or registered places of residence. This was attributed to the upsurge in migration, which confronted schools with the enormous challenges of registering children, particularly from migrant families. The upsurge in migration was in turn attributed to the effects of "perestroika" and the consequent relaxation on registration and passport policies.

It has become almost impossible to track people migrating within the country or a particular region or city. The only way to locate the children of migrant families is through the registration coupons from school. When, for whatever reason, parents do not register their children, it takes the educational body months, and sometimes years, to identify the new school and residence of their former students. The consequences are such that a lot of time and money is spent on tracking such children and the limited resources of the government, which could have been spent on salaries, are spread even thinner. In the worst case, a school is held responsible for the "unaccounted" or "missing" children even if there is no evidence that these children are from that particular school. The severity of problems in the system of collecting data and tracking school-age children in Kazakhstan is best manifested by this survey response:

> By the end of 2003–2004 academic year, we identified 50 students who were not attending school. At the present time, 6 of them have changed their place of residence and 2 are wanted by the police. The remaining students have returned to school and are continuing their education. Every year we collect a great number of documents and conduct monthly visits to students' homes to confirm whether students have moved to another city and need to be taken off the register. We learn from the neighbors where the family has moved, send inquiries there, and wait for a reply. Sometimes it takes us months and years to locate the students.

Social status

Most of the children not attending school were members of large families: half of the families had three or more children. Every sixth family had more than four children. The most typical was the family with two or three children. According to the results of the survey, most of the families were categorized as low income: the total income of more than 60 percent of the families was below US$200. Considering that 87 percent of the surveyed families had two or more children, it was safe to assume that more than half of the surveyed families lived below the poverty line.[1] Only 6.5 percent of the families had standards of living that may be considered average (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.
Total Income of Family
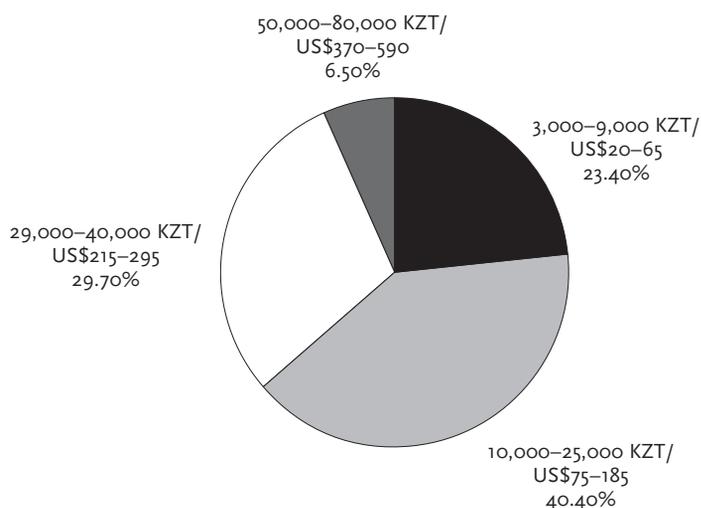
Based on the responses from the questionnaires, 51.9 percent of students lived with both parents; others lived in broken families or with single/unwed parents. One child did not have parents, 40.7 percent of the children were brought up by their mothers only, and 5.6 percent by their fathers. Also, 59.1 percent of the surveyed mothers did not work. In 46.4 percent of the families, both the mother and father worked (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.
Presence of Parents

Does Child Have Both Parents?
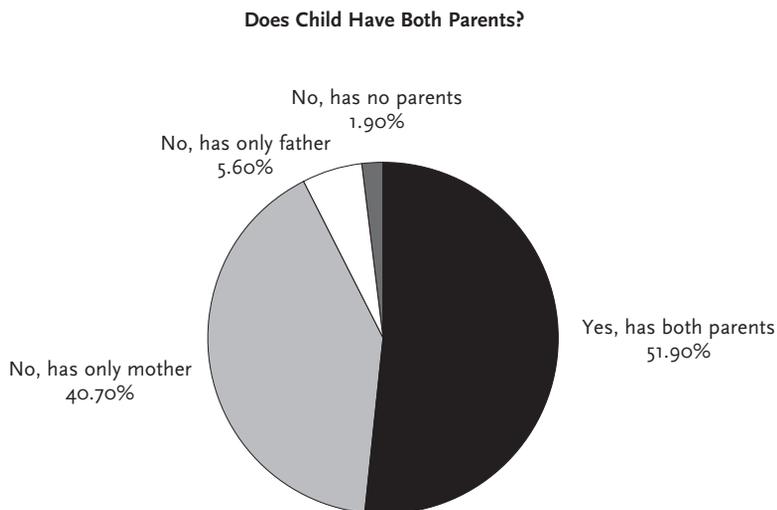
Attitude to education and relations within the family

Most of the parents (79.6 percent) did not want their child to drop out, some were indifferent, and others agreed with their children dropping out or missing school. In 18.6 percent of the cases, the parents themselves had once dropped out of school or had not attended classes. Sixty-three percent of the parents agreed with the statement that school guarantees a good future; 35.2 percent were not sure.

The results reinforced the teachers' views that children from these families do not receive support from parents in their studies and that there are problems in the family (77.4 percent). Most of the parents (54.5 percent) met with their children's teachers at school meetings or the meetings organized on the initiative of the teachers and the school administration; 15 percent of the students were reported not to have received any help from the parents in doing their homework.

Based on the results, it could be surmised that the families of children not attending school may be characterized as having low financial status, low social status, and problems related to the upbringing of the children, including a lack of attention to the children.

Nonattendance from the teachers' point of view

Teachers observed that nonattendance was caused by the following factors: parental neglect (12); problems in the family, including parents' drinking, and conditions at home not conducive to study (10); children's lack of interest in studying (9); preoccupation with computer games (6); and peer influence (5). The duties of a class teacher in Kazakhstan include talking to parents of students who do not attend school. This is done through individual consultation with the parents, or by calling the parents to the Council on Prevention of Law Violation, or by going through juvenile inspection with the student. However, 81.1 percent of the surveyed teachers noted that such measures were only effective at certain times.

Students' response

Former classmates of dropout students cited the following reasons behind dropping out: lack of interest in studying (54), family reasons (26), poor progress at school (22), illness (19), negative impact of friends (16), need to work (15), financial problems (11), conflicts with teachers (9), and tardiness (9). When dropout students were asked, "Would you like to attend school regularly?" 52 percent said they would, 16 percent would not, 23 percent were not sure, and 9 percent wouldn't answer (see Figure 3).

Figure 3.
Responses to the Question "Would You Like to Attend School Regularly?"
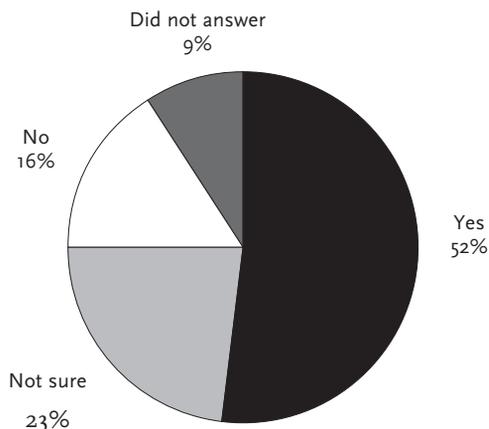
It is interesting to note that those who did not attend school due to lack of interest in studying, poor progress, and tardiness were also those who did not want to attend school in the future. When asked, "What needs to be changed at school so that you could come back to school?" the children suggested certain improvements: e.g., reduce students' training work load, improve conditions of life at school, repair the school, and solve heating problems. The students also indicated that the break between classes was too short, and this fact and the requirement to wear a school uniform influenced their decision whether to attend school again.

Seven out of 10 students transferred schools two to three times. Another two transferred due to conflicts with the administration and, as a result of their school council's decision, were later expelled. One student transferred because of a conflict with classmates. Other reasons for transferring included the relocation of the family, desire of the student to live with relatives, or special requirements such as the need for language training.

Profile of the nonattending student

The survey also attempted to determine whether a student's perception of himself/herself as an individual, in school, and in society had any influence on nonattendance at school. The results showed that most of the students (60.5 percent) were pleased with themselves and believed they had good character traits (51.5 percent). They noted having such traits as kindness, willingness to help, sense of responsibility, diligence, cheerful nature, and humor. Twenty-four percent indicated that they did not have any good qualities.

As to whether they were satisfied with their progress in school, 36.5 percent indicated they were partly satisfied, while 20 percent were dissatisfied. The rest indicated that they intend to pay more attention to their studies or to take additional studies to improve the situation. One third of the students who were not satisfied with their marks responded that they would not take any measures to improve their progress at school. In addition, 42.6 percent reported being uncomfortable in school; 45 percent were not sure.

As to communication with parents, the results showed that 32.5 percent of the children never talked with their parents about their problems. The survey team surmised that this is an area where there is a lack of appreciation and understanding by the parents of the student's plight in school. The logical inference is that this is a precursor to dropping out. This conclusion is supported by another finding from the students' survey in which more students (36.5 percent) than parents (14.8 percent) indicated that parents did not mind their children missing classes. However, most parents (79.6 percent) reported that they did not want their children to drop out, while 5.6 percent said they did not care.

Regarding beliefs about the benefits of education, 42.5 percent of children doubted or did not believe that school training would guarantee them a better future, while more parents believed it would. Half of the students (56.5 percent) said they know what they want to become in the future and what profession they will engage in. Among the most popular professions they identified were doctor, driver, lawyer, and cook. Some wanted to be soldiers or cosmonauts.

Teachers noted that among students surveyed, most were not interested either in the process of studying or in training. According to teachers, only 11.3 percent of the children were interested in acquiring new knowledge and doing their homework; and 45.3 percent were only sometimes interested in their studies. According to homeroom teachers, only 1.9 percent showed high results in the studies. Although 66 percent of the students were reported not to have high results in their progress, 62.1 percent did not care about their results. Fourty-eight percent of the students from the surveyed groups never participated in extracurricular activities.

Description of children by teachers

Teachers indicated that 44 percent of dropout children sometimes or usually showed aggression, while 66 percent showed good behavior. Half of the students were sometimes or always displeased with the teacher and were impolite to him or her. The teachers indicated that the most typical manifestations of aggression were a rude attitude toward teachers and classmates, and fighting.

Peer influence

In terms of social association, the survey revealed that all students in the study had friends: 75 percent had friends who were of the same age as the students, while 25 percent had friends who were older. The association with older friends as well as the association with friends who were also dropouts (2.5 percent) and friends who worked (4.6 percent) had an influence on dropping out.

Students' health and habits

Responses varied on the general health conditions of the students: 23 percent of the parents said their children were unhealthy while 72.2 percent thought their children were healthy. Those who believed that their children were unhealthy cited colds and headaches as the most frequent reasons. The teachers, on the other hand, indicated that smoking and drug

use were the reasons why children appeared weak or ill, and believed these were the same reasons why the students do not pay attention in class or appear to be slow learners.

The overall reaction of the teachers about the dropout situation is best captured with the following responses:

"Often it is enough to find an individual approach to the pupil."

"No, we don't have a right to exclude a child from school. We are obliged to fulfill the provision about general compulsory education. An exception is if the parents are not able to feed their child, and he must work—say, if his mother is an invalid or she is alone— then we may transfer a pupil to the evening form of training. Moreover, this question may be settled only by the Commission on Juvenile Rights."

"We had a case where the principal personally took a pupil to school. Early in the morning he would come, wake him up, and bring him to school and for every class check to make sure he was there."

"Duties of schools and teachers should be specified, and also obligations of the parents and local executive bodies, especially in the education law. At present, teachers are forced to make household rounds. This is illegal. Teachers have no authority to do this. They are not paid for this kind of work. Many children are not registered in the place of residence. Who must control this? Who is responsible for this?"

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Legislation and laws

► The analysis of legislation and laws pertaining to the dropout issue showed that there is a problem of definition and distinction between "dropout student," "nonattending student," and "nonenrolled." In the Kazakhstan context, "dropout students" are those children who quit school because of, among other reasons, family relocation or their own illness. A child who dies is also listed as a dropout. A "nonattending" student is a student who misses school for more than 10 days in a month without a valid reason. The headmaster has five days to report information about children who do not attend school.

► The problem of dropping out is riddled with dubious, if hidden, inconsistencies: official data does not reflect the actual situation. Despite the attention of state authorities to the program on attendance at school (the Vseobusch program), the program

is intended to monitor rather than to prevent dropout. As a result, school administrations end up not providing reliable information in order to avoid administrative punishment.

Socioeconomic status of families

► Nonattending children mostly come from families with many children and live below the poverty line: 40.7 percent of the children are brought up only by mothers; 59.1 percent of all mothers from the surveyed families don't work; and parents mostly engage in unskilled occupations.

Dropout reasons

► The survey showed that the main reason for nonattendance is lack of interest in studying. Other reasons include poor performance in school, poverty, migration, conflicts with teachers and classmates, unfavorable school environment, and financial and health problems. However, it should be noted that these other reasons frequently serve as the root cause of students' disinterest in studying.

Main recommendations

► Clearly define, by legislation, the following terms: "dropout student," "nonattending student," and "nonenrolled," taking into account the international context of dropout.

► Legally define and delineate the responsibilities of all entities involved in the process of ensuring general secondary education for school-age children: parents, teachers, representatives of school administration, local authorities, and education management authorities.

► Improve the efficiency of the state program (Vseobuch) through: (a) the creation and review of funding mechanisms to prevent regional disparities; (b) greater transparency and reporting to society about the program through the publication of annual reports with access via a website.

► Strengthen departmental coordination involved in this process among a range of agencies, including Kazakhstan's MES, MIA, Health Ministry, Migration Committee, Statistical Agency and others.

► Create and maintain a database on nonattendance and dropout.

► Develop indicators to monitor the situation and introduce into practice a periodic monitoring inspection.

- ► Institutionalize the use of indicators in school assessments, in particular those that relate to the improvement of the school environment.
- ► Include educational programs and methods of student-centered learning in teachers' training and professional development programs.

References

Code of RK on Administrative Violations, January 30, 2001, N 155–II.

Decree of the Government of RK on Approval of Instruction on Registration of Children and Juveniles at the Age of 6-17 in RK, December 4, 1997, N 463.

Decree of the Government of RK on Measures for Further Reforms of Secondary Education System in RK, August 28, 1998, N 812.

Decree of the Government of RK on Measures for Implementation of the Law of RK on Population Employment, June 19, 2001, N 836.

Decree of the Government of RK on Approval of Standard Regulation on Educational Organizations of Adequate Type, December 2, 1999, N 1839.

Decree of the Government of RK on Approval of Regulation on the Activities of the Out-of-School Organizations, June 22, 2001, N 849.

Eversman, E. (1999). *School attendance in the Kyrgyz republic*. Bishkek: UNICEF.

Labor and employment of population in Kazakhstan. (2003). Almaty.

Law of RK on the Child's Rights in RK, August 8, 2002, N 345.

Law of RK on Employment of Population, January 23, 2001, N 149–II.

Republic of Kazakhstan (2002). National Plan of Actions of RK (RK NPA) in Education for All (EFA). Astana, Kazakhstan: RK.

Order of MES of RK on Approval of Standard Regulation on Educational Institution of Adequate Type, January 6, 2000, N 1.

Order of ML SPP on Implementation of Decree of Government of RK, June 19, 2001, N 836 and April 26, 2002, N 91–II.

Regulation on the Procedure of Organization of the Lyceum Activities in RK, approved by the Order of MES of RK, July 10, 2000, N 708.

Regulation on the Procedure of Organization of General School Activities in RK, approved by the Order of MES of RK, July 10, 2000, N 708.

Regulation on Professional Post-Diploma Practice for Unemployed Youth, approved by the Astana Akimat Decree on Additional Measures for Population Employment Promotion, July 16, 2003 N 3-1-1179.

School drop-out predictors and consequences (2003). Tirana.

Statistical Kazakhstan yearbook, 2004 Almaty.

Street or school: What do children choose? (2001). Almaty: UNESCO.

Concept of Education Development in RK to year 2015.

Constitution of RK, 1995.

Joint Order of MES of RK, March 15, 2000, N 222 and MIA of RK, March 20, 2000, N 148.

The Joint Order of MES of RK, March 15, 2000 N222 and MIA of RK of March 20, 2000 N 148. On Approval of the Plan of Organizational and Practical Action on Prevention of Crimes, Legal Violation, Neglect and Traumatism, and Ensuring Total Attendance of Schools by Students.

The Joint Order of MES of RK of August 11, 2000 N 822, of MIA of RK of August 11, 2000 N447, of MES of RK of August 4, 2000 N 67, of Statistics Agency of RK of August 9, 2000 N 74. On Approval of Criteria of Registration of School Age Children Not Covered by Education.

Order of the MHES of RK on Implementation of Tasks Set by the President of RK to the Government, May 6, 1999, N 238.

Order of the President of RK on State Education Program, September 30, 2000, N 448.

The Order of the President of RK on Further Measures for Implementation of the Strategy of Development of Kazakhstan to year 2030, December 4, 2001, N 735.

United Nations Development Program: Kazakhstan (2005). Retrieved from: http://www.undp.kz/script_site1.html?id=185. September 2005.

Note

1.   In 2004, the standard living wage in Kazakhstan was estimated as approximately US$40.

Chapter 4

Latvia

Indra Dedze, Maiga Krūzmētra, Solvita Lazdiņa, and Ingrīda Mikiško

Overview

Insufficient education is one of the major contributors to poverty and social exclusion. The two groups in Latvia's population that face the gravest risk of being excluded from the labor market are school dropouts and former prisoners. Rapid economic development and political changes are notable achievements of the Latvian state. Increasingly, however, Latvian society is facing the manifestations of the insufficient education level of its population, and its impacts on human welfare.

In recent years, the number of illiterate persons has increased in Latvia; there are a considerable number of people who have not acquired sufficient general and vocational education. Among those aged 20–29 years, as compared with the older segment of the population, the proportion of people who have only elementary education has increased (CSB, 2002). The proportion of people who are illiterate, have not attended school at all, and who have only experienced the first stage of basic education (four grades) has also increased.

Among 20 to 29 year olds there is a relative decrease of people who have received secondary vocational education.

The poor level of education has an impact on employment opportunities. More than 20 percent of the young people aged 15–24 are unemployed, which is 8.7 percent more than the average level of unemployment in the country (LM, 2003). The level of education of an individual is the determining factor in their further involvement in lifelong education. Statistical data reflecting the situation in Latvia confirms the trend: a higher level of formal education is the basis for continuing to acquire knowledge and skills out of the formal education system (CSB, 2004b).

The education process is also influenced by external factors such as the place of residence, and the relative level of the family's welfare. Education in Latvia is not accessible for all.

Indicators reflecting levels of income and unemployment differ significantly across the regions of Latvia. The highest level of income is in the households of the city of Riga (the capital) and its region. There the level of income is increasing, in comparison with rural areas, where income is decreasing. A particularly severe situation is in the eastern part of the country (Latgale) where the density of population is lower than in other parts of Latvia: unemployment is high, education level is relatively low, and the proportion of elderly in the population is higher (OECD, 2001).

The material welfare of the family is directly related to the accessibility of education, which is linked to the ability of the family to invest financial resources in education. In 2003, affluent families spent seven times more on the education of each household member as compared to lower-income households (CSB, 2004a). The same applies to cities, where the population has more income and people spend 2.4 times more on education than people in rural areas (CSB, 2004a).

Regarding the accessibility of education, 51 percent of people who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion admit that they are in a situation where the lack of funds has prevented their children from participating in school and class activities. Thus, the lowest share of funds invested in education is found in single-parent households, as well as households where there are three and more children, since they have a considerably lower income (University of Latvia, 2003).

People with insufficient education are characterized by poor awareness of social safety net guarantees, limited access to the state-provided support measures to increase their competitive advantages, or low activity in participating in these activities, low professional skills or their absence, and low trust in the government and local authorities. Thus, insufficient education is directly linked to other social problems, and to improve the situation, solutions must be complex and comprehensive.

Building a knowledge-based society, in which every member has lifelong education opportunities, is a significant task for Latvia's policymakers. The plan is to tackle the problem of insufficient education by providing opportunities for mastering basic skills in all subjects to everyone under the age of 18, increasing the accessibility of general education. This includes the implementation of programs of pedagogical adjustment for those with a low level of education, and expanding programs for vocational education (IZM, 2002). The reform of general education is being continued in Latvia. Education reform envisages moving away from the past focus on cramming vast amounts of information and adopting a modern approach that emphasizes information-processing skills, knowledge and skills useful for practical life, and inclusion of modern subjects in the curriculum. It also features the integration and alignment of subject content to achieve "un-cluttering" by decreasing inconsistencies and duplication (CCDE, 2004). Alongside the development of general education, goals for vocational education have been set. These include goals for promoting adult education, creating opportunities for acquiring additional qualifications, and preparing a skilled labor force for the development of the economy (ES, 2003).

The most noteworthy practical achievements of recent years are the introduction of programs of pedagogical adjustment, which aim to improve education opportunities in closed institutions and the accessibility of vocational education, including the activities implemented by the State Employment Agency. This has allowed for extended opportunities for acquiring new qualifications and upgrading existing ones for various groups at social risk.

Although several policy documents have been adopted, they have not been completely implemented for the lack of continuity of the policy process and other reasons. The alleviation of the problem of insufficient education is hindered by rapid turnover in the government,[1] poor coordination, procrastination in implementation of reforms, and an inability to focus on concrete priorities. This in turn has an impact on budget decisions; the needs of concrete groups and education priorities are not included in budgeting decisions. A significant problem is the lack of qualitative information on insufficiently educated people in Latvia and their needs. The statistical data available is often of poor quality or even inconsistent; there is a lack of academic research, which would provide a broader insight into the problem of insufficient education and the opportunities for solutions.

Background Information

Compulsory education

The education system in Latvia is regulated by the Education Law; the implementation of the education process is determined also by the General Education Law and Vocational Education Law.[2]

The following levels of compulsory education are distinguished:

► Preschool education, preparing children aged 5 and 6 for school (effective September 1, 2003).
► Compulsory basic education of nine grades. The legal requirement is relevant until the age of 18 or until the moment when an individual has received the document (certificate) confirming the completion of the compulsory basic education course.

As of 2004, the basic education certificate is not given if the student has failed to obtain marks or has obtained unsatisfactory marks (e.g., below 4 points on a 10 point scale) in more than two state examinations or more than two subjects. The individual then receives a report card only, which does not certify the completion of compulsory education. Therefore, those students have to seek alternative ways to complete their compulsory basic education and achieve satisfactory marks. The government had offered the following options: repeat the grade in the same school or another school, attend evening school, enter specially organized pedagogical adjustment classes, or attend some vocational schools. However, clear follow-up procedures have not been established, and there is no reliable data on how many of these children eventually complete compulsory schooling in their second attempt.

The Law on Education states that the education system also includes special education, which means education for individuals with special needs and health challenges, or general/vocational education adjusted to such people. The law calls for special programs of pedagogical adjustment and social adjustment. Pedagogical adjustment programs are education programs for individuals within the age group who need to receive compulsory education and need to improve their knowledge on basic education curriculum subjects. Social adjustment programs are education programs suitable for individuals within the age group who need to receive compulsory education and who experience social behavior challenges.

Repeated studies in the same grade for a second year. Students are transferred to the next grade if they have received satisfactory marks on all study subjects. When students fail to fulfill the requirements and do not receive satisfactory marks, that is, marks that are lower than

4 points, they may apply to repeat the tests during the summer recess (in accordance with the decision of the school's Pedagogical Council). If they receive satisfactory marks during the summer courses, they may be transferred to the next grade; if not, the student remains in the same grade level for a second year. The Pedagogical Council, based on unsatisfactory fulfillment of these standards, may also decide that the student has to remain in the same grade for a second year, without offering the opportunity for repeated tests.[3]

At the end of academic year 2003–2004, the number of such general education students was considerable: 8,485 total, of which 2,175 were students of grades 1–4, and 6,125 were students of grades 5–9. This means that 2.6 percent of primary schoolchildren repeated a grade, and 3.8 percent of students in grades 5–9 repeated a grade (CSB, 2005).

The statistics of the Education, Youth and Sports Department of Riga City Council (2004) point to a sharp increase in the number of students in grades 7 and 8 repeating the same grade in Riga's schools. This situation could be explained by the inability of a number of students to fulfill the requirements of the complicated education programs, which in particular increased during this time. Certainly additional reasons (e.g., knowledge gaps or lack of motivation) also may be valid.

Unfortunately, there is no data on the impact of repeating the same grade on the dynamics of dropping out. There is also no reliable information on the link between repeating the same grade and the level of study motivation. However, despite the lack of such information, the practice of repeating the same grade may be treated as a problem in its own right, since in a vast number of cases repeating the same grade does not solve the original education problem. This is confirmed by the fact that 1,761 students (20.75 percent) repeating the same grade are doing it for a third year.

Students who have mastered the compulsory basic education program only in part do not receive the certificate when finishing grade 9. Instead, they only receive a report card, which is one more indicator of an insufficient education level. At the end of academic year 2003–2004, a total of 3,238 students leaving 9th grade (9.5 percent) did not receive the certificate. Individuals who have not completed compulsory basic education do not have the opportunity to acquire secondary education. Also, they have only limited opportunities in vocational education (there is a small number of vocational schools that offer basic education studies alongside vocational training). This means that some of these students repeat the same grade at school, and others simply drop out of the formal education system.

Selection and change of school. According to legislation, basic education has to be obtained in maximum proximity to one's place of residence. At the same time, the student's parents have the right to choose a school in the territory of the same or another local government. The change of school may be initiated by parents by submitting a written request

to the school administration. In turn, the school may complete the documentation for a child's transfer to another school only after their acceptance is guaranteed, which has to be confirmed in writing by the principal of the receiving school.

The change of school, when it is not related to a change in the place of residence, is most often carried out in the following circumstances:

► For social-psychological disagreements either between the student and his/her peers or between the student and his/her teachers
► When a student has to repeat a grade for a second year and it is too difficult for him or her to return to an environment that symbolizes failure
► When a change of school is suggested because of the student's study results or/and unacceptable behavior

Expulsion or removal from school. Should the school intend to remove a person under the age of 18 from school and the requirement of compulsory basic education, this decision may be carried out only based on agreement with the local government in the territory where the child lives.[4] The reasons for removing a student from the school rolls include the departure of the child's family from the country, the child's death, or the imprisonment of the child for committing a crime. The process of removal is a complicated one; even in cases where the child has not attended school for a year and is being sought by the police, the child cannot simply be removed from the school (Kurlovičs, Muraškovska, and Vilciņa, 2004).

Should the child live and study abroad, the following procedure is carried out: The parents submit this information in written form to the school's principal. When the absence is less than one year, a note is made in the school's documents accordingly; however, the child is not removed from the rolls. Only in cases where the child is continuing studies abroad for more than a year and the child's parents submit a request may the principal issue a decision to remove the child from the school.

It is necessary to note the number of children removed from schools when analyzing statistical data on insufficient education. Some of these children drop out of the education system. During the academic year 2003–2004, a total of 10,242 students were removed from regular schools, and 7,331 (72 percent) were basic school students (CSB, 2005, p. 51). These numbers reach the Ministry of Education when schools submit their data. The school providing such a report groups the causes for removal according to a number of categories: transferred to another school, left after the age of 18, living abroad for more than a year, expelled for breaking the code of conduct, and other causes (e.g., the child is placed in a psychiatric institution). As mentioned previously, removal does not mean that the student does not continue studies in another school, another country, or a private institution.

However, since the information on further schooling of these students is not available, a more extensive analysis of this information is not possible.

More precise causes for removal from school are available for vocational schools (CSB, 2005, p. 70). In the study year 2003–2004, the number of students involved in acquiring basic education alongside vocational training was 1,421, of which 177 students (12 percent) were removed from the rolls. The majority of young people were removed from years 1 and 2, in the initial stages of mastering vocational training. The most widespread reason was non-attendance.

Table 1.

Students Removed from Vocational Schools in 2003–2004
(who have completed less than 9 grades of general education)

Index/cause of deregistering	Number
Total number of deregistered	177
Truancy	66
Moved to another school	44
Family circumstances	14
Academic failure	17
Illness	9
Changed place of residence	1
Other causes	26

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. *Education Institutions in Latvia at the Beginning of the School Year 2004/2005, Riga, 2005, p. 70.*

Dropouts and those on the verge of dropping out. The education system gathers data on the children who are within the age group of compulsory education and yet do not attend school. At the end of the study year, education establishments submit the information on students not attending school for a prolonged time to the Ministry of Education and Science. This report includes the indicator "students who have not attended school more than half of the study year."

Another set of data on the level of involvement in the education system is the number of children within the age group of compulsory education (this is done by the Register of Population), and the number of children who have been registered with education establishments (this is done by education establishments and the information is gathered by the

ministry). Comparing these two sets of data, the difference between those of age and those actually registered points to dropouts.

This report uses terms "dropouts" and "students on the verge of dropping out" as defined by the Dropout Monitoring Project's survey team from Latvia:

► The *child who has dropped out* from the education system—a student who has not received complete compulsory basic education and does not attend school any more

► Those *on the verge of dropping out*—students who have not attended school for at least half of the school year and thus cannot fulfill the requirements of compulsory basic education

Analysis of Available Statistical Data

The main sources of statistical data on education in Latvia are the Ministry of Education and Science, Central Statistical Bureau (CSB), and local school boards and municipalities. Information may also be found in the annual Human Development Report produced by UNDP. The results of a number of international comparative surveys such as PISA and IEA studies provide important information on the education process. Overall, however, information on the compulsory education process is not complete, and the gathered data sometimes is self-contradicting and hard to interpret.

Analyzing the basic indicators on education gathered by the CSB for the academic year 2003–2004 (see Table 2), it must be noted that a considerable number of children within the age of compulsory education are not involved in attaining basic education.

Table 2.
Basic Indicators of Education

Stage of Education	Age	Number of persons attending institutions of education	Gross enrollment ratio	Net enrollment ratio
Preschool education	3–6	62,811	80.4	78.0
Elementary school	7–10	84,369	104.2	94.9
Basic education	11–15	162,001	100.4	91.8

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. *Education Institutions in Latvia at the Beginning of the School Year 2004/2005.* Statistical Bulletin. Riga, 2005., pp. 17–18.

This information on the number of children who are not involved in compulsory basic schooling is quite imprecise; the registration data on children of compulsory education age varies between the Ministry of Education and Register of Population in Latvia.

Table 3.

Registration of Children Who Have Reached the Age of Compulsory Education (born 1987–1998) in 2003

All children who have reached the mandatory age according to the data of Population Register	Registered at the institutions of education		Do not learn and have not completed basic education		Not registered at the institutions of education	
	Number of children	Percentage of the total number	Number of children	Percentage of the total number	Number of children	Percentage of the total number
331,121	314,344	94.9	2,526	0.8	11,432	3.5

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. *Children in Latvia 2004.* Statistical data collection. Riga, 2004. p. 23.

Official statistics show that 95 percent of compulsory school-age children are registered with education establishments. However, 4.3 percent of children have not been registered, do not attend school, and have not completed compulsory basic education. Reviewing this breakdown, it can be noted that the Register of Population has data on 0.8 percent of children who are not accounted for in the ministry data. The Dropout Project survey team did not succeed in obtaining information about the reasons for not registering such a proportion of children who are obviously out of school. The following are possible reasons:

► Since inhabitants of Latvia may declare their place of residence freely, the register of local governments is imprecise; it may be possible that a proportion of children are not registered there.

► The data on children of pre-school age is not registered in full, and since the above data includes children from age 5, a proportion of them are not registered with education establishments.

► A number of children have left the country for an indefinite time, and thus are not registered with education establishments. For example, 3,373 children left Latvia with their parents in 2003; it is not known if they are acquiring education in other countries or are not receiving any schooling at all (BM, 2003).

A considerable proportion of children are truant for extended periods of time.

Table 4.
Truants

Academic year	Unjustified nonattendance			Do not learn at all
	Approximately half of the academic year	Almost all the academic year	Total	
2003/04	2,706	1,803	4,509	1,878
2002/03	1,859	977	2,836	2,515
2001/02	1,224	742	1,966	1,755
2000/01	974	632	1,596	1,824
1999/00	951	530	1,481	2,607
1998/99	1,001	639	1,640	...

Source: The data of the Education State Inspectorate and the Ministry of Education and Science, as published by the newspaper "Diena" on October 16, 2004.

The general increase of numbers in Table 4 testifies to the insufficient capacity of the education system to ensure access to education for all children, although the data does not reflect student age or grade. The information on the reasons for truancy is quite unclear. Schools have to indicate in their reports the reasons for truancy, choosing from three options: "arbitrary nonappearance and wandering around," "parental irresponsibility," and "social problems of the family." However, these are poor indicators of the reasons for truancy, since the selection criteria are vague and overlapping: for example, there is no clear boundary between "parental irresponsibility" and "social problems of the family." The indicators also are incomplete (e.g., there is no option that suggests the reasons may be related to problems in the education system and not in the family). The impression one gets is that attributing truancy to the above three reasons has more to do with laying blame on the family rather than attempting to understand the problem of truancy.

Some additional studies of at-risk children in Latvia were carried out recently. These uncover a number of problems in providing education and in related spheres. They focus on an analysis of measures that are now addressing the problem of insufficient education, not just its statistical scope. The studies identify significant national-level problems, such as the incomplete registration of children, lack of resources, and lack of information.

Accessibility and equality in Latvia's education system have been analyzed by OECD experts (OECD, 2004). They point out that one of the problems is the lack of a reliable and coordinated register of school-age children. Because of the lack of such a register, there is no clarity as to the number of children who are within the age of compulsory education but who do not attend school.

Findings about street children in Latvia provide additional information on deficiencies in the support system for children at social risk, emphasizing the lack of resources for addressing the needs of these children, and pointing to insufficient analysis of risk factors that impact the children's welfare (Lukašinska, 2002).

Assessments of local government work identify the following serious deficiencies: unequal distribution of funding, lack of strategies, insufficient capacity of specialists, and lack of information and cooperation.

The contribution of local governments to education varies. The most affluent local governments assign sizable additional funding to education, while other local governments are unable to fulfill the minimum standard requirements for maintaining their schools (OECD, 2001). This assessment means that the work with dropouts and those on the verge of dropping out is quite limited, since it requires additional resources (e.g., developing and implementing specific programs, in-service training of teachers, salaries for social pedagogues).

Local governments do not have strategies for addressing problems of children who are at social risk (Lukašinska, 2002). They also lack sufficient numbers of qualified professionals to undertake consultative and coordinating work with children, young people, and their families. Thus the capacity of urban and rural local government to provide services is quite limited. In addition, cooperation among specialists and institutions providing support to children and families is poorly developed. Services are for the most part isolated and poorly coordinated (LM, 2003).

One more problem is emphasized by education specialists, admitting that both local governments and schools have not sufficiently developed their work with various at-risk groups. Specialists note that cooperation occurs much more often in cases where the problems are already grave; it does not foresee possible risks for children and families in advance and endeavor to deal with these risks. Most education specialists also point out the insufficient knowledge in assessing the needs of vulnerable at-risk children and providing them with needed support. They also note the lack of information about where to turn for assistance when handling complicated problem situations involving at-risk children (Lazdiņa and Zavackis, 2004).

Dropout Study

The present study on dropouts (Dedze, Mikiško, and Krūzmētra, 2004) was carried out by the Centre for Public Policy Providus as part of the Dropout Monitoring Project. The goal of the study was to identify factors or a combination of factors that influence the risk of not completing basic education. The findings of the research project can serve as the basis for initiating changes on various levels of the education system.

This report is based on a survey of 287 teenagers, 130 parents, and 160 teachers. They came from 14 secondary schools, 1 gymnasium, 4 evening schools, 13 basic schools, and 1 boarding institution, which allowed the survey team to assess the situation in various types of education establishments. In the course of the survey, 97 full units of results were gathered (i.e., student, teacher, and parent opinions, thus forming three perspectives on a situation). The full units included a student questionnaire, and the teachers' and parents' opinions of the same student, which may have added to and deepened the perspective on the problem under study.

The study revealed both the external factors (e.g., influence of the school, family, and peers on the study process) and internal factors (e.g., self-assessment of one's competence or motivation to learn) that are related to the students' dropping out from the formal education system.

The information gathered characterizes both the dropouts and those on the verge of dropping out and their families, as well as conditions that influence dropping out from the formal education system.

The surveyed pupils almost equally represent complete families (45.6 percent) and divorced families (41.3 percent). In 12.8 percent of the cases, one or even both of the parents had died, and the pupils were living at the boarding school or were in custody of grandparents or other relatives.

Table 5.
Characteristics of the Surveyed Families
(percentage of the number of surveyed families)

	Parents live together	Parents have divorced	One or both parents have died
Cities	38.6	50.9	10.5
Rural areas	52.5	32.2	15.3

Differences can be observed among families in cities and rural areas. In rural areas, the proportion of complete families is larger, as is the number of pupils who have lost one or both parents.

Most of the surveyed pupils (90 percent) come from families where one or even both parents are employed. However, judging by the financial status of the families, they have to be characterized as needy or even poor, since the majority of the parents (both fathers and mothers) work in low-paid professions such as ironer, chambermaid, sweeper, worker at a sawmill, or stoker. The majority of parents have comprehensive secondary or vocational secondary education, i.e., the level of education is sufficiently high to understand the significance of education in life and to offer their children at least minimum help with school work, if difficulties arise.

The study affirmed that the parents of dropouts and those on the verge of dropping out have no close links with school, which is manifested in infrequent contacts between children's parents and teachers. According to the information provided by the teachers, only 17 percent of the parents had regular contacts with the school, and 54 percent of the parents had had only occasional contacts with the school, which apparently had been insufficient. Parents of boys were twice as active in meeting the teachers; all parents would be advised to visit school more frequently and to take an interest in solving their children's learning problems.

Table 6.
Pupil's Gender and the Parents' Contacts with School
(percentage of the surveyed pupils)

Gender	Do the pupils' parents meet with the teachers?		
	Regularly	*Occasionally*	*Never*
Girls	14.1	74.6	11.3
Boys	28.3	57.2	14.5

It could be concluded that a weak link between parents and the school points to a broader problem of miscommunication between parents and the school. In any case, the study finds that school-parent cooperation is insufficient—and that is a considerable problem. Successful cooperation may serve as a resource in addressing everyday problems of students, including issues related to obtaining education.

The majority of the surveyed pupils were academically failing in some of the following subjects: algebra, geometry, physics, chemistry, English, Latvian, history, and geography. Some pupils had unsatisfactory marks also in such subjects as health education, visual art, household, and sports, but this was a very small number. The fact that there was a particular list of subjects in which students failed suggests that the problem is caused not only by the pupils' attitudes toward learning these subjects, but also the programs, textbooks, and teaching methods used in these subjects.

At the same time, pupils have unrealistic dreams about their future. They were asked about their future profession and it was possible to divide their carrier aspirations into two categories: (1) jobs requiring vocational education, and (2) jobs requiring higher education (see Table 7). Most of the listed jobs would require the following basic skills: precision, technical knowledge, and patience. The students would also need basic knowledge in math, chemistry, and physics in order to acquire these jobs. It appeared that students do not have a clear picture about what is needed for the job they are dreaming about. For example, a pupil who has unsatisfactory grades in eight subjects said that he would like to become a programmer; another student, who has not attended school since 1998, said that he believes that he can be successful in virtually any subject but that he just wants to relax for a while and to become a designer some day. Many students would like to become sailors or athletes, and to work abroad. It is possible that these unrealistic aspirations are triggered by mass media or movies, which often depict opportunities for obtaining easy money, or becoming a millionaire without a proper education.

Table 7.
Student Carrier Aspirations

Vocational education needed	*Higher education needed*
Electrician	Programmer
Painter	Musician
Miller	Economist
Cook	Actor
Assembler	Designer
Carpenter	Businessman
Construction worker	Attorney
Auto mechanic	Engineer
Mechanic	Manager

Vocational education needed	Higher education needed
Confectioner	Sports teacher
Driver	Animal doctor
Waiter	Doctor
Bartender	Social psychologist
Locksmith	Architect
Cosmetologist	Notary
Hairdresser	Translator
Shop assistant	Accountant
Guard	Entrepreneur
Fireman	Policeman
Sailor	

Pupils who have problems in learning are not too much involved in general school activities. Both the teachers and the pupils themselves assess that only 15 percent have participated in the activities of special interest groups at their school. Only 21 percent of the pupils of the surveyed group have fun together with their schoolmates. This kind of behavior is not caused by conflicts in their relationships with their peers, since 62 percent of the surveyed indicated that they usually were on good terms with their schoolmates.

Some of the pupils have taken paid employment. Overall, only 8 percent of students are permanently involved in paid jobs, and about 30 percent of them take on paid jobs occasionally. Pupils who are on the verge of dropping out most likely do not work or work occasionally. Dropouts are more likely to be involved in paid regular or irregular employment.

Table 8.

Involvement in Paid Employment (percentage of the specific school)

	Paid employment			
	Regularly	*Occasionally*	*No work*	*No answer*
No longer attends school	15.4	43.6	37.2	3.8
Attends school	3.4	19.1	61.3	16.2

Involvement in paid employment is caused by the financial conditions of the family, but also by the desire of the pupils themselves to obtain additional means. Although the attempts of dropouts and those on the verge of dropping out to join the labor market and start earning money, may be viewed as positive, failing to obtain basic education and vocational training limits the opportunities of these children in the labor market considerably.

Education has the highest prestige among the pupils in the capital city, and the lowest among pupils in rural schools. It corresponds to the situation outside of school: in the capital, the demand is greatest for an educated and qualified labor force, but there is not yet full awareness of this necessity in the rural areas. One out of four rural pupils does not understand the importance of education for their future, and almost 20 percent of pupils have no opinion on this issue.

Table 9.
Education as a Guarantee for the Future
(percentage of pupils, social-territorial cross-section)

Social-territorial division	Education ensures better future			
	Yes	Perhaps	Don't know	No answer
Urban schools	76.7	16.7	5.0	1.6
Rural schools	50.4	24.0	19.0	6.6
Capital city (Riga)	90.2	7.3	2.5	0.0

Similarities and differences could be found in the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents on the causes of dropping out. The opinions of students and their parents on the causes of dropping out are quite close, while teachers often have a differing view. For instance, "family circumstances" as the cause of dropping out are identified by 7.5 percent of students, 7.5 percent of parents, and 39.7 percent of teachers. Health problems are named by 10.1 percent of students, 13.2 percent of parents, and only 5.3 percent of teachers. The lack of study motivation is mentioned by 29.6 percent of students, 30.2 percent of parents, and only 18.3 percent of teachers. Opposite views are manifested in assessing the impact of prior knowledge base, where teachers (24.4 percent) are much more critical than parents (11.3 percent) and students (6.3 percent).

Table 10.

Rating the Causes of Dropout as seen by Respondents (top three responses provided)

Place	Pupils	Parents	Teachers
First place	Lack of motivation 29.6%	Lack of motivation 30.2%	Family conditions 39.7%
Second place	Friends, social environment 15.1%	Health problems, pregnancy, disability 13.2%	Poor abilities, "gaps" in knowledge, psychological problems 24.4%
Third place	Health problems 10.1%	Poor abilities, "gaps" in knowledge, psychological problems 11.3%	Lack of motivation 18.3%

The most often selected responses by students, teachers, and parents point to the conflicting opinions about the causes of dropout. Students and their parents attribute dropout or its risk mostly to a lack of motivation to study, while teachers consider the key factor to be family conditions. Such divergent perspectives on the causes of dropout attest to the need to bring the issue to the forefront of debate, involving the general public in discussing the causes and solutions of the problem. A special place must be given to the perspectives of education specialists and parents, since only through joint efforts of the school and parents is it possible to help the dropout or the student at risk of dropping out.

Summary of Findings

National level education policy and practice

The legislation of the Republic of Latvia and other politically significant documents are modern, and they clearly define the problems and goals of the education system; however, these policies are not fully implemented on a practical level. Population groups with limited access to education do not receive sufficient support from the state; the responsibility for their involvement in education rests with local governments, where available resources and priorities differ greatly across the country. The reform of education content requires movement toward skills development and the mastering of knowledge useful in one's life.

However, curricula of various study subjects are still very complicated and sometimes lack applicability, making them quite difficult for children with less ability and motivation.

The collection of data on school-age children is incomplete. There are discrepancies between the data of the Register of Population and the register of school-age children that is compiled by schools and local governments as required by the Ministry of Education and Science. It is not clear how many children do not participate in the education process, and for what reasons. The criteria developed by the Ministry of Education and Science, which should be identifying the reasons behind nonattendance of school, are unclear and open to various interpretation; thus the information is of no practical use.

No studies have been carried out in Latvia to obtain qualitative information on the reasons for lack of learning motivation, or on the impact of staying in the same grade for a second and third year on the completion of basic education. Thus, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the practical work is in concert with the policy goals.

Pedagogical and social adjustment work has been started with children who have learning and behavior challenges. Such assistance is not accessible to all children who might need it, however, and the outcome of the work has not been researched to a satisfactory extent.

Local level education policy and practice

The contribution of local level government depends on the funding and human resources that are at its disposal. Local governments are not affluent and less funding goes to education in the eastern part of Latvia (Latgale), as well as in rural areas. For the most part, only city governments can staff their schools with specialists who provide assistance in working with the social problems of families, truancy, and other issues.

Due to limited funds and a lack of sufficiently educated professionals, local governments do not develop strategies and action programs that are oriented toward identifying the needs of vulnerable groups, responding to these needs, and systematically working with families who need support in bringing up their children.

Information exchange among institutions and professionals is too limited; therefore the roles of various players in addressing the problems of children and families are unclear.

The work of schools

School teachers admit they are not trained sufficiently to work with children who present learning and behavior challenges, or with the families of these children. Schools lack resources to make progress on these problems. In some schools, cooperation between

specialists and teachers is promoted, and team work in providing support to children is encouraged. Nationwide, however, teachers lack the time, experience, knowledge, and skills needed to organize, manage, and carry out this kind of work. Teachers do not know where help and support can be obtained when facing complicated and novel problem situations.

Participation of the society

There are several successful examples of the participation of parents' groups and NGOs in addressing problems that are crucial for schools, such as promoting learning and strengthening cooperation between family and school. However, the participation of society as a resource in improving the work of schools is underused throughout Latvia.

Recommendations

For national policymakers and the Ministry of Education and Science

► Develop a common register of children specifying the kinds of information and the ways it should be obtained/gathered.

► Improve the monitoring and data-gathering systems at schools, developing criteria that would not be susceptible to various interpretations (e.g., changing schools or truancy).

► Study the causes of various phenomena and their impact on the process of basic education: repeating the same grade, decrease of learning motivation, the course of adjustment work, and the process of mastering the subject curricula in cases where the ability of students is insufficient. Based on the results, develop recommendations for improving work.

► Define precisely the groups that need special support and assistance to facilitate receiving education, and develop concrete practical programs for use at schools and within local government territories, providing funding/cofunding in the state budget.

► Develop and, with state support, implement in-service training programs for school administrations and teachers to assist them in improving work with truants, students repeating the grade, and other children at risk within education institutions.

For local governments

► Identify, gather, and disseminate information on the roles and opportunities for cooperation of various institutions and professionals in facilitating the education process, thus promoting coordinated action in addressing the problems of children and families

► Develop services necessary for supporting dropouts and those on the verge, as well as their families, based on needs assessments and identification of the best course of action

► Support in-service training for teachers, facilitating the improvement of knowledge and skills in working with students on the verge of dropping out and their families.

For schools

► Develop teamwork, involving specialists both from within the school and from external institutions

► Seek opportunities to improve cooperation with families, emphasizing the development of parenting knowledge and skills, as well as providing support

► Collaborate with other schools, exchanging experience and identifying best practices.

For society

► Popularize the involvement of NGOs and informal groups in addressing issues that are important for schools. Gather and disseminate examples of existing successful practices and their role in improving the education process.

References

BM (2003). *Report on the children's situation in Latvia in 2002.* Riga: The Secretariat of the Special Task Force, Ministry for Children and Family Affairs.

CCDE (2004). *The State Compulsory Education Standards.* Riga: The Centre for Curriculum Development and Examinations, Ministry of Education and Science.

CSB (2002). *Census in Latvia. Statistical Bulletin, 2002.* Riga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.

CSB (2004a). *Household Budget Statistical Bulletin 2004.* Riga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.

CSB (2004b). *Mūžizglītības aspekti Latvijā. Statistisko datu krājums* (*Aspects of life-long education in Latvia. Statistical Bulletin.*) Riga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.

CSB (2004c). *Children in Latvia 2004. Statistical data collection*. Riga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.

CSB (2005). *Education institutions in Latvia at the beginning of the school year 2004/2005*. Riga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.

Dedze, I., Krūzmētra, M., and Mikiško, I. (2004). *Savlaicīgu pamatizglītības apguvi traucējošo faktoru kopums*. [*Factors that hinder timely completion of basic education*]. Riga: Centre for Public Policy Providus. http://www.politika.lv/polit_real/files/lv/atbirusie.pdf.

ES (2003). *Single Programming Document for Latvia Ojective 1 Programme 2004–2006*. Riga. Retrieved from: http://www.esfondi.lv/upload/spd2003_12.pdf.

IZM (2002). *Educational Development Concept Paper 2002–2005*. Riga: Ministry of Education and Science. Retrieved from:http://www.izm.gov.lv/default.aspx?tabID=22&lang=1&id=103.

Kurlovičs, G., Muraškovska, I., and Vilciņa, A. (2004). Pamatizglītības ieguves iespējas bērniem ārpus izglītības sistēmas. *Izglītības reformas Latvijas sabiedrības integrācijai un labklājībai. Pārskats par izglītību 2003./2004.* Riga: SPC, Providus. [Primary Education Opportunities for Children Outside the Education System. In: *Education Reforms in Latvia: Underpinning Integration and Prosperity. Education Report, 2003/2004*].

Lazdiņa,, S. and Zavackis, A. (2004). *Mazaizsargāto grupu bērnu iespējas saņemt palīdzību un atbalstu Valmierā, mazinot apreibinošo vielu lietošanas risku. Situācijas analīze.* (*The Possibilities for Children from Vulnerable Groups to Receive Assistance and Support in Valmiera, Reducing the Risk of Using Intoxicating Substances. Analysis of the Situation.*) Riga: Izglītošanās centrs ģimenei un skolai.

LM (2003). Material of the joint project by Latvia and the Danish Government. *Strategies for the Work to be Carried out in Latvia with Children and Adolescents who are Addicted to Psychoactive Substances.* Riga: Ministry of Welfare. Retrieved from: http://www.lm.gov.lv/doc_upl/Strategija.doc.

Lukašinska, I. (2002). *Street children in Latvia: Problems and Solutions*. Riga: Soros Foudation–Latvia. Retrieved from: http://www.politika.lv/polit_real/files/lv/ielas_berni_eng.pdf.

OECD (2001). *Analysis of National Education Policies, Latvia*. Report of OECD experts. Paris: OECD.

Riga City Council (2004). The Work of Specialists of Institutions of Education with Pupils Who Encounter Problems in Mastering the Program of Basic Education. Conference materials of Riga City Council Department of Education, Young People and Sports.

University of Latvia (2003). *A Study on Social Exclusion*. Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia.

Notes

1. For example, during 15 years of independence Latvia has had 12 ministers for education and science.

2. Adopted on June 10, 1999.

3. The procedures for enrolling children in school, moving on to the next grade, and the procedure for changing schools are defined by the Instruction No. 7 issued by the MES on November 27, 2003.

4. The Law on Comprehensive Education, article 32-5.

Chapter 5

Mongolia

Mercedes del Rosario
in collaboration with Battsetseg Donrov, Bayartsetseg Bayarsaihan,
Bolormaa Tsetsegee, Dorjnamjin Batmonkh,
Tumendelger Sengedorj, Tsentsenbileg Tseveen, and Enkhbold Delger

Overview of Dropout Incidence

Citing the results of a 2000 study, the 2001 Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper by the Mongolian government reports that 15.1 percent of children in rural areas do not go to school because they are employed in the agriculture sector and 8.3 percent of children in the cities do not go to school for the same reason. Additionally, 6.4 percent of children in rural areas responded that they do not go to school because they are employed in urban settlements, while this percentage is 1.2 percent in cities. The majority of students who leave school are boys. The same study shows that the number of dropouts is higher in areas where the amount of livestock is also higher. Otgonjargal (2003) notes that Mongolia is also in a unique situation in that more boys than girls drop out of schools. As the rural economy moves toward growth and reform, families find it more economically rewarding to keep boys in farming rather than to send them to school (UNICEF, 2004).

Since 1990, when Mongolia started moving from socialism to a market-society state, nearly 200,000 children in Mongolia have dropped out of school. This figure comes from Save the Children, which implemented the Herdsmen Children's Education Project in Omnogobi, Mongolia's largest province. It attributes this dropout rate to the fact that most are working children who reside in remote areas and face enormous economic difficulties. Making the matter worse is the fact that often communities and schools are quite distant from one another, making access to education a formidable challenge especially for those children who are responsible for herding the family livestock.

Design of the Study

Sampling design

Mongolia is administratively divided into 21 aimags and the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. Aimags are divided into 340 soums, which are further divided into 1,671 baghs (small villages averaging two to five gers[1]). The capital city, Ulaanbaatar, is divided into nine districts. Four of these districts are suburban, and are in turn divided into 121 khoroos or subdistricts. Stratified random sampling was used in the survey. The first step of the sampling procedure was to select the regions and aimags. The selection was based on the following factors:

► regional variations in the climatic and environmental characteristics, income level, and living standards, type of economic activity, infrastructure, and availability of social services
► distribution and fluctuation of dropout rate in regions exhibiting the three levels of dropout rate: high, middle, and low

Based on these factors, five regions were chosen: Uvurkhangai, Dornod, Khovd and Dornogobi (four aimags), and the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. The second step was the selection of soums and baghs applying the same selection process. The third step involved the random sampling of the respondents based on the 2003–2004 dropout joint survey report of Mongolia's Non-Formal Education (NFE) program and UNICEF, along with the school records of the said aimags and soums and the local NFE offices. The total number of respondents (532) and the instruments per respondent category are shown in Table 1.

Sample population

The following were identified as the sample population of this study: the dropout children themselves; potential dropout or at-risk children; teachers from both the formal and informal education programs; parents of dropout children; and local and national government officials, formal and informal educational officers, policymakers, police officers, and officers from the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science.

The dropout children, at-risk children, and parents were identified by the local administrators and staff, school officials, and/or local NFE methodologists who contacted them and asked to participate in the survey. Some were reached by the teams by going to the dropout children's and parents' houses with the school administrators and NFE methodologists—and sometimes with the teachers, who knew where the dropout children and/or their parents lived. There were cases where the neighbors were approached as well to locate those who no longer lived in the areas where the school officials or NFE methodologists thought they did. It must be noted that not all of them were reached since some were nomads and others left for warmer places.

Table 1.

Total Number of Respondents and Instruments Used per Group

Respondents	Aimags	Questionnaire	Interview	Focus-Group interview/ number of participants	Total number of respondents
Dropouts	Ulaanbaatar	52	1	2/20 (40)	93
	Khovd	34	5	1/15 (15)	54
	Dornod	34		1/10 (10)	44
	Uvurkhangai	34	1		35
	Dornogobi	34		1/10 (10)	44
Subtotal		*188*	*7*	*5/55 (75)*	*270*
At-risk children	Ulaanbaatar	14	1		15
	Khovd	8	1		9
	Dornod	12	1		13
	Uvurkhangai	16		1/8 (8)	24
	Dornogobi	18	1		19
Subtotal		*68*	*4*	*1/8 (8)*	*80*

Table 1.

Total Number of Respondents and Instruments Used per Group *(continued)*

Respondents	*Aimags*	*Questionnaire*	*Interview*	*Focus-Group interview/ number of participants*	*Total number of respondents*
Parents	Ulaanbaatar	20	1		21
	Khovd	18	1		19
	Dornod	18			18
	Uvurkhangai	18	1		19
	Dornogobi	18			18
Subtotal		*92*	*3*		*95*
Teachers	Ulaanbaatar	12	1	1/10 (10)	23
	Khovd	7			7
	Dornod	9			9
	Uvurkhangai	12	1		13
	Dornogobi	14		1/10 (10)	24
Subtotal		*54*	*2*	*2/20 (20)*	*76*
Headmaster	Ulaanbaatar		1		1
	Dornogobi		1		1
Policymakers	Ulaanbaatar		2		2
Educational methodologist	Ulaanbaatar		1		1
	Khovd		1		1
NFE teacher	Dornogobi		1		1
Policemen	Ulaanbaatar		1		1
	Uvurkhangai		1		1
Social worker	Dornod		1		1
	Khovd				1
Total		408	26	8/85 (103)	532

The study defined at-risk children using these indicators:

- ► poor family
- ► big family (four or more children with one or two who had already dropped out)
- ► working after school
- ► high rate of truancy
- ► prolonged unexcused absences

The first four groups were the subjects of the structured questionnaires used in the study, while the last group was the subject of focus group discussions and interviews. The total number of respondents was 532 (see Table 1). The dropout sample included children aged 8–16, and involved children who had dropped out after 1996.

Study instruments

The Mongolian research team prepared four questionnaires, one for each sample population. The questionnaires were semistructured in the sense that there were some open-ended questions. All the questionnaires underwent a series of revisions especially after they were piloted and reviewed by the international consultant and staff of the Mongolian Education Alliance (MEA). The final versions were completed on January 7, 2005, a day before the teams traveled to the countryside.

Findings and Analysis

Definitions of dropout

The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (MOECS), in compliance with the Education Law of 2002, defines dropouts as children of compulsory basic education age (7 through 16 prior to the 2005 implementation of Education Law 2002) who are not attending school. However, the survey revealed that different groups—parents, children, teachers, and local school officials—defined dropout according to their own understanding. The definitions of dropout varied from "those children who attended school for a period of time and thereafter quit" to "those who never enrolled." Erdeneburen soum in Khovd counted disabled children as dropouts.

This variety may be attributed to the fact that, as the team's investigation of previous records of the MOECS and the National Statistical Office show, there was no official definition of a dropout prior to Education Law 2002. The definition is of prime importance because it is the very basis on which agencies arrive at their figures (Table 2). Of note is the fact that no two agencies showed any similar results.

Table 2.

Comparative Figures on Dropout Rate 2003–2004

Agency	Dropout statistics	Difference from highest figure
Human Rights Commission	68, 115	
UNICEF/NFE	40,000	28, 115
Census 2003	17,671	50,444
MOSTEC/NSO	11,953	56,162

The number of dropouts bears a strategic financial significance regarding how much budget a school receives for a given academic year. It must be emphasized that school budgets depend on the head count of currently enrolled students.

A deeper scrutiny on the importance of defining "dropout" would reveal that it is also fundamentally linked to the enforcement of compulsory education. Effective from the 2005 school year, compulsory schooling covers primary and lower secondary education (nine years of study for pupils aged 8–16).

The enforcement of compulsory education in Mongolia does not carry any weight, however, since there are no penalty clauses provided for noncompliance. The matter is exacerbated when one considers the nomadic tradition of most of rural Mongolia and the harsh physical conditions students from the remote baghs and soums have to endure to get to school.

Information base: registration and computation of school dropouts

MOECS collects and processes statistical data related to school dropout across Mongolia using two standard forms:[2]

1) Approved by order of the chairman of the National Statistical Office (NSO) #114 of 2003, the form "BSE–3" (Basic Secondary Education). This form allows the

centralized gathering of data in a particular aimag or local level on children aged 8–15 who entered the school in pursuit of basic education and dropped out, or who never entered the school. The form summarizes the number of children by grade, sex, age, and reason for dropping out.

2)   Approved by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science Order #221 of 2003, the form "BSE–9," which is a noncentralized form (it was changed to the "Administrative data" by the Statistics Law of 2004): The purpose of this form is to monitor the change in number of pupils who studied during the previous academic year and successfully passed to the next grade and pupils who newly enrolled. It subtracts the number of pupils in the previous academic year from the number of pupils who left the school plus the number of newly registered or enrolled pupils. By using this form it is possible to determine the number of schoolchildren who dropped out while comparing the number from the previous year. The form also provides information on the reason for dropping out, the grade, and sex of those who dropped out.

Upon scrutiny, however, the above methodology was noted to have one serious flaw: although information is elicited in terms of reason for school change, i.e., "Transfer within the aimag or transfer to other aimag, city," which is an indicator, there is no established controlling or monitoring system to determine if children who transfer actually attend the school at the aimag or soum/bagh they migrate to. If the transfer occurs within the aimag, then the number of increased pupils at the aimag will be equal to number who transferred. However, at present these numbers are different.

In compliance with the MOECS procedures, schools calculate the number of dropouts by subtracting the number of children enrolled during the current year from the number of children enrolled in the previous year. The data collected is sent to the MOECS.[3] The ministry is informed about how many children are enrolled at schools from capitals of provinces and the capital of Mongolia at the beginning of each academic year. Parliament retains the statistics, which are confirmed by the population census. There are unconfirmed reports that the Ministry of Finance, which authorizes budget releases on student expenses (school budgets depend largely on the headcount of students enrolled per school), sometimes finds the education ministry's records on total number of students enrolled to be bloated.

Registration and computation of school dropouts

Intricately linked to the matter of defining "dropout" is the registration and counting of school dropouts. The results show serious flaws on the MOECS's method of counting drop-

outs. From the central office down to the bagh level, errors could be detected. As noted, there is no cross-checking system to determine if a child who transferred actually reentered a school wherever s/he migrated. Attention must be paid to how records are kept and maintained at some of the soum schools. Evidence of error and inefficient data collection from some social workers and flawed record keeping and maintenance were reported in the survey. The question to be asked is: If at the very first source of data collection (bagh schools), the data is already questionable, how much of it could be reliable when it finally reaches the central office of the education ministry, especially considering how many steps of the bureaucratic ladder it has to go through? Corollary to this question is another: If the official method of counting dropouts is flawed, how can any data on dropouts be relied on?

Dropout reasons

In Table 3, dropout reasons can be categorized as having a policy focus or belonging to an understudied area. The intent is to help bring focus to the kind of measures and action each group of reasons require. Under the policy focus, the following reasons were identified: poverty/low income or lack of means of subsistence; child-labor related reasons such as herding, need to earn a living to help support the family, and need to take care of siblings or older members of the family; migration; lack of dormitories; teacher discrimination; and systemic problems with the education system. Understudied areas included the following: physical and/or mental disabilities; lack of communication and socialization skills; bullying or peer discrimination; and educational level of parents.

Issues pertaining to policy demand socioeconomic policy reforms and actions that are considered and strategically configured, and particularly addressed to the dropout issue. The understudied reasons demand careful attention for they are rooted in the very core of the dropout as an individual person not as a statistic—a victim of forces and circumstances over which s/he has no control.

Certainly the reasons for dropout are not at all surprising as they have been pointed out time and again by different studies. Yet a closer look at the reasons as a whole, however, revealed the mosaic complexity of the dropout issue; the reasons are so intricately linked that it seemed almost arbitrary that they could be individually or collectively categorized.

The root cause of poverty, by itself, is already a matter of grave concern. While it would be naïve to simply recommend that it be eradicated, it should be confronted. As the survey results showed, poverty is certainly an underlying cause for the child's need to participate in herding livestock, making a living, and taking care of other family members. Poverty also transcends and leads to the other reasons. As cited in the survey team's report, poor parents or families withdraw their children from school because they can not afford school supplies

and other expenses, and believe that they are better off herding or working instead. This was especially true if the child was a slow learner, or had problems communicating, or if the family lived too far away from the school and/or was nomadic and the family needed to look for a warmer place in winter.

Table 3.

Comparison of Questionnaire Responses by Dropout Children, Parents, and Teachers

Reasons for dropping out	Answers (multiple choice)					
	Children		Parents		Teachers	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Poverty/low income/couldn't buy school supplies/clothing	49	23.1	57	50.5	20	37.0
Herd livestock/work/run household/ look after younger siblings	70	32.9	18	15.6	1	1.9
Dormitory/boarding difficulties/ homeless/homesick	57	26.9	21	19.2	NR	NR
Migration	16	7.5	9	8.3	2	3.7
Timid/poor communication skills/child was sick	37	17.5	NR	NR	5	9.3
Teacher discrimination/poor relationship with teacher	12	5.7	23	21.1		
Physically/mentally disabled			19	17.4	7	13.0
Not interested in studying	40	18.9	13	11.9	6	11.1
Didn't pass the exams/poor performance	17	9.4	18	16.5		
Lack of attention, parental pressure	3	1.4	NR	NR	9	16.7
Parents were sick/alcohol addiction problems	22	10.4	9	8.1	NR	NR
Others: peer discrimination; engagement in antisocial activities, to become a lama	2	1	1	1.9	1	1.9

Note: NR—No response.

Another example gathered from the survey: A child who is so poor that he or she cannot afford to contribute money to school activities and is therefore considered as pulling back the class. As a result, he or she is not looked on with favor by teachers and even class-mates, and starts to be bullied and treated with hostility. The survey found that a child may be discriminated against by school administrators or teachers themselves who favor those who live in apartments rather than in traditional gers, indicating the teachers' preference for urban over rural children. The inference was that rural children who migrate to the centers are poor performers and need individualized instruction, which a teacher, who is normally overworked and underpaid, has no spare time to do. Since teachers' salaries are reportedly dependent on the performance of their students, among other factors, teachers do not want to take the chance of taking children who are at-risk or have the potential to earn a failing grade. As some teacher respondents explained, an "F" student means a salary deduc-tion for the teacher. The sad consequence, of course, is that children end up dropping out.

A variety of interviews clearly indicated the multilayered interconnectedness of the reasons behind dropout. Such connections range from the educational level of the parents (which influences the eventual academic performance of a child), to a child's own commu-nication and socialization skills, to the way a child is treated by teachers and peers in school, to the way a child gets to school, and to the physical availability of a dormitory space or other living accommodations—all of these reasons, singly and collectively, contribute materially to that very moment when a child finally drops out of school. It was not within the scope of this study, however, to find solutions to all the reasons behind a child dropping out. Instead, the team focused on what the study could realistically address in terms of policy reforms at this point in time: the systemic problems with the educational system of Mongolia, in particular the creation and adoption of educational standards.

An area in need of serious investigation, results showed, is the creation of new edu-cational standards that will make schools interesting places to study. School curriculums must be changed radically; instead of giving pure theoretical knowledge to children, practical knowledge must be included as well. The main challenge is to make the education system more practical in incorporating real life demands with study. Yet even for teachers them-selves, there was very little opportunity to acquire professional practical knowledge, much less higher education and professional development. There was no policy regarding the teachers' skills and qualifications, and there was nothing done in this direction. The survey team maintains, therefore, that if the Mongolian government is really serious about its educational reform efforts, it should be ready to deal with the systemic problems within its educational system. By themselves the problems are a matter of serious concern; moreover, these problems have a direct bearing on the incidence of dropout in Mongolia, making it all the more imperative that they be reviewed and addressed immediately.

As for the understudied areas, particular attention should be given to the plight of the physically and mentally disabled child. Survey results show that services for the disabled were available only in the aimags and the cities, and that there was nothing of the sort in rural areas. Given the formidable physical conditions of the countryside, one would logically surmise that such services are most needed in the rural areas. Mongolia's disabled children, whether dropouts or not, were not registered or counted in rural areas or suhms (the smallest administrative units of Mongolia), and no provisions were available for them.

The institutionalized discrimination by the Mongolian government of the disadvantaged members of its society must be the subject of immediate policy reforms and a reordering of Mongolia's priorities. Such discrimination is apparent in the way rural migrants used to have to pay city fees to avail themselves of basic services, in the way city teachers turn away those who live in gers from city schools, and in the way the disabled are not counted on official registries.

Laws and policies on dropout

Some policies have been instituted to alleviate the occurrence of dropout, such as the abolition of the dormitory fees, addition of the 16,000 tugriks subsidy for school supplies, and the establishment of the nonformal education program. However, there is no explicit and distinct legislative enactment or mandate pertaining to the dropout issue or to its alleviation. There are also no provisions in the Education Law of 2002 or in the Constitution of Mongolia that stipulate who should be responsible and accountable when a child drops out, much less any penalties ascribed thereto.[4]

Undoubtedly, the lack of a national mandate on dropout leaves the doors wide open for parents or families or even the children themselves to get out of school. Such a mandate should provide the legal framework and enabling imprimatur on how the dropout issue could be addressed. The fact that no party is held accountable and responsible for a child dropping out could only make the matter worse. Not only does the current situation provide the perfect conditions for the unregulated dropping out of children, it also cripples both the letter and the spirit of Mongolia's compulsory education program.

Alternative pathways to education: National Program of Non-Formal Education Development and National Program for Distance Education[5]

In cooperation with UNESCO, the government established the Non-Formal Educational Development (NFED) in 1997–2004. The NFED, or NFE as it is commonly called, is composed of two programs. The first program was launched in 1997, The National Program of

Non-Formal Education Development. The second program was launched in January 2002, the National Program for Distance Education. In general, the goal of these two nonformal education programs is to give a wide variety of opportunities to people to acquire required knowledge and skills by forms and ways of training appropriate for them, and to enhance the accessibility of formal and nonformal education for the population through distance education.

Policy Recommendations and Indicators

On the definition(s) of dropout
► The term dropout must be defined.
► An information and public awareness campaign should focus on the negative impact of dropout on Mongolian society and Mongolian children.

On registering and recording the dropout rate
► There should be an exhaustive policy review on the methods and procedures by which dropout is measured, with the goal of instituting efficient data-collection and record-keeping systems and procedures from the bagh level to the central office of the MOECS.
► There should be institutionalized checks and balances and cross-referencing of data sources, bearing in mind the political and economic implications of the "politics of the statistics of dropouts" pointed out by Steiner-Khamsi, Stolpe, and Amgaabazar (2004).

On dropout reasons
► Poverty alleviation measures should be concerted and coordinated to provide sustainable employment opportunities and income-generating initiatives especially for the population of rural Mongolia.
► The dropout issue should be treated as a separate concern and not lumped together with other poverty-related issues, in order that it receives the necessary government support and attention it deserves, including corresponding budgetary appropriation.

- ► Immediate review and reforms should be carried out to address and arrest the systemic problems plaguing the Mongolian educational system including, but not limited to: providing mandatory preschool education, raising curriculum standards, improving teacher skills and professional development, ending the practice of making teacher salaries contingent on student performance, ending the prevailing practice of collecting money from students, confronting teacher discrimination, and addressing the lack of dormitory space.
- ► Measures should be in place to protect and assist disabled children.

On oversight policies

- ► The government should institute a national policy to provide for overseeing the dropout problem, and apply appropriate penalty provisions and sanctions against those persons who cause or are instrumental in a child dropping out of school.
- ► There should be oversight committees both at the central and local levels to monitor dropout cases.

Recommended indicators on dropout

- ► Income level/poverty level
- ► Prolonged unexcused absences
- ► Transfer within the aimag or transfer to other aimag or city
- ► Big family (four or more children with one or two children who already dropped out)
- ► Working after school
- ► High rate of truancy

References

Amgaabazar, G. (2005). World Bank draft policy brief on the Mongolian drop out rate (unpublished).

Altantsetseg, S. (2002). *Financing state higher education in Mongolia: Constraints and opportunities*. Accessed at http://www.policy.hu/~sodnomtseren/Financing percent20ofpercent20State percent20Higher percent20Education.pdf. December 2004.

Human development report Mongolia (2003). Urban-Rural Disparities in Mongolia.

International Bureau of Education. UNESCO (March, 2003). Country Dossiers. Accessed at http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/Databanks/Dossiers/mainfram.htm (Mongolia). January 2005.

EFA 2000 Assessment: Country Reports (2000). Accessed at http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/mongolia/rapport_2.html. January 2005.

Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (2005). *Statistics for the academic year of 2004–2005*. Ulaanbaatar.

Mongolian Educational Structure (2004). Accessed at http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/Databanks/Dossiers/mainfram.htm. December 2004.

Mongolian Ministry of Tourism (2005). Accessed at http://www.mongoliatourism.gov.mn/. September 2005.

Mongolian UNDP Organization and the Mongolian Ministry of Health and Social Services (2000). *Mongolian adolescents needs assessment survey*.

National Board for Children, Save the Children-UK and UNICEF (2003). *The living conditions of the children in peri-urban areas of Ulaanbaatar*. Ulaanbaatar: Sogoo Nuur Printing.

National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (2003). *Human rights and freedoms in Mongolia status report*. Accessed at http://www.nhrc-mn.org/docs/Annual percent202003 percent20Status percent20Report.pdf. February 2005.

National Centre for Nonformal and Distance Education/UNESCO (2004). *Survey report 2003–2004*. Ulaanbaatar.

National Centre for Nonformal and Distance Education (2005). *Dropout statistics for 2003–2004*. Ulaanbaatar.

Otgonjargal, O. (2003). *Mongolia international comparative higher education finance and accessibility project*. Accessed at http://www.gse.buffalo.edu/org/inthigheredfinance/region_asia_Mongolia.htm. January 2005.

National Centre for Nonformal and Distance Education (2005). *Report of the national program on nonformal education: 2000–2004*. Ulaanbaatar.

Save the Children. *Focus: Education in remote areas—Mongolia*. Accessed at http://seapa.net/external/focus/education.htm. January 2005.

Steiner-Khamsi, Stolpe, and Amgaabazar (2004). Rural School Development Project: Evaluation Report (unpublished).

Steiner-Khamsi, Stolpe, and Amgaabazar (2004). *Rural school development project: evaluation report*. (unpublished).

UNICEF (2004). *Mongolia: Fostering partnerships with parents*. Accessed at http://www.unicef.org/childfamily/index_23626.html. December 2004.

World Bank (2000). *Mongolia participatory living standards assessment.* Accessed at http://www.worldbank.org/participation/MongoliaPPATOR.htm. February 2005.

World Bank (2001). *Interim poverty reduction strategy paper.* Accessed at http://poverty.worldbank.org/files/Mongolia_IPRSP.pdf. January 2005.

National Statistics Office of Mongolia (2003). *Yearbook of Mongolian statistics.* Ulaanbaatar.

Notes

1.   Traditional Mongolian dwelling houses or tents made of wooden frames and covered with felt.

2.   Source: MOECS statistics, 2005.

3.   Based on interviews with local education and MOECS officials

4.   Based on discussions with Amgaabazar, Gherelmaa

5.   Source: Excerpted from the Enclosure to the Government Resolution No 116, 1997, National Program for Non-Formal Education.

Chapter 6

Slovakia

Zuzana Šranková and Marcela Maslová

Overview

The term "dropout" or "early school leavers," used internationally to describe young people leaving school without fulfilling locally defined requirements, is translated into Slovak not without confusion and difficulty. But there is a lack of consensus on the terminology itself in Slovakia. Despite the fact that Slovak society, in general, does not perceive the issue of school dropouts as a current priority, the government recently undertook several measures in an attempt to reduce the percentage of young people leaving school early with poor or no qualifications. One such measure is the termination of child benefits to parents if their child fails to satisfy compulsory education requirements. The law requires school principals to report to the corresponding municipal body if a child is not enrolled for compulsory school education or if a child misses more than 15 classes per month without an excuse. As a result of this measure, school statistics record reduction in absenteeism; however, the reliability and accuracy of the data could not be verified.

A continuing challenge in the Slovak society relates to its Roma minority, estimated to make up approximately 10 percent of the population (Vašečka, 2002). Roma students are 30 times more likely to drop out than students who are not Roma; Roma students are also 14 times more likely to repeat grades and 5 times more likely to receive unsatisfactory marks (Koptova and Lacko, 1993). Roma children have limited access to education, which puts them at a greater disadvantage in the labor market. The education level of Roma is well below other groups in Slovak society, further reducing their chances in the primary labor market and further pushing them to the edges of the society.

Information Base

Status and availability of information (statistics) on enrollment, dropouts, attendance at the level of compulsory education

Statistical data and information regarding schools and school attendance in Slovakia are collected and processed by the Institute of Information and Prognosis in Education (ÚIPŠ), a research, concept, and analytical institution in the area of status and development, financing, prognosis, and development of preschool, primary, and secondary schools. Being a state institution under the Education Ministry, it is the main information source in the area of general education, providing collected data to the education sector, state institutions, as well as schools and other organizations. The institute annually publishes statistics, including data about students leaving elementary schools in individual grades (see Table 1), number of students in a grade, and number of students repeating a grade—all with details about their nationality, sex, region, and type of school. Data available include information about the number of students in a grade, their progress, committee exams taken, and hours of absences with or without excuse. The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, on the other hand, gathers statistical information about inhabitants according to nationality, highest level of education, and degree of economic activity. It also regularly collects and processes information regarding employment, unemployment, wages, education levels, and demographic composition.

Due to the ambiguous definition of school dropouts in Slovakia, data about students falling under the stricter international definition of school dropouts are not available. Data about students who have reached the end of the compulsory education age without completing primary education are made available too late for any kind of intervention. This is often also the time when these students leave the school system and later show up only in partial records kept by labor offices and unemployment statistics. A lack of earlier data

and information about school dropouts leads directly into underestimation of the problem and postponement of preventive measures. Furthermore, accuracy of the data provided by schools is also problematic. Since schools are financed on a per capita basis, based upon the number of students, they tend to "hide" absenteeism and underreport students who are registered but do not come to school.

Table 1.

Number of Students Finishing Compulsory Education

(State schools as of September 15, 2004)

Region	Number of students who completed grades 1–4	Number of students transferring to the next level of compulsory education (grade 5)	Number of students who completed grades 5–9	Number of students transferring to secondary education	Number of students who completed grade 9
Bratislava	688	682	187	127	5,977
Trnava	334	308	291	135	6,392
Trenčín	297	282	242	159	7,690
Nitra	472	435	346	102	7,904
Žilina	428	421	430	326	8,772
Banská Bystrica	409	376	607	228	7,175
Prešov	491	407	868	348	10,004
Košice	539	479	1,036	382	8,253
Total for Slovakia	**3,658**	**3,390**	**4,007**	**1,807**	**62,167**

Source: Institute of Information and Prognosis in Education, www.uips.sk.

Design of the Study

Sampling

The survey was conducted on a sample of 253 children and their parents and teachers. Children interviewed were between 12–16 years of age. The sample was randomly chosen in five regions of Slovakia. In addition to Bratislava, the capital city, the regions included

the areas around Dolny Kubin in the northern part of Slovakia; Martin in the central part of the country; Presov in the eastern part, with its substantial Roma population; and Rimavska Sobota in southern Slovakia, with its substantial Hungarian and Roma populations.

In each of the five selected regions, schools were approached for cooperation to provide information about children considered as dropouts, children at risk of dropping out, and children with no problems with school attendance to serve as a control group. With the assistance of schools, parents were contacted and met by the regional survey administrators.

Children considered as dropouts for the purposes of our research were those who fit the definition: "A child who fails to finish basic education requirements and is absent from school for more than 15 consecutive days is considered a dropout." Schools cooperating in the research provided information and contacts for students with more than 20 unexcused absences; and/or students who had previously repeated more than one class during the final year of their compulsory education. The children at risk of dropping out were those children with problematic school attendance and poor school results, with a record of class repetition in the past. The control group consisted of children with no problems with school attendance and who were succeeding in school.

Findings and Analysis

The dropout group

In this group of children, 96 percent repeated a primary school grade at least once. They came from families with a high number of children—63 percent were from families with four or more children; 1.1 percent of the children did not have any parent; 22 percent of them had divorced parents; and 36 percent shared their households with their grandparents. Most fathers of the dropouts typically had 8 years of education; 6 percent had less than 8 years, and only 1 percent had attended school for 16 years.

Most mothers of dropouts typically had 8 years of schooling, 10 percent had less than 8 years, and only 1 percent had 16 years of schooling. Fifty-eight percent of the children were from families in which both parents had completed elementary education, while 25 percent came from the families where neither parent had completed primary education. The net monthly income of 97 percent of these families was around 20,000 Slovak crowns (500 EUR).

The at-risk group

Seventy percent of the children in the at-risk group repeated a grade; 42 percent came from families with two children; 0.8 percent of the children did not have any parent; 31 percent of them had divorced parents; and 22 percent shared their household with their grandparents.

The majority of their parents had 12 years of schooling; 10 percent had completed 16 or more years of schooling. For 88 percent of at-risk children, both parents had completed primary education; 7 percent came from families where none of the parents completed primary education. The average net monthly income of 9 percent of these families was around 20,000 to 30,000 Slovak crowns (500 to 650 EUR), while the rest had lower income.

The control group

The children in the control group were successful in school. The majority of them were from families with only two children. Not one came from a family with four and more children, and 97 percent had both parents. Only 3 percent of these children had divorced parents; 31 percent shared their household with their grandparents. Regarding their parents education, 51 percent of both mothers and fathers had 12 years of schooling; 46 percent had 16 or more years. Almost all (97 percent) parents had completed primary education. The net monthly income of 14 percent of these families exceeded 30,000 Slovak crowns (750 EUR).

Indicators of dropping out of the school system

Child's personality, negative expressions in behavior, signs of poor psychological state and emotional problems

All the groups of students indicated that there were situations when they were angry, although this was true to a greater extent with the dropout and at-risk children. The children in these groups were also found to have experienced more nightmares, with only 30 percent never experiencing nightmares. Meanwhile, almost 70 percent of the control group indicated they had nightmares only sometimes. Headaches were also reported more often by the dropout and at-risk children, while 60 percent of the control group children responded that only sometimes did they have headaches.

In terms of smoking, 94 percent of the control group reported they never smoked, while more than 50 percent of the dropout and at-risk children said they often or sometimes smoked. Frequent breaking of school rules by the control group children was not reported; half of them indicated they never broke the school rules. One-third of the dropouts said they

never broke school rules, while 17 percent of the at-risk children reported they did so. Both the dropouts and at-risk children reported frequent fighting with their classmates (around 14 percent); about 20 percent of the control group said they only occasionally fought, and as many as 77 percent of control group said they never did. Forty-seven percent of the dropouts reported getting into fights as did 41 percent of the at-risk group.

As to the behavior and personality of the students, the teacher respondents reported that aggressive behavior was not observed at all in the control group, while dropout and at-risk children (19 percent) often expressed aggressive behavior. Problems with discipline were reported more frequently among the dropouts and at-risk children (80 percent), while almost 60 percent of children in the control group had never had problems with discipline. Drug abuse was observed in a quarter of dropouts and in one-fifth of the at-risk students, and not at all among the control group. One-fifth of the at-risk children were found to carry dangerous objects to school.

Child's personality, self-assessing, assessing of students' own abilities

Dropout and at-risk children were reported to show lower self-esteem, and they tended to be less satisfied with themselves and less sure about their future than the control group. They were often unable or preferred not to respond to questions regarding their positive personal qualities. In comparison, nearly every student in the control group spoke positively about themselves, with only one giving a negative self-evaluation and another one refusing to respond.

Relationships with peers and teachers

Dropout and at-risk students reported that they had peers who were not of their age bracket while the control group (77 percent) indicated they and their peers were of the same age range. Contacts with peers at school were also less frequent among the dropout and at-risk children. If this is any indication of the social network of the three groups of children, the dropout and at-risk children tended to have fewer friends; the majority had only "several" and quite a few (8 percent) indicated they had none. For the control group, as many as 34 percent had "a lot" of friends while 60 percent had "several" friends.

The teachers also reported they had fewer disagreements with the control group than with either the dropout or at-risk children. In terms of student-teacher relationships, there was a mutual dissatisfaction between dropout or at-risk children and their teachers; these students appeared to be less satisfied with their teachers and the teachers felt the same toward them. With the control group, it was the opposite: these students were satisfied with their teachers and the teachers were satisfied with them.

School motivation, school results

Half of the dropout or at-risk children were not satisfied with their grades. Arguably, such dissatisfaction could be viewed as a motivating factor to improve, especially if a student believes that education means a great future. Unfortunately, 40 percent of the dropout or at-risk children expressed doubts about this, and 5 percent did not believe in it at all. The majority of the control group, on the other hand, believed in education as the key to a better future and wanted to continue with their studies. They were also sure about what they wanted to become and had plans for their future.

As to the teacher's perception on student motivation toward learning, their activities in school, fulfilling duties, success and the child's reactions toward it, teachers observed that sustained motivation in only 1 percent of dropouts and 3 percent of at-risk children. Fifty-five percent of the dropouts and 73 percent of the at-risk children were reported to be motivated sometimes, while 42 percent and 23 percent respectively were never motivated. The majority of children in the control group were almost always motivated.

School attendance

Undoubtedly, irregular school attendance has a big impact on bad marks at school; it also indicates other problems that contribute to dropping out. Further, it disrupts the continuity of a child's class work and learning, which increases the chances of the child leaving the school system. On this score, the teachers reported that 15 percent of dropouts had systemic attendance problems, 48 percent had justified absences, and 36 percent had unjustified absences. With the at-risk students, 36 percent attended school regularly, 54 percent were reported to have justified absence, and 6 percent were often absent. The majority of control group children attended school regularly and they had no unjustified absences.

Extracurricular activities

Almost 60 percent of the dropout group never participated in extracurricular activities; 44 percent of the at-risk students never participated. Among the control group, only 3 percent did not participate. This means that engagement in extracurricular activities increases the propensity to stay in school—a view shared by teachers.

Influence of family, school–family communication

Twelve percent of the parents of dropout children and 4 percent of the parents of the at-risk students agreed with their children's dropping out of school. Only half of the dropout parents believed that education guarantees a better future; 44 percent were not sure; and 2 percent did not think so. Some 80 percent of parents acknowledged the importance of education among the at-risk group, while among the control group, most parents were convinced of the importance of education.

As to family support for their children's education, the parents of the control group children cared about the education of their children and expressed opinions against dropping out. Frequent help with learning, though quite rare in this group, was not deemed a negative indicator since the children in the control group were capable of doing their school work without parents' help. Meetings of parents with teachers were also quite rare, which may indicate no problems with children's marks and behavior at school on the one hand, and lack of time on the part of the parents on the other.

For the dropout group, almost 30 percent of parents did not care about the education of their children. For the at-risk group, the percentage was smaller. Almost 60 percent of the parents of the dropout group never helped with homework. With the at-risk children, the situation was somewhat better: approximately 60 percent of children reported that parents sometimes met with their teachers, an indication that the parents of the at-risk children, in one way or another, were involved with the school activities of their children. In general, however, weak family support toward the education of the dropout and at-risk children was regarded as a contributory factor to the dropout problem.

Outside conditions, family conditions, social-economic situation of family

Among other reasons given for lower school achievement were migration of the family and the consequent changes of a child's school, environment, and social relationships in the last five years. The dropout group had the largest number of children in families that moved in the last five years (24 percent); this was followed by the at-risk group (19 percent) and the control group (14 percent). Dwelling conditions were characterized as satisfactory by 60 percent of dropouts, 76 percent of at-risk, and 100 percent of the control group.

The income of most families of dropouts (67 percent) is augmented by social benefits; 40 percent of the at-risk group's families also received social benefits, while the control group's families never received social benefits. Income from employment was minimal in dropout families, in which only 19 percent of the fathers and 23 percent of the mothers were employed. Among the at-risk children, almost 60 percent of parents were employed. Among the control group, 9 percent of the mothers were unemployed. Teachers' perceptions regarding the existence of family problems indicate that half of the families in all groups had problems "sometimes." Teachers perceived that 37 percent of dropouts and 35 percent of at-risk students lived in families with "frequent" problems. On the contrary, 37 percent of control group families "never" had problems.

Causes of children's problems at school

According to teachers, the problems of dropout and at-risk children were mostly caused by family influences: bad economic situation, neglect by parents, problems between parents, missing parent, lack of communication between family and school, ignorance of teacher's requirements, lack of parents' interest in child's education, and a socially disadvantageous environment. There is a long list of other negative factors affecting family life cited by the teachers: bad dwelling conditions, lack of food, poor hygiene, insufficient provisions for child's relaxation and sleep, lack of privacy, weak motivation and family support toward learning and attendance in school meetings, parents' divorce, death of a parent, new partner of a parent, big age difference between a child and a parent, upbringing by grandparents, a bad example set by older brothers and sisters, alcoholism, parents' sickness, nonrecognition of teacher's authority by the family, low intellectual and educational levels of parents, and frequent changes of address and schools.

As reported by the teachers, the personality traits of the students also appeared to be a serious cause of difficulties. These included: low mental abilities, learning and behavior disorders, lack of interest in learning, lack of motivation, passivity at school, neglect of homework, irregular attendance, bad health, bad relationship with parents, and dismissal of parental authority. Other factors cited were: being an outsider in a group, runaways from home, mental instability, emotional problems, and household chores (which cause students to be exhausted and leave little time or energy for school work). And the list goes on: drinking, smoking, drugs, emotional relationships, sexual maturity, walking to school from another village, and, last but not least, language problems.

The parents of dropout and at-risk children, however, see the dropout problem in a completely different light. To a certain extent, they in turn blame the schools and teachers. Following is how parents view various factors leading one to be a potential (at-risk) dropout or an actual dropout.

Among the control group, only some of these causes were indicated, such as adolescence, disagreements with classmates or teachers, lack of independence, lack of interest in learning, health problems, parents' education and upbringing, weak discipline in the class, or problems with the teacher.

Table 2

Negative Factors as Seen by Parents

Dropouts	At risk of dropping out
Bad company, friends, older friends, early interest in sexual life, having too much fun, smoking, drugs, truancy	Learning difficulties, too much to learn, learning and behavior disorders
Lack of interest in learning and school, child is not learning, doesn't want to attend the school	Lack of interest in learning and school, child is not learning, doesn't want to attend the school
Family problems—quarrels, divorce, death, maltreatment, alcohol, financial problems, dwelling problems, social situation	Parents—lack of interest, weak control, lack of time, absence caused by business, weak support, not able to help with homework
Health problems	Family problems—quarrels, divorce, death, maltreatment, alcohol, financial problems, dwelling problems, social situation
Disobedience, hard to educate	Bad company, friends, older friends, early interest in sexual life, fun, smoking, drugs, truancy
Bad relationships with classmates, bullying, Roma child among non-Roma children	Health problems
Learning difficulties, too much to learn, learning and behavior disorders	Bad relationships with classmates, bullying, Roma child among non-Roma children
Insufficient preparation for school (doing homework)	Disobedience, hard to educate
Parents—lack of interest, weak control, lack of time, absence caused by business, weak support, not able to help with homework	Moving, change of school
Adolescence	Problems with teachers, school
Problems with teachers, school is guilty	Insufficient preparation for school (doing homework)
Moving, change of school	Problems commuting to school
Problems commuting to school	Adolescence

The children themselves also had different perspectives on the problems affecting their success in school as shown by their following responses.

Table 3

Problems as Seen by the Children

Dropouts	*At risk of dropping out*
I don't learn, I don't like school, I am not interested in learning, I do not see any sense in learning, laziness	I don't learn, I don't like school, I am not interested in learning, I do not see any sense in learning, laziness
Absences, truancy	Learning difficulties, too much school work, nobody can help me at home
Influence of friends, smoking, smoking drugs	Influence of friends, smoking, drugs
Learning difficulties, too much school work, nobody can help me at home	Family problems—quarrels, divorce, death, lack of parents' interest, lack of privacy, dwelling problems, moving
Family problems—quarrels, divorce, death, lack of parents' interest, lack of privacy, dwelling problems, moving	Absences, truancy
I don't know	I don't know
Disobedience	Health problems
Bad relationships with other children, being an outsider, Roma child among non-Roma children, age difference	Neglect of homework, insufficient preparation for school
Health problems	Disobedience
I do not have any problems	Bad relationships with other children, being an outsider, Roma child among non-Roma children age difference
Neglect of homework, insufficient preparation for school	Teacher—bad relationships, changing of teachers
Feelings of being misunderstood, uncertainty, disappointment	I do not have any problems
Problems commuting to school	Problems commuting to school
	Feelings of being misunderstood, uncertainty, disappointment

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Defining school dropouts in Slovakia

The line defining a student as a dropout or an absentee is unclear. The Slovak school system considers a dropout to be a child who has fulfilled compulsory education's age requirements but has not completed primary education (ISCED 2). Compulsory school-aged children who miss school are considered in school statistics to be absentees regardless of the number of missed days or weeks in school.

Data collection

Official school statistics in Slovakia are collected and processed by the Institute of Education Information and Prognosis, a state institution working under the Slovak Ministry of Education. The institute collects detailed data regarding enrollment numbers per year and type of school as well as regions. It also collects and processes information about the number of absent hours and the number of repeated grades, as well as information about the number of students finishing compulsory education without completing primary education, i.e., not reaching grade 9 of primary school. Parents are required by law to enroll their child in first grade at the age of 6; there is, however, no system for registering children every school year. Thus, reliable data about students falling under the stricter international definition of school dropouts are not available. Data about students finishing compulsory education without completing primary education are collected and known; nevertheless, they are not timely enough to institute preventive measures. Such lack of timely data and information about school dropouts results in an underestimation of the problem and of the need to introduce preventive measures. Furthermore, as schools are financed per capita, they are likely to "hide" absenteeism in order not to lose students as well as financing.

Findings based on the questionnaires

The questionnaires administered to 253 children and their teachers and parents showed several interesting results. The analysis shows that the socioeconomic background of children is a relevant factor behind dropping out: 63 percent of dropout children in the sample came from large families with four or more children, and the monthly net income of 97 percent of these families is low, around 20,000 Slovak crowns (500 EUR). The educational background of parents has also proven to be a factor: parents of dropouts have typically spent 8 years in school, with 6 percent of fathers and 10 percent of mothers with less than 8 years; only 1 percent attended school for 16 years. Family support toward education is also an important

indicator: 12 percent of the parents of dropout children agree with their child dropping out; only half of the parents of dropouts believe that education guarantees a better future for their children, and 30 percent do not care at all about the education of their children.

When it comes to personality traits as indicators, dropout children tend to have more behavioral problems and exhibit problems with discipline while in school. Revealing results were gathered as regards peer contact and social networks. Among dropout and at-risk children, relatively high percentages have no friends, or have friends who are not of their own age. The control group (children who succeed in school) are reported to have more friends, and the friends are more or less in the same age range.

Dropout children also express their dissatisfaction with their schools and teachers as well as with their relationships with others in school. Half of the dropout children are not satisfied with their performance in school, which is viewed, on the positive side, as a realistic assessment of situation. On the negative side, this could be a cause of frustration leading to nonmotivation in the long run. Belief in the value of education is another important factor: 40 percent of dropouts are not convinced that education means a better future, and more than 5 percent do not believe in it at all; 40 percent of the interviewed dropouts do not want to go back to school while 40 percent would like to start studying again. The responses also confirm that motivation is a decisive factor. According to teachers, 42 percent of dropouts showed no motivation; 45 percent were reported to have been active in class; 60 percent never did their homework or participated in extracurricular activities. In this regard, the role of teachers in increasing motivation and creating supporting environments and active learning cannot be overemphasized.

Recommendations

New policies

The problem of dropouts in Slovakia needs more attention on all levels. Current school regulations date back to 1984. It is of prime importance that new regulations should clearly define and identify what a school dropout is, institute stronger preventive measures, and support and clarify the system of second-chance schools and courses. Further regulations should focus on supporting families, most especially the marginalized Roma and others who are in need, and provide them more access to education. The role of education as the key to employment and eventual success in one's life must be promoted. New policies should also clearly set the limits and extent of state responsibilities while providing support to local safety networks and administrative units.

Improving cooperation

Local education officials should organize second chance courses, and information on these courses should be easily accessible to those interested in continuing study. Secondary schools, especially vocational schools, are often the most appropriate for organizing such courses. In line with per capita funding of Slovak schools, a working system of funding for such courses should be established. Cooperation between the community and social workers must be supported in the regions; the principle of local self-governance must be encouraged; and communication between school, family, and local government bodies must be improved.

Improving the system of teacher training

The issue of school dropouts must be taken into consideration during teacher preparation and continuing education of teachers. Teachers need to be better prepared to deal with former school dropouts in second chance courses.

Data collection

It is important to improve the system of data collection regarding school dropouts. The current system on the reporting of absent students needs to be improved. Registering students every new school year is strongly recommended. In this way, information regarding children out of school and those at-risk of not completing primary school would be available in time for preventive actions to be taken.

Create an effective system of second chance courses

The current system of courses for completing primary education is more limiting than supportive. It is important to develop a system offering choices for young people who wish to complete primary education and continue to study. Education authorities should organize courses in the form of evening classes, offer them at the beginning of each school year, and secure enough funding for their continued operation. In this way, teachers as well as schools would be paid for their work and would be able to provide courses of higher quality. Course curriculum should include not only the curriculum covering the missed years, but also practical topics on life-long learning. When organizing second chance courses, schools should cooperate also with other professionals, such as psychologists, labor office staff workers, and social and community workers.

References

Koptova, A. and Lacko, M. (1993). *Human rights and civil rights of Roma in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.*

Save the Children (2001). *Denied a Future? The Right to Education of Roma/gypsy and Traveler Children in Europe.* Save the children, London: United Kingdom.

Center for Democratic Education (2003). *School dropouts: Predictors and consequences, research study in five districts of Albania.* Tirana.

Šimcáková, L. (1999). *Education for all in the Slovak Republic.* Bratislava.

Institute of Information and Prognosis of Education. *Country report: Slovakia.* Accessed at http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/slovakia/contents.html. November 2003.

Šranková, Z., Higo, Y. and Lafuente, C. (2004). *Education sub-sector review: Slovakia.* Teachers College, Columbia University.

Šranková, Maslová, Kadlecikova (2005). *Národná správa monitoringu predčasného odchodu detí zo školského systému.* Bratislava.

Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2002). *Basic data on schools and school establishments in the Slovak Republic in the school year 2001/2002.* Bratislava.

Vašečka, M. (2002). *Human development report on Roma in Slovakia.* Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs.

Chapter 7

Tajikistan

Nodir Amonov, Azim Bayzoev, Khayol Boboyev, and Shodibeg Kodirov

Overview

In Tajikistan,[1] most dropouts, faced with minimal options and chances to acquire steady sources of income, end up engaging in petty trade and menial work. The dropout situation is exacerbated by an impression that one can count on high income without education, an impression based on an undeveloped labor market that has an insufficient demand for people with good knowledge and professional skills. A simple laborer can earn, on average, 5–7 somoni[2] a day and 150–200 somoni a month (about US$70). In comparison, the average monthly base salary of a secondary school teacher is only 34 somoni (about US$12).

Information Base

According to official statistics on education coverage, the dropout situation has recently been improving (see Table 1). The education coverage factor is calculated as the ratio between the overall number of students at basic education level (grades 1–9) and the total number of children of school age in the country. For example, in the school year 2003–2004, the coverage factor (95.4 percent) among students from grades 1–9 grew by nearly 6 percent from school year 1998–1999 (89.7 percent). Arguably, if the coverage factor is any indication, then its increasing value means more students are in school and fewer are dropping out.

Table 1.

Education Coverage Factor

School year	Number of students in grades 1–4	Population aged 7–10 years	Coverage factor (7–10 years)	Number of students in grades 5–9	Population aged 11–15 years	Coverage factor (11–15 years)
1998–1999	690,306	708,968	97.4	659,050	795,662	82.8
1999–2000	691,891	710,131	97.4	674,555	823,129	82.0
2000–2001	680,100	698,335	97.4	691,361	851,611	81.2
2001–2002	684,542	695,264	97.4	743,989	872,885	85.2
2002–2003	694,930	705,527	98.5	798,568	875,808	91.2
2003–2004	690,270	692,802	98.5	805,848	875,767	92.0

School year	Number of students in grades 1–9	Population aged 7–15 years	Coverage factor (7–15 years)	Number of students in grades 10–11	Population aged 16–17 years	Coverage factor (16–17 years)
1998–1999	1,349,356	1,504,630	89.7	85,165	260,497	32.7
1999–2000	1,366,446	1,533,260	89.1	96,998	271,579	35.7
2000–2001	1,371,461	1,549,946	88.5	131,634	285,378	46.1
2001–2002	1,428,531	1,568,149	91.1	129,924	306,514	42.4
2002–2003	1,493,498	1,581,335	94.4	124,227	329,538	37.7
2003–2004	1,496,118	1,568,569	95.4	143,914	342,864	42.0

Source: State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2004.

The official statistics are contradicted, however, by the results of monitoring performed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on poverty reduction in 2002. According to the ADB, the coverage factor is calculated on the basis of dividing children of school age into two age groups: 7–12 years of age (primary education) and 13–17 years of age (basic and full education). Thus, in 2002 school attendance by students from the first age group was 90.2 percent (versus 98.5 percent according to official statistics for the children aged 7–10 years); of this number, 90.8 percent were boys and 89.6 percent were girls.

Table 2.
School Nonattendance, Children Aged 7–12 Years by Gender,
in Urban and Rural Areas (percentage in 2002)

	Not atending school		
	Both genders	*Boys*	*Girls*
Republic of Tajikistan	9.8	9.2	10.4
Urban areas	10.7	9.7	11.7
Rural areas	9.5	9.1	10.0
Gomo-Badakhstan Autonomous Oblast	1.0	0.0	2.0
Sogd Oblast	8.6	8.8	8.4
Khatlon Oblast	10.1	9.6	10.6
City of Dushanbe	10.2	7.7	12.6
Districts of Republican Subordination	11.8	10.8	12.9

Source: State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Tajikistan, ADB. *Poverty reduction monitoring survey 2002.* p. 111.

For middle and high school level students (13–17 years), the coverage factor was 80.6 percent, out of which 87.1 percent were boys and 73.9 percent were girls. The highest coverage was reported in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), 89.3 percent, while the lowest was in Dushanbe, 73.4 percent (see Table 3).

Table 3.

School Nonattendance, Children Aged 13–17 Years by Gender, in Urban and Rural Areas (percentage in 2002)

	Not attending school		
	Both genders	*Boys*	*Girls*
Republic of Tajikistan	19.4	12.9	26.1
Urban areas	22.3	13.6	31.0
Rural areas	18.4	12.7	24.3
Gomo-Badakhstan Autonomous Oblast	10.7	7.4	14.0
Sogd Oblast	17.5	14.0	21.2
Khatlon Oblast	18.4	11.7	25.5
City of Dushanbe	26.6	10.5	43.0
Districts of Republican Subordination	21.7	14.9	28.7

Source: State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Tajikistan, ADB. *Poverty reduction monitoring survey 2002.* p. 111.

Design of the Study

In order to identify the reasons why children drop out of school, the survey team investigated various factors contributing to development or prevention of this phenomenon. Adapting the instrument developed by the Center of Democratic Education of Albania allowed reseachers to study and analyze important components of the problem such as influence of family problems, the relationship between teachers and students, peer influences, the specific characteristics of a child, the level of parents' education, and the efficiency of work done by the school and community in monitoring the dropout situation.

The survey was conducted among dropout students, their parents, and teachers in three regions of Tajikistan—Sogd (Istaravshan) and Khatlon (Kurgan-Tube and Bokhtar district) oblasts, city of Dushanbe, as well as in the Districts of Republican Subordination (Shakhrinav district). All in all, 113 parents, 102 students, and 100 teachers were interviewed from December 2004 to January 2005. In total, 68.1 percent of the interviewees lived in rural areas, 31.9 percent lived in cities; and 14.2 percent of families changed residence after the 1990's. Of the school dropouts, 77 percent were aged 11–15 years (basic level of education, grades 5–9) and 18 percent were aged 16–18 years.

Findings and Analysis

According to state statistics, of the total number of children aged 7–18 not attending school, 46.1 percent were boys while 53.9 percent were girls. The main reasons for children dropping out of school were related to difficult financial circumstances (e.g., lack of school supplies, the need to work). The number of those dropping out of school for this reason was about 20 percent of the overall number (17 percent boys, 25 percent girls). Some 11 percent of children aged 7–17 who were not attending school could not do so for health reasons. Other reasons cited were lack of capacity (4.5 percent), lack of interest (2.2 percent), and residence far from school (0.1 percent).[3]

It should be pointed out that the predominance of girls among dropouts is primarily because attending grades 10 and 11 is not compulsory and the fact that education in Tajikistan is traditionally a male prerogative. Thus, senior grades, such as grades 10 and 11, are usually attended by boys from poor families, while girls stay home and help about the house or end up getting married at an early age. This leads to a gender imbalance in senior grades.

The interviews also revealed a number of reasons for not attending school: 74.5 percent of the interviewed children blamed the poor economic circumstances of the family as the main reason (e.g., low standard of living, need to work, help parents with the household); 2.9 percent dropped out of school for lack of interest; and the same number of respondents gave remote residence as the reason. Only 1 percent cited health reasons for dropping out (see Table 4).

Table 4.
Children's Reasons for Dropping Out of School

Reasons	Number	Percent
Economic reasons	76	74.5
Lack of interest in studying	3	2.9
For health reasons	1	1.0
Distance between home and school	3	2.9
Other reasons	2	2.0
No response	17	16.7
Total	**102**	**100**

Teachers responding to the survey questions cited economic reasons as the main cause of children dropping out (see Table 5).

Table 5.

Teachers' Opinions Regarding the Reasons for School Dropout

Reasons	Number	Percent
Economic	65	65
Lack of interest in studying	18	18
Distance between home and school	2	2
Do not know	15	15

Why do children of school age drop out of school? An analysis of available official data and the results of the survey conducted as part of the Dropout Monitoring Project showed the following reasons and possible explanations:

► At the primary education level, according to official statistics, 99.6 percent of children up to 10 years of age were in school. According to Dropout Project survey results, the number of dropout students at primary school level was 8 percent. The main reasons at this school level were either poor health or remote residence.

► The number of dropout students increased at the second level of education when the child reached 11–12 years of age. Results showed that 73 percent of children dropped out of school after grades 5, 6, 7, and 8. At this age, they are able to work and begin to help their parents about the house. The main reason for dropping out was the difficult economic situation of the family.

► Although official statistics show that the percentage of basic education coverage has been steadily increasing over recent years (95.4 percent in 2003 against 89.7 percent in 1998), the results of the Dropout Project survey showed the contrary: the number of dropouts is growing. Of the overall number of interviewed students not attending school, 13 percent dropped out of school in 2001; 16 percent in 2002; and in 2003, this figure rose to 35 percent. During the first half of the 2004–2005 school year, 24 percent had dropped out. Based on this, the survey team surmised that that the problem is becoming more pressing, even if the official statistics contend otherwise. This is demonstrated by the fact that in one of the districts where the survey was conducted, the number of official dropouts was only 11 students, while the survey showed there were actually 34.

► As previously noted, the coverage of children in grades 10–11 (level of full secondary education) is falling dramatically since this level is not compulsory (in 2003 the coverage factor was 42 percent). This level is marked by a noticeable gender imbalance: the number of girls who do not, for various reasons, complete full secondary education far exceeds the number of boys. According to the Research Poverty Reduction Monitoring (RPRM), in 2002, the percentage of children who did not attend school was 19.4 percent, of this number, 12.9 percent were boys and 26.1 percent were girls. Out of the total number of students in grades 10–11 (about 124,200 people), 47,600 were girls, according to Goskomstat (State Committee of Statistics of Republic of Tajikistan) in 2002–2003.

► Among those considered as dropouts are children who failed to finish school before reaching 18 years of age because of forced migration as refugees as a result of civil war in 1992–1997. The issue of refugees is addressed by the government through measures that allow those who have returned to receive an appropriate level of education and a corresponding certificate within a short timeframe. The measures were adopted on October 15, 2004.

Characteristics of dropout children

The results of the survey among teachers (100 total, including 47 males and 53 females) indicated that most children who had dropped out of school were typical students, no different from their peers. Only 8 percent were repeaters; 72 percent never demonstrated aggressive behavior; 67 percent were of calm disposition; 99 percent had never used drugs; 92 percent did not smoke; 77 percent never had any run-ins with the teachers; and 68 percent had no differences with their peers.

The survey team surmised, however, that the number of those smoking and using drugs may be a little higher since teachers did not always notice such behavior, while students tried to hide these from both teachers and parents. As to the student-teacher relationship, results pointed to the possibility that teachers intentionally concealed that their relations with students may be far from perfect, in order to make the family fully responsible for the student dropping out of school. There was a tendency to lay the blame on the family in order not to put the position of the teacher in jeopardy. It was thus inferred that the teachers' specific responses on the frequency of school attendance and students' motivation to study could be the only ones not colored by this tendency. According to the teachers, more than half (54 percent) of those who dropped out often missed classes, while 28 percent seldom attended school. Only 36 percent were usually motivated to study; 44 percent were seldom motivated to do so; and 18 percent were never motivated to learn (see Table 6).

Table 6.

Attendance versus Motivation to Learn, Teachers' Opinions (in percent)

School attendance		*Motivation to learn*	
Systematic	18	Usually	38
Not regular	54	Seldom	44
Infrequent	28	Never	18

In so far as relating to peers is concerned, the teacher respondents observed that more than half (55 percent) of the students had fun with their peers. The dropouts were observed not to be active participants in school life, were reluctant to do class assignments, and failed to demonstrate good academic performance. Only a third of their parents were reported to have maintained regular communication with the school and the teachers.

For the most part teachers pointed to family problems, including economic ones, as the main causes of student dropping out: 73 percent of the teachers responded that their former students who were now out of school had dropped out because of family problems, along with economic problems.

Socioeconomic circumstance of the family

Family and material circumstances

Most of the families of dropout children (67.2 percent) had four or more children (67.2 percent). In 55.8 percent of them, only one family member worked, while in 18.6 percent, two held jobs. Most families with dropout children were poor: 70.8 percent of families had an average monthly income of only 50 somoni (about US$17); however, only 18.6 percent received social benefits. Only 28.3 percent of families believed that they have adequate living conditions, while 71.7 percent responded otherwise. Quite a few dropouts lived with both parents (68.1). Another 19.5 percent lived with their mothers, 6.25 with their fathers, and 5.3 percent were orphans (see Table 7).

It is interesting to note that 10.6 percent of the parents were divorced. Considering that in Tajikistan, as in other countries in Central Asia, marriages are preserved and maintained, one can surmise that the breakdown of a family due to parental divorce or separation affects the decision by a child to drop out of school. This is especially true when the child ends up working in order to fill the spot vacated by a working parent who left the family.

Table 7.
Family Situation of Dropouts

	Number	Percent
Both parents	77	68.1
Only mother	22	19.5
Only father	7	6.2
No parents	6	5.3
No reply	1	0.9
Total	**113**	**100**

Interrelation between education level of parents and children

It is generally acknowledged that, prior to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the older generations, including the generation of parents of the interviewed children, attained a relatively higher degree of education. Most people completed secondary school. However, the results of the survey showed that most of the parents of the dropout children had below-average levels of education. In fact, 18.8 percent of the fathers and 22.1 percent of the mothers of these children had no primary education. The percentage distribution of those with secondary education was not high either: 54 percent of fathers and 47.8 percent of mothers. Only 10.6 percent of fathers and 3.5 percent of mothers had higher education. Both parents of 9.7 percent of the children dropped out of school before completing it; fathers of 1.8 percent of the children dropped out of school, and 6.2 percent of the mothers also dropped out (see Table 8).

Table 8.
Education Level of Parents

Education level	Number	Father	Number	Mother
No education	21	18.6	25	22.1
Primary education	6	5.3	14	12.4
Incomplete education	12	10.6	15	13.3
Complete education	61	54.0	54	47.8
Higher education	12	10.6	4	3.5
No response	1	0.9	1	0.9
Total	**113**	**100**	**113**	**100**

The results suggest that the parents' low level of education has an impact on a child dropping out.

Unemployment among parents

One observation that also emerged from the survey was the very high rate of unemployment of the parents of dropouts: 50.4 percent of fathers and 84.1 percent of mothers had no permanent jobs. Of the employed mothers, the majority worked for farmers. None of the parents had any well-paying and stable jobs. The point should be made that in Tajikistan, unemployment refers to lack of registered jobs; housekeeping, petty commerce, and other menial forms of employment are not usually registered. The inference was thus made that the unemployed status of a parent or parents of the dropout children also influenced their dropping out.

Parents' attitude to education of children

Specific questions to identify parents' attitude to the education of their children and their future were also asked: 87.6 percent of the parents of dropout children believed that school and education are able to provide a good future for their children; 6.2 percent of parents were not sure, and as many did not believe that the school of today can guarantee a good education and an adequate life.

Socio-psychological profile of students

Peer influence

The results of the survey further revealed that 71.6 percent of the dropout children had a lot of friends and maintained their communication with school friends even after dropping out for over a year. They also had out-of-school friends who, just like the dropout children, were also not employed (see Tables 9 and 10). By inference, the supposition was made that peer influence played a role in the dropping out of the children.

Table 9.
Do Your Close Friends Work?

Types of response	Number	Percent
All of them	3	2.9
Some of them	33	32.4
None of them	65	63.7
No response	1	1.0

Table 10.
Do You Work?

Type of response	Number	Percent
Yes	25	24.5
No	74	72.6
No response	3	2.9

General behavior toward school activities

The results also showed that most of the dropout students did not like to participate in extracurricular activities and were not happy with their grades. A little fewer than half of them were also noted to break school rules while over 20 percent liked to fight with their peers at school, and about 6 percent broke ties with their former school friends. More than half (84.3 percent) shared a good opinion about the teachers.

Parents' attitude toward dropping out

According to the survey results, 58.8 percent of dropout children believed that their parents cared about the education of their children, while only 6 percent of children thought otherwise; 50 percent said they received help in learning from their parents while 8.8 percent reported they never did. Interestingly, more mothers (26.5 percent) than fathers (18.6 percent) were found to be against their children dropping out, while 5.9 percent of both parents were against their children leaving school.

Attitude of children to learning and school

Over 70 percent of the dropouts believed that education enables one to have a good future. Nearly as many indicated they were ready to return to school to finish their studies and they expressed what they hoped to be in the future: 16.7 percent said they wanted to become teachers; 4.9 percent, doctors; and 2.9 percent, lawyers.

Summary of Findings

Implementation of laws and regulations on dropout

In spite of the right to receive a free basic education guaranteed by the Constitution and the Law on Education, there are still children of school age who are out of school. Official accounting as to their number varies: according to official statistics, 4.6 percent of school-age children are not in school, while the *Poverty Reduction Monitoring Survey–2002* reports 19.4 percent. The conflicting official data on this problem fails to capture the true picture of the dropout situation in Tajikistan, leaving education administrators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in the dark as to the extent of the problem. Consequently, they are not in the best position to address the dropout issue. A serious problem with the compulsory education program of Tajikistan is the fact that the government does not have sufficient funds to implement the law that guarantees compulsory basic education.

Dropout reasons

Based on the results of the survey, the main reasons why students drop out of school are the effects of poor economic conditions, which drive children to work at an early age. An external circumstance considered as another reason why students drop out was the 1992–1997 civil war, which caused forced migration.

The application of the socio-psychological framework used in this study resulted in a number of observations about how dropouts are regarded in the Tajikistan society, i.e., they contribute to unemployment and create new social problems, including petty crime, drug addiction, and prostitution. In addition, they are deemed to harbor behavioral problems and complexes and contribute inadequately to society. A look at their socioeconomic circumstance also revealed that most of them come from large, poor families; are products of broken marriages; and do not receive enough parental care and attention, including help with their school work.

Recommendations

Education reforms

► Laws and regulations needs to be improved in order to guarantee that children of school age receive an education.

► Local education authorities should be granted greater autonomy and should encourage decentralization, expand the network of alternative methods of involvement in education, and develop curricular programs on such methods.

► The government should develop a social security system for persons who have dropped out of school, and take specific steps aimed at developing the internal labor market.

► The system of reporting and gathering data should be improved, and a database on the basic indicators of the education system should be created.

► A preferential system of providing education to persons from older age groups should be created.

Organization of school work

► Action plans for bringing children back to school and preventing them from dropping out should be created.

► A plan and a set of activities aimed at working with children and families at risk should be designed and implemented.

► The habits and peculiarities of children should be monitored, starting from the first grade, to detect and prevent possible deviation of the student from accepted norms of behavior.

Central and local governments

► Create and develop a favorable environment for teachers, students, and parents.

► Involve experts in sociology and child psychology in the educational system.

► Provide additional funds for the social support of poor families.

► Make the schools more responsible for creating better study conditions and a better learning environment.

► Provide incentives for well-performing schools and teachers.

► Involve various agencies and NGOs in implementing projects aimed at solving the dropout problem.

► Expand the network of preschools and establish sustained communication between levels of education.

Families and communities

► Encourage parents to be more involved with their children's education.
► Use the influence of prominent people from a given area and community to explain to parents and children the role and place of education in the development of personality and society.
► Provide financial support to orphaned children and those with health problems.
► Provide support to single mothers.

References

State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Tajikistan (2002). *Poverty reduction monitoring survey*. Asian Development Bank.

State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Tajikistan (2004).

Teacher (Omuzgor newspaper). January 21, 2005.

Notes

1. The Republic of Tajikistan is one of the former Soviet Union countries in Central Asia. It declared independence on September 9, 1991. It has a territory off 143.1 thousand sq. kms, and a total population of 6.25 million people (census 2000). The capital city is Dushanbe.

2. Tajikistan currency.

3. State statistics committee of RT, ADB. *Poverty reduction monitoring survey–2002,* p. 113.

Notes on Institutions

Albania

Center for Democratic Education

Address: Rruga Mustafa Matohiti, Pallati 7, Shkalla 1, Nr. 1/2, Tirana, Albania
Phone: +355 4 247 884
Fax: +355 4 247 893
E-Mail: bmusai@cde-ct.org

Kazakhstan

Education Policy Analysis Center at Educational Center "BILIM–Central Asia"

Address: 65, Abylai Khan Ave., apt. 13, Almaty 050004, Kazakhstan
Phone: +7 3272 597 619
Fax: +7 3272 795 955
E-mail: zrakhimzhanova@bilim.kz
Website: www.bilim.kz

Latvia

Centre for Public Policy Providus

Address: Alberta 13, Riga LV–1010

Phone: +371 7 039 251

Fax: +371 7 039 244

E-mail: providus@providus.lv

Mongolia

Mongolian Education Alliance

Address: Sukhbaatar district, 1st Horool, Chinggis Avenue 15/1
              Ulaanbaatar–28, Mongolia–210628

Phone: +976 11 318 149

Fax: +976 11 324 285

E-mail: info@mea.org.mn

Website: http://www.mea.org.mn

Slovakia

Center for Education Policy at the Orava Association for Democratic ducation

Address: Halova 16, 851 01 Bratislava 5, Slovakia

Phone: +421 2 6241 0676

Fax: +421 2 6241 0648

E-mail: zuzanas@projectorava.sk; marcelam@projectorava.sk

Website: http://www.cpvp.sk

Tajikistan

Educational Reforms Support Unit PULSE

Address: 45 Aini St., 734024 Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Phone: +992 372 214 190

Fax: +992 372 214 190

E-mail: osi@ersuosi.tajik.net

Website: http://www.ersu-pulse.by.ru

Open Society Institute

The Open Society Institute works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve its mission, OSI seeks to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. On a local level, OSI implements a range of initiatives to advance justice, education, public health, and independent media. At the same time, OSI builds alliances across borders and continents on issues such as corruption and freedom of information. OSI places a high priority on protecting and improving the lives of marginalized people and communities.

Investor and philanthropist George Soros in 1993 created OSI as a private operating and grantmaking foundation to support his foundations in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Those foundations were established, starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism. OSI has expanded the activities of the Soros foundations network to encompass the United States and more than 60 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Each Soros foundation relies on the expertise of boards composed of eminent citizens who determine individual agendas based on local priorities.

www.soros.org

Education Support Program

OSI's Education Support Program (ESP) and its network partners support education reform in countries in transition, combining best practice and policy to strengthen open society values. ESP works to facilitate change in education and national policy development. ESP is the organizational hub for a dynamic and growing network of OSI/Soros foundations, education spin-off organizations, cross-national NGOs, regional education cooperation networks, OSI-related professional networks, and independent professionals. Support is focused in South Eastern Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Mongolia.

ESP-supported education monitoring projects to date include: the Report on Gender Issues in Education covering CIS countries, undertaken with the OSI Network Women's Program; *Monitoring School Dropouts; Education in a Hidden Marketplace: Monitoring of Private Tutoring*; and *Monitoring Education for Roma* and *the International Comparative Data Set in Roma Education*. ESP is currently engaged with OSI EUMAP program in a monitoring project on the access of Roma children to quality education. The resource pack/monograph

on Religion and Schooling in Open Society also mapped current religious education policy in most of CEE/SEE/NIS, a compilation that had not previously been available and in which there has been significant interest. ESP's aim is to identify an efficient and effective way to monitor key education concerns, such as the need to provide vulnerable groups with equal access to quality education, including open society values.

www.soros.org/initiatives/esp

Network of Education Policy Centers

Education Policy Centers from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union contribute to open, democratic, and participatory policy processes. They monitor and promote transparent, nondiscriminatory, nonselective education for all. The centers have become valuable partners in national policy development by providing alternative sources of information and policy options, in facilitating open public debate, and in raising awareness through advocating policies aimed at equal access to all levels of education. Through global networking, the Education Policy Centers gain new ideas and contacts, plan joint projects and learning events, and build their capacity in education policy analysis and advocacy.

http://www.edupolicy.net/EN.php