

Chapter 14

Self-Awareness and Motivation Contrasting ESL and NEET Using the SAVE System

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes the main drivers and the related approaches adopted to contrast ESL and NEET with a special focus on the reinforcement of motivational, reflective, and active learning dimensions to enhance youth personal development. That allows one to foster both the guidance and the training system by defining the basis for personalized and effective learning and development processes. This in turn facilitates the effective implementation of job/training dual systems as well as the job placement itself. These dimensions and focus represent the main goals and results of a project approved under the EU Erasmus + Program, named SAVE. The chapter presents the methodological and technological frameworks developed within the SAVE project that have been validated by over 60 trainers and about 250 students in Europe, mainly in Italy, the UK, and Spain.

INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment has been increasing over time in the last 10 years, although with very different rates, in all Countries. The last economic crisis has intensified the phenomenon of people being not in education, employment or training (NEET), extending it to areas where it was most content. According to OECD (2016), about 15% of youth aged 15 to 29 (corresponding to roughly 40 million young

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people) are NEET. However, crisis represents only a contingent factor: effective policies and intervention should address their structural drivers, mainly related to the quality of the educational, VET and job market systems and dynamics, as well as their dynamic alignment (Eurydice and Cedefop, 2014; Global Opportunity Report, 2016). It is well documented that reduced employment opportunities and increased likelihood of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion is strictly linked to early leaving from education and training (OECD 2012; European Commission, 2011).

The strong correlation between education and employment, links the NEET and early school leaving (ESL) phenomena in a vicious circle (Eurostat 2016) having negative impacts on social inclusion and development, also in a medium-long term perspective. Young people with low level of education are three times more likely to become NEET compared to the others (Eurofound report 2012). The core issue of this relationship is not merely related to a lack of “professionalization”; it also calls for the progressive lack of expectations and motivations and in turn, in very low (or absent) active youth behaviours. The consequent vicious circle between ESL and NEET brings serious social and economical impacts, also in a long term perspective.

Although the both are featured by very diverse sub-groups and driving factors, three main common features and intervention directions emerge as critical: the improvement of the guidance, training and orienting systems in terms of learning and orienting personalization; the stronger focus on the active engagement and motivational aspects; the employment of a multi-dimensional and multi-actor approach, addressing contemporarily system, trainers, targets (European Commission, 2015; Eurydice and Cedefop report, 2014).

Referring to this scenario, this paper provides a review of the main effective approaches to contrast ESL and NEET phenomena; presents the methodological framework and the technology enhanced guidance and learning system, integrating the main effective methodological approaches in an embedded Instructional Design System, guiding both the learners and trainers to the curriculum development and building of digital portfolio. The System, aimed at supporting trainers to contrast ESL and NEET phenomena, particularly in Vocational Education and Training (VET), is designed within a European project, named SAVE - Self Awareness, evaluation and motivation system Enhancing learning and integration and contrast ESL and NEET - 2014-1-IT01-KA202-002472 carried on by an European partnership (IT, ES, CZ, UK) under Program ERASMUS +. Then the article presents the result of the SAVE system piloting, engaging over 60 trainers and about 250 students in Europe, especially in Italy, UK and Spain; last discusses the further implications, challenges and effort required to prevent ESL and NEET.

BACKGROUND: MAIN DRIVERS AND POLICIES TO REDUCE THE PHENOMENON OF ESL AND NEETS

The heterogeneity of the NEET phenomenon is largely agreed, in terms of driving factors. Starting from the relation with ESL and, generally, with the educational level, other common causes emerging as critical refer to family and other social background factors and to school/work transition, Labour Market access, guidance system (Italia Lavoro, 2011; Eurofund, 2012; EU Commission, 2015 a). One of the main issues is the “lack of ownership” existing in the current setting, with many NEETs, particularly for 16/17 year olds, having little or no contact with institutions. This creates a serious risk of disconnection and by the time they enter the “formal” system, the damage may already be done.

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