

Early-warning toolkit to help schools identify students at risk of dropping out

March 14 2019, by Hannah Postles

Researchers at the University of Sheffield have launched an early-warning toolkit to help schools and colleges identify young people who are 'quietly disengaging' from education and at risk of dropping out or becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

The School Engagement Risk Assessment Toolkit (SERAT) has been designed to help schools to put more effective and targeted measures in place to prevent students from leaving [education](#) prematurely. With increasing numbers of young people excluded from mainstream education – something which has been linked to the current knife-crime epidemic – it is crucially important that those at risk are identified early in the process of disengaging from school.

The research team, which also includes the University of Nottingham, has recently completed a five-year research project Reducing Early School Leaving in Europe (RESL.eu) exploring the processes that lead young people to leave school without achieving the skills and qualifications to successfully transition into the labour market. The findings from that research informed the development of the SERAT toolkit.

Professor Louise Ryan, from the University of Sheffield's Department of Sociological Studies, said: "The early identification of young people who may be at risk of disengagement can be crucial for putting in place measures to re-engage them and prevent school dropout or becoming NEET later on."

Neil Kaye, a Researcher at the University of Sheffield, explained: "Our toolkit can be used at school and class-level to identify individual students who report low engagement, and to identify where school resources might best be focused. We hope this work will help tackle the prevalence of NEETs – which continues to be a serious challenge facing British society today."

The toolkit has been developed using extensive research data collected as part of the RESL.eu project and the Department for Education outcome data (KS4 / KS5 results) for over 3,000 young people in England.

As explained by Magdolna Lőrinc, a Researcher at the University of Sheffield: "Our data indicates that by far the largest influence for disengaging from education is [young people](#)'s own belief in their ability to succeed at [school](#) and the level of support they perceive is available from their teachers."

Dr. D'Angelo from the University of Nottingham added: "Of course, wider structural factors, including socio-economic background, are also crucial. However, our model helps us to identify dimensions which seem to matter for every young person. In the context of financial pressures on the education system, our toolkit may enable schools to target interventions on those who need them most."

The SERAT toolkit comprises a student questionnaire with up to 25 questions and a spreadsheet to help interpret the results.

The [toolkit](#) can be downloaded at: sites.google.com/sheffield.ac.uk/serat

Provided by University of Sheffield

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