



Improving Students' Engagement Through Policy Making

Sara Makki Alamdari
Patrick Sullivan

Overview

To provide policy solutions by addressing school disengagement using model of Rapp and Poertner (1992)

National Dropout Rate

The national dropout rate in public schools in 2013, 2014 and 2015 school year was at 5.9%-6.5% (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Causes of Dropout

- Health issues
- Low socioeconomic status
- Family environment
- Pregnancy/parenthood
- Academic challenges
- Disengagement

Disengagement Rate

The survey, conducted by Gallup among nearly a million U.S. students:

- only half of adolescents report feeling engaged in school
- A fifth are actively disengaged.
- About 10 percent of students are classified as both disengaged and discouraged.

(Gallup Student Poll, 2016)

Definition of Engagement

Three dimensions of engagement:

- Behavioral engagement (Participation in academic/social/extracurricular activities)
- Emotional engagement (Positive reactions, willingness and interest)
- Cognitive engagement (Commitment, coping with challenges, investment in learning)

(Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004)

Focus of This Study

To address disengagement challenge through creating new ideas for policy-making

Methodology

- Eight-step model of Rapp and Poertner (1992)
- The eight steps include:
 - defining the problem
 - evaluating beneficiaries
 - applying social work theories
 - clarifying service/policy procedures
 - discussing budget and human resources
 - clarifying an appropriate environment
 - specifying necessary relationships to implement the program
 - taking into an account emotional reactions.

An Innovative Idea

The main idea of the intervention/program is to replace the last two years of high school by specific trainings in the field of students' interests oriented to the future job.

Benefits of This Idea

- Job skills are more interesting for the students, especially if the content of this two-year training is selected by students' freedom.
- Two-year period is good enough for students to become familiar with the principles of a specific skill.
- Implementing the program out of school environment and highlighting the students' self-determination, the proposed program could address students' school-disengagement and promote school completion.

But ...

- This is only one idea; we need brainstorming for more new ideas by a multidisciplinary team
- This idea need pilot study, comparative (experimental) study to examine its effectiveness
- We need systematic review of best practices.

How to cite the presentation:

Makki Alamdari, S., & Sullivan, P. (2017, October). *Improving students' engagement through policy-making*. Paper presented at 107th Annual Conference, Indianapolis, IN, 2017. Knoxville, TN: International Association for Truancy & Dropout Prevention.