Preparation of impact evaluation of EFOP 3.1.5-16 - The support of institutions endangered by early school leaving

Executive Summary

The objective of this preparatory methodological report is the **comparison** of schools involved in the EFOP-3.1.5-16 (The support of institutions endangered by early school leaving) project with those having similar characteristics but being excluded from the project, with the aim of pointing out the achieved effects in an ex post evaluation to be conducted later. The basic objective of the EFOP-3.1.5-16 project was to implement complex and targeted institution developing programs in selected public educational institutions having **pupils without qualifications and imperilled by early school leaving** and in those **with segregated education and training and underperforming in the national competence measurement surveys**. These programs were meant to reduce the risk of early school leaving and to render pupils help to obtain qualifications and competences essential and applicable in the labour market.

457 institutions (task performing places) participated in the program, from which (after discussions with governmental specialists) we focused on 300 institutions (schools) (the other 157 participants were pre-school institutions). Out of this, 154 entities were included in the program based on the segregation index and illegal separation. 102 institutions were endangered by early school leaving and the remaining 44 task performing places were partner institutions supporting institution development processes. In the EFOP-3.1.5-16-00001 program all the three target groups accomplish a complex institution development process run as pilot projects in the **Supporting Pedagogical Framework System**.

For the evaluation, a **control group** should be defined (counterfactual impact analysis) together with the necessary **base data**. Regarding the latter, the availability of data should be

ensured for both the surveyed and the control group. The impact analysis will be part in the evaluation of the thematic objective of "School leave without qualification", planned in 2020.

Since the objective of the program is institution development with the intention of affecting early school leaving, **we considered necessary to display the objectives to be achieved in detail** and the underlying methodological developments. This way the evaluation criteria can be designed that, in part, correspond to the set objectives of the project, in part, allow real comparisons with other schools not covered by the program.

During the elaboration of the project, significant preparatory work took place to lay down the foundations of the project and ensure precise targeting. While defining the target group, there was a great emphasis on the threat of segregation. It can be assumed that in segregated living spaces schools, too, turn segregated since in the school district system pupils come mainly from among schoolable children regardless of the free choice of schools, since handicapped families have very limited chances to make use of the latter possibility. In addition to segregated schools, segregation within the schools, too, exists (e.g., at the level of classes there are "good" and "bad" classes, but even within the individual classes can be segregation as well.). Another problem is that **research of segregation is frequently limited to Romas** (in certain cases perhaps to handicaped and severely handicaped non-Roma pupils as well). Nevertheless, **pupils with special educational needs, too, frequently suffer disadvantages in the school system.**

In the report, we **present** the selection methods of task performing places, the planned institution development (what the developer wants to achieve and how) as well as the expected results. This helps understand the **selection methods of the control group** that is necessary for counterfactual analysis and the **selection criteria of indicators proposed for the comparison**. After this, **we answer the questions included in the Terms of Reference**.

The evaluation methodology is twofold. On the one hand, projects should be analysed from the point of view of the direct implementation of the set targets. On the other hand, comparison with the control group, too, is advisable.

The first analytical method describes the potential effects of the launched programs aimed at reducing early school leave. In this framework we compare the schools to themselves according to the target system defined in the call for tender. In addition to this, **the program manager conducts surveys among the educators involved**. Questions are asked concerning their own activity, experience and the progress in the mitigation of early school leave. The latter can give help in the proposed analytical methodology. Important indictors referring to **changes in the attitude of pupils** such as the number of unjustified hours of absence, motivation, frequency of grade retention, etc. Beyond this indicator target system, other data

including those collected by the early warning and the pedagogical supporting system can be used for the analysis of the project's short-term effects. These data are closely associated with the causes of early school leave, thereby they serve the prevention of school leave without qualification.

The second analytical method builds on the control group. In this framework, we propose five approaches:

1. Survey of schools included in the additional lists. (The project manager, too, mentioned this possibility.)
2. Survey of other task performing places selected according to the segregation index.
3. Survey of task performing places selected according to the family background index.
4. Survey of task performing places defined according to the results of competence measurement survey.
5. Survey on task performing places according to the release of early school leavers.

Since there were 112 state and 32 non-state managed task performing places on the additional institutional list that were excluded from the project at the start, it is possible to involve some of them in the impact analysis of the project in the capacity of control institutions.

In the subsequent analysis, **we compare the task performing places participating in the EFOP 3.1.5.-16 project with those that were excluded from the project but performed poorly according to the segregation index**. This way, information can be gained on the impact of the program on the supported institutions (segregated schools or schools affected by segregation), whether or not they performed better than their non-supported counterparts.

The third possibility is the comparison of results according to the family background index of the database of the National Competence Survey. The index comprises questions related to the socio-economic background of pupils contained in the background questionnaires meant for pupils by the National Competence Survey. On the one hand, it includes headings such as the highest educational qualification of students and the severely handicapped position of pupils, on the other hand, items related to the cultural and educational background of pupils such as the number of books in the household, the number of own books, and the availability of personal computer in the household. These are issues mostly touched upon in international surveys (such as PISA) as well. The advantage of this composite background index is that it perceives the family conditions of pupils, but it comprises their broader spectre as well. Its disadvantage is that not every pupil fills this questionnaire out (filling out the questionnaire is voluntary). Therefore, in the past few years, **the family background index could be calculated only for 70 per cent of the pupils**. The availability ratio of the index is not proportional, in each period there are settlements where the aggregated family background

index could be distorted due to the low return rate. These cases should be either excluded from the survey or their results should be interpreted cautiously, considering these limiting factors.

The fourth approach builds on the results of the competence survey. Competence measurement focuses on competence fields rather than on encyclopaedic knowledge. In this respect its logic is similar to that of PISA. Thanks to changes introduced in 2008, its advantage due to standardisation is that the same cohort is comparable during many years. Competence levels can be defined, consequently, the development of the performance of the same age groups can be measured on the same scale based on the tests written in different ages. Its disadvantage is that it does not contain data on educators, consequently, the impact of the educational culture that could be different according to classes cannot be measured directly. Thanks to the individual identification numbers of pupils, survey data collected in different years can be connected with each other, enabling the calculation of the value added of educators, thereby the indirect measuring of educational work.

Finally, there is another issue worth investigating, namely that from which schools early school leaver pupils come. In these institutions, the different success indicators of pupils are typically worse than the country average. In the recent past, Hungary's Educational Authority developed an indicator system in order to enable the follow-up track of early school leaver pupils. The group formed by the schools of early school leaver pupils may serve as a control group in the research.

The report presents the control group sample proposed according to the individual selection criteria as well as recommendations on which indicators are worth examining in the comparisons.