



STAY TUNED

BOOSTING THE FREQUENCY OF QUALIFICATION

Solution Story // Implementation Journey Barcelona

Education Consortium of Barcelona, Spain, has been working to tackle the gap between compulsory and post-compulsory school, where many students drop out. They have introduced new data software to track things better and used “proactive” methods to engage students early in conversations about further education, helping them bridge the gap.

01. WHAT WAS THE STARTING POINT?

The ELET rate in Barcelona is relatively low at 8.5%, but that still corresponds to 1100-1200 people per year who leave education and training after compulsory school or earlier. This totals to around 9000 people in the 18-24 age bracket who only have no qualifications about lower secondary.

The Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona (Barcelona Education Consortium) is the main, central department in the city for coordinating schools improvement and the measures to reduction Early leaving from Education and Training (ELET).

02. WHAT WERE THEY WORKING TO IMPLEMENT?

The team from the Consortium were leading the implementation of the city's strategy to combat school drop-out, poor study choices and absenteeism, including focus on programmes and methods to help increase diversity and inclusion in schools. This includes preventive actions to anticipate drop-out from school, applying them in the

early stages of compulsory education with the objective of preventing withdrawal from school. Part of this included plans to make improvements to academic/career guidance for students in the schools and to implement improved collection and use of data to track and spot potential risk students.

Key Policy Themes for Barcelona:

Career Guidance
Vocational Education

03. WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION?

The first challenge for Barcelona is the excess for interested stakeholders. There were a large number of different parties to manage and to keep informed and engaged.

The team were also aware that the inefficient data collection for absenteeism data was a hindrance to successfully tracking and monitoring risk or schools were notable problems existed. Data was being collected but not in a standardised format and not in a way that was easy to interrogate or aggregate across the whole city. This also meant that the

data was neither complete nor accurate, due to coming from different sources in different formats. Getting to more accurate data was a core aim of the work.

Career orientation guidance for students in compulsory education was also patchy, with some students receiving much better support and guidance than others. Due to the above data challenge, it was not always clear whether the guidance quality had any correlation with the drop-out rates of a school.

The final challenge was the lack of mechanisms to deal with diversity in their schools. "School Promoters" were introduced ten years ago, as a role to support vulnerable children in schools from Roma communities, but were not having the effects that were needed.

Changes were needed, but keeping the School Promoters on board with the changes would

pose a challenge, as it would change their terms of reference and the day-to-day nature of their work.

The parts of the action plan relating to increasing diversity were the areas that were less measurable. The team knew they are going in the right direction and coordinating and ordering the models of work, but quantifying that was more challenging.

Key Implementation Challenges for Barcelona: Stakeholder Engagement Performance Management and Monitoring

04. WHAT WAS THEIR DELIVERY APPROACH? HOW DID THEY TACKLE THE BARRIERS?

The Consortium created a new Educational Orientation unit in September 2017, whose role is to tackle premature drop-out and absenteeism and focuses on academic orientation. This has enabled the resources throughout the school life of the students to be aligned, coordinating all those involved.

The Consortium also created a new software system to standardise the data collection for absenteeism across Barcelona. This introduced the same criteria for all schools in Barcelona to enable data to be analysed across all schools and education centres. To test the system, it was first introduced in 2 districts, Sants-Montjuïc and Sant Martí, in May 2018. This test serves to detect and solve practical problems before a wider roll out across the city.

To promote usage and quick acceptance of the system, the team made sure the data collection interface was user friendly and easy to use. They also organised conferences in 10 districts of the city to train school principals in using the system. This approach proved

successful: at the city-wide launch of the system in November 2018, all participating schools provided their data within a 1-week period, with very few errors.

Alongside all this, the team worked to improve and reinforce career guidance for compulsory school students and in a specific way in order to manage pre-registration of students in post-compulsory education – working to help them make the transition to post-compulsory education, rather than trying to catch them and bring them back in after they have left at the end of their compulsory schooling.

The Consorci team also decided to move the control and management of the School Promoters to be part of the individual educational centres and to also have these as their physical base. This alteration of the Coordinator of the Promoters has been one of the most significant changes in the Program. The change allowed the team to carry out more intense and regular work sessions in coordination with those responsible for the

programme within the Barcelona Education Consortium.

The fact that a School Promoter is located in these education centre/school allows information to be shared and exchange more fluidly, with a more coherent and cooperative way of working between the Promoter and the Teaching Team. Above all, the figure of the Promoter is viewed not as an external element to the school, but as a professional of the educational community. This change of perception was crucial to enabling the Promoters to have the desired impact.

In 2018 the team were able to visit all the centres with Promoters to jointly establish and approve actions with the School Management. This means that the assignment of the performance schedule of the Promoters has been made according to the needs and number of students of each centre. This was the first time the School Promoters' work plans have been made in coordination with the Schools Management where they

operate. This means the school and promoter have clear, shared aims and roles.

The team also organised and managed training for teachers to help them to acquire better understanding of diversity and new approaches to help with inclusion within the classroom. This has been focussed on compulsory level, vocational schools, and worked to reinforce good practice that combines theoretical process with practical work in a company.

To help tackle the challenge of measuring the success of this work, the Consorci began a study to observe the figure of the Promoter from all points of view and see how it could be improved.

This included introducing a data logging process (for each Promoter) to register the individual and group interventions to students and families and also regular meetings with the Principal of the school to establish priorities and evaluate the impact of the interventions with students and families.

Key Implementation Themes for Barcelona:
Open Working and Stakeholder Involvement
Conditions for implementation
Project Monitoring, Evaluation and Decisions

05. WHAT WORKED? AND WHAT DIDN'T?

The new software system works very well for the collection of absentee data. And the testing and communication approach greatly aided the successful start of the city-wide launch. Interim results of the tests already appear to show a reduction in absenteeism levels the two test districts, starting to provide evidence that the approach is effective. The complete results of this test in two districts

will be available in September 2019, after a full school year cycle.

Whilst the changes to the school Promoter working have been positive, one challenge still hasn't been addressed. This is the way the School Promoters work in conflict situations.

Their key asset is that they themselves are Roma, and are part of the community which they serve. However, in times of conflict between schools and families or students, there is still a tendency, for the Promoter to side with the family, by way of solidarity. This

is powerful and supportive in one respect, but it also undermines the school position and highlights a conflict of interests in the role and responsibilities of the Promoter. Further work is being done to explore and amend working practices to deal with this.

06. WHAT DID THEY LEARN?

Through this situation the team have seen how very important communication is. To share common values it is important to explain these things with teachers and all stakeholders to align all this and have a shared aim.

Agustí and Mariona from the team have also drawn on the learning from Stay Tuned meetings – particularly thinking about the different types of systems and problems they

are working with. One of their future aims now is to work with an understanding of complexity theory of systems and think differently about their approach.

They are viewing some of their Complex problems and looking at how they test things out and learn from the process in order to move them into the domain of Complicated situations that are more manageable.

07. WHAT DID THEY CHANGE AS A RESULT?

Overall, the coordination of all the relevant services are now under the new Absenteeism Unit. This has made a massive difference to the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes of the Consortium and its partners.

Around 1700 students have been supported through the pre-registration programme. This has been effective in moving the approach to be a “prevention” rather than a “cure” (stopping the initial drop-out from happening). The team track students for 18 months, helping to reorient them to other opportunities if they are not successful in their initial choices

They now have systematic collection of information and used this to monitor the rates and profiles of absentee students and their families. The Promoters are part of the Social Commissions of the Educational Centres, and their Coordinator assists the Absenteeism Commissions of each District where the Socio-

educational Program of the Gypsy society is implemented.

A new area of work has also begun, to promote the value of schooling among Gypsy & Roma families in Barcelona. There will be meetings, led by the School Promoters themselves, with the families of the students in the schools and educational centres where absenteeism is higher and there are more premature school dropouts. The Promoters will offer support and follow-up to the families that have joined this new Educational System, with the intention of involving them in the schooling and learning process of their children.

As Agustí from the Education Consorci says, “We think we have changed the situation in Barcelona and we think there is a greater awareness amongst teachers about the problems (because they weren’t very aware before). We have improved data collection

very much with this new computer software and the different units are now coordinated under one umbrella, under this unit and this is a big improvement. And in comparison to

what we had there has been a considerable improvement to processes, and we hope this will improve results; we are convinced – let's see what happens."

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08. WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS IT MADE? WHAT DO THEY PLAN TO CHANGE IN THE FUTURE?

The role of School Promoters still needs further work. Changes so far have been good but there is more to do. The team feel the Promoters' work plan needs to change but

they don't exactly know how. This is an ongoing priority and they are working to tackle this problem.

