FUNDACIÓ BOFILL
ivàlua | Institut Català d'Avaluació de Polítiques Públiques

What Works in Education?
Using Evidence to Improve Education

20
February 2022

Second chance programmes: what works to improve young people's education re-engagement and transitions to work?

Alejandro Paniagua Rodríguez

Active labour market policies are the most visible face of the action that governments have taken to combat persistent youth unemployment, which has been aggravated by the crises of 2008 and 2020. This action includes second chance programmes, which focus on improving comprehensive training to improve educational return and transitions to work for young people and are particularly important in a labour market marked by intensified competition. This review of the evidence collects new data on second chance programmes and their impacts, on which ones seem to be more effective and on the factors of success that should be considered in future programmes.

"For too long, education has been subject to inertia and based on traditions, and educational changes have been grounded in unfounded intuitions and beliefs. The 'What Works' movement irrupts into the world of education with a clear objective: to promote evidence based policies and practices. Ivàlua and the Bofill Foundation have come together to push this movement forward in Catalonia."

FUNDACIÓ BOFILL
ivàlua | Institut Català d'Avaluació de Polítiques Públiques

What Works in Education?

Using Evidence to Improve Education

Second chance programmes: what works to improve young people's education re-engagement and transitions to work?

Alejandro Paniagua Rodríguez is a primary school teacher with a PhD in Social Anthropology from the UAB (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). He is currently a lecturer at the Open University of Catalonia (UOC). His research work revolves around educational inequalities, diversity, pedagogical innovation and public policy analysis.

Motivation

Youth unemployment, especially during the early stages of the transition to adulthood (15-21 years of age) and combined with dropping out of school, is associated with harm to mental and physical health, the increased likelihood of suffering long-term unemployment, low salaries and job insecurity and other effects on health, political participation and social inclusion that can last between 10 and 20 years [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9]. This is why national governments have increasingly invested in programmes to try to alleviate the effects of unemployment and the poor training of young workers [10] [11], as demonstrated by the important European initiative Youth Guarantee, which began in 2013[1].

1 First implemented in 2014, Youth Guarantee programmes aim to provide all young people between the ages of 16 and 25 with an offer of a quality job, education or training programme within four months after losing their job or dropping out of school. This framework has been applied very unevenly, as some countries show many problems in meeting their objectives and action plans [12].

Today, young people in OECD countries are enrolled in post-compulsory education more than ever, and for longer, thereby delaying their entry into the labour market [13] [14]. Although most OECD countries show an ageing population and a growing demand for employment in certain economic sectors, the proportion of young people who are unemployed or exposed to job insecurity has only continued to grow since the 1980s [15] [16] [17]. This trend is also greatly affected by the current COVID-19 crisis, whose impact is estimated to be almost 10 times greater than that caused by the 2008 crisis [18]. In May 2020, approximately one in five young people had lost their job [19], while in 2021, the cohort between 18 and 35 showed the greatest deterioration in their mental health [20].

Most countries have faced the challenge of encouraging young people's return to a training pathway or improving their insertion in the labour market based on "active labour market policies". These initiatives have reproduced a good part of the neoliberal discourse on the need for young people to get "activated" and improve their "employability"[2], which are merely ways of approaching much more macrostructural problems, referring to the educational system, the labour market and social policies in terms of individual responsibility. As such, unemployment has gone from being understood as something temporary that requires institutional support to a structural but collateral damage, to which one must respond with more and better training, while also accepting tough competition in the market [21] [22] [23].

However, the neoliberal promise that someone can get a skilled job (simply) by having better and more successful qualifications has proven rather illusory [24]. As recent studies on leaving school early and transitions to work show, intergenerational factors come into play both in dropping out of school and in youth unemployment (parents' education and socio-occupational status), as well as non-cognitive factors (self-discipline, emotional stability, social skills and others) and the ability to interact with future employers (signalling theory). These variables act as invisible mechanisms linked to parents status that is transmitted very early in childhood education [26] [11].

2 Employability can be defined as those personal skills and competencies directly related to getting and keeping a job that are linked to personal development, including social and human capital. The abuse of this concept, without considering the structural context of education and the labour market, has been criticised as a way of legitimising inequality through discourses on individual responsibility and personal qualities.

Box 1.
The difficult challenge of second chance programmes in Spain and Catalonia.

- A fundamental aspect when establishing strategies to reach and involve young people in second chance programmes is that they are very sensitive to the triad formed by the structure of the labour market, the development of the welfare state and the available aid, as well as the dynamics of the educational system [7]. The difficult context faced by these programmes across Spain clearly colours the results of the evaluations carried out in Catalonia [31][25], which must be viewed through the lens of very adverse structural factors, since:
- Spain saw **a very steep drop in the young population's participation in the labour market between 2007 and 2014,** with nearly 20% less people working [53].
- Indeed, **37% of university graduates end up in unskilled jobs** [28] **and 75% of all job offers are never made public** [29].
- Spain is repeatedly and persistently classified among the countries **most affected by the 2008 financial crisis**, which has had an impact on provisions that have deregulated the labour market and cut investment in social programmes [40]. In fact, Spain is among the group of countries with the highest risk-of-poverty rates in the EU, showing an inconsistency between economic policies, the labour market, social aid and active labour market policies [7].
- **Transitions to the labour market** in Spain have been characterised by their great length and even chaotic nature [12], with a notable waiting period and a highly segmented and temporary/insecure labour market, with few opportunities for on-the-job training, falling salaries, the loss of social rights and growing degree inflation caused by the excessively quick boom in tertiary education [54].
- The development of a comprehensive educational system in Spain with the implementation of the LOGSE in 1996 has not brought relief in the reproduction of social inequality and has led to **more school dropouts than under the previous system** [55]. In fact, [27] across Spain as a whole, almost three times as many upper middle-class students with poor or regular marks continue to post-compulsory education compared to those from families that live off manual labour.
- **The Youth Guarantee has been implemented late in Spain**, whose significantly lower budget than other countries has done more to prop up initiatives that were already in place than to take quality innovative action [12]. Between 2005 and 2015, the investment in active youth employment policies grew in Denmark by 50% (1.46 % of the GDP), while in Spain it fell by 8% (0.45% of the GDP) [7].

These programmes view empowerment as a personal project that is part of a process that goes far beyond work and encompasses the transition to adulthood.

In this context, second chance programmes are a specific type of response to dropping out of school and youth unemployment that differs from other active labour market policies. These programmes are committed to the comprehensive development of young people, of the power and privilege existing in our society, and view empowerment as a personal project that is part of a transition identity process that goes far beyond work and encompasses the transition to adulthood [30] [11]. In Spain as a whole, there are already initiatives that are proving to be successful in this regard, in the absence of more rigorous evaluations (see Box 2). These programmes are also based on the fact that a group of young people with lower qualifications than their competitors can be identified in any regional context. And in a labour market where not enough quality and stable jobs are created, but where competition and degree inflation grow, this means that those with the worst marks unequivocally end up being the losers. These groups, who have certain personal, family-related and social risk factors and who must face particularly tough barriers to get a stable job or continue with a training pathway [4] [8], are the very ones targeted by the second chance programmes.

Both in Catalonia and in Spain as a whole, this group has been and continues to be one of the largest in the entire European Union and the OECD. This is the result of an education system that continues to show high school dropout rates, which in 2020 sat at 17.4% (the EU average is 15%, still far from the 2020 goal of 10%) (Spanish National Employment Institute), and of a labour market that shows unemployed young people not engaged in any training programme at rates of over 20% (Eurostat).

The current effort to identify and analyse the international impact of second chance programmes seeks to provide recommendations to improve public policies in relation to young people's educational return and employment transitions.

What programmes are we talking about?

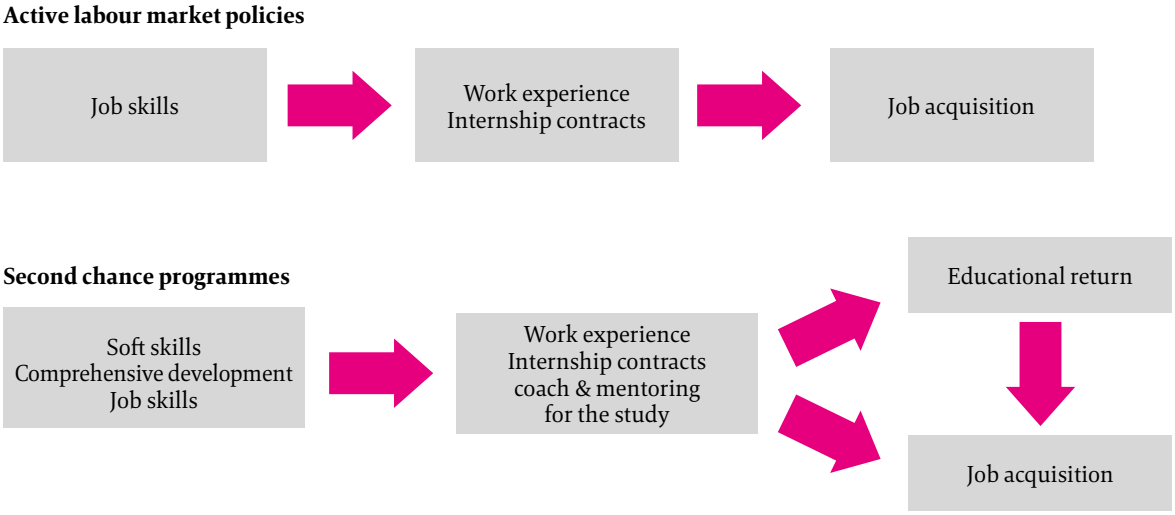
Definition and theory of change

In this review, we define second chance programmes as specific types of active labour market policies characterised by their (long term) duration and by their theory of change, since they seek educational improvement to acquire basic skills and credentials to improve youth job transitions [26]. Occasionally, these programmes are considered something genuinely different from all other active labour market policies, since the impact of the latter are usually measured based on how they improve employability (mainly by obtaining short-term employment or boosting salaries) and they are usually much shorter and focused on aspects such as job hunting or providing work experience or internships.

Second chance programmes, focused on training and general education, seek a more comprehensive and personal development, which includes non-cognitive aspects that end up either provoking a return to education or a training pathway or facilitating a transition to the labour market.

Second chance programmes are also distinct due to their theory of change. While youth employment policies revolve around the idea of gaining direct experience in the working world (the programme itself is the catalyst for obtaining employment), second chance programmes, focused on training and general education, seek a more comprehensive and personal development, which includes non-cognitive aspects—emotional stability, trust, self-discipline, social capital and others—that are critical to either provoking a return to education or a training pathway or facilitating a transition to the labour market [1] [32] [17] [30] [26]. In fact, various authors indicate that negative evaluations are due to the "short-termism" of many active labour market policies that include more comprehensive and training-related aspects (or ones focused on educational return), because the positive effects take longer to appear [17] [26]. Therefore, it is not only important to include longitudinal studies, but also programmes that are sustained over time and have medium- and long-term objectives.

Figure 1.
Active labour market policy theory of change vs. second chance programme theory of change



Reference: author's creation.

Following the classification made by Alegre and Todeschini [31], the second chance programmes that interest us in this review:

- Have an educational focus or place education as a priority, either to return to the educational system or obtain a degree.
- Are reactive, acting when educational transitions or shifts towards the labour market are problematic.
- Include work experience as a factor, but secondary to the educational aspect.
- Place mentoring as central.
- Tightly address the profile of each person.

Moving beyond the NEET category

The target of certain especially vulnerable groups, commonly called Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET), is also an aspect that distinguishes second chance programmes from other activities to combat youth unemployment [10]. Thus, even though the diverse NEET group (also potentially called "disengaged, at risk of being NEETs, disadvantaged, out of school or disconnected") has been the increasing focus of youth employment policies, the literature only considers 38% of its members, categorised as "returning" or "short-term unemployed", as realistic recipients of these second chance programmes (see Table 3). This is because they have recently dropped out of school and are confused and need support or because over the years their personal development has changed their negative perception of training or education [41] [1] [32] [37] [42].

Between one third and half of those who drop out of school try to return to the education system at least once, so it is important to point out and criticise the distorted image that radiates from the NEET category.

It is estimated that between one third and half of those who drop out of school try to return to the education system at least once [43], so it is important to point out and criticise the distorted image that radiates from the NEET category, charged with negative markers, and work harder at unravelling and defining each profile that is currently hidden under this category. In fact, the data show that in Catalonia, up to 70% of this group consists of people who would be interested working or who are looking for work unsystematically and ineffectively in a complex educational and work context, as previously indicated [31]. Given these limitations, quite a few authors have openly criticised the suitability of the NEET category and have proposed a more specific classification that also includes other groups that commonly end up being the target of these programmes. This is the case of "youth at a higher risk of limited employment" proposed by McGirr [26] that is analysed in detail below.

This review does not include programmes focused on the general education of young people who are long-term unemployed, with disabilities, subject to restorative justice programmes or shouldering family responsibilities, or people who are totally discouraged about or alienated from training or who have other severe socioeconomic needs and primarily require intensive comprehensive action. An

operational way of circumscribing the groups that theoretically fall under the umbrella of second chance programmes is to identify them as those experiencing the intersection of a lack of work, high disengagement or discouragement and the risk of marginalisation [41].

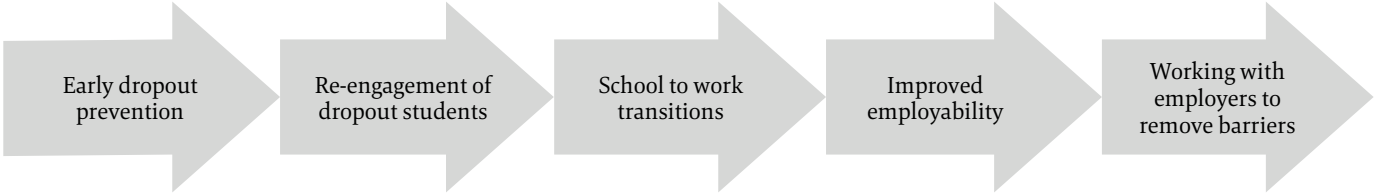
Diversity and lack of systematisation of second chance programmes

Not all the programmes covered by this review fully reflect the aforementioned characteristics. They can vary significantly in nature as they approach an ideal type of what has been called "Second Chance Education" [32], where we might find both "second chance schools" and all alternative and flexible educational programmes that largely target groups that have dropped out of school or, on the contrary, programmes whose educational component is a small part of action aimed at a type of vulnerable population, like programmes for young people who are disengaged or do not work, study or train [26].

From the typological point of view, although programmes that carry out preventive work in a complementary way (such as flexible education) are included, this review does not consider reviews of programmes that are primarily preventive in nature and that have already been analysed in this collection, like scholarships and grants for educational continuity [33], guidance and counselling programmes [34], action to address educational needs [35] or anti-truancy programmes [36]. Although all the studies reviewed unanimously start with the idea that preventive measures are always the most important and highest priority, second chance programmes are reactive in nature as a necessary mechanism to support more vulnerable groups of youths [32]. Using the phases identified by the European Commission [40] for the return to training or work of young people who are not working or training, second chance programmes primarily focus on helping them to return to education, improving transitions to work and boosting their employability in a complementary way.

Second chance programmes primarily focus on helping young people to return to education, improving transitions to work and boosting their employability in a complementary way.

Figure 2.
Stages of activation of NEETs and second chance programmes



Source: European Commission 2016 [40].

Given the lack of systematisation and the inconsistent terminology in the sources, in this review we have used a high variability of actions and programmes that cannot exclusively be considered "second chance programmes" for the most part, although they do include one or more of the variables defined above. This wide selection of programmes has made it possible to significantly expand the information on and results of actions that also include students' training and comprehensive development.

The following list is a tentative exercise to categorise very different types of programmes based on their objectives and themes to show readers the diversity of programmes considered in most of the sources that have been reviewed. It also exposes the lack of systematisation in second chance programmes regarding the relationship between the different components of the programme and their impact, such as their duration, dosage or specific characteristics.

- **Multiple goal programmes:** these may combine professional, academic or health-related training, guidance services, mentorship and other types of services [1] [6] [30] [37] [38], such as the National Job Corps (United States) and the Youth Contract Provision for 16- and 17-year-olds NEET (United Kingdom). Many types of second chance schools and alternative schools would also be classified here.
- **Basic skill training programmes:** these are the closest thing to generic adult training classes focused on numbers, literacy and preparation for basic skills or continuing other training pathways. Prominent programmes in this category would include second chance schools and other similar programmes that provide an alternative, such as adult or lifelong learning centres or alternative schools [1] [32] [3] [6] [39] [30] [9].
- **Support programmes for transitions to work or post-compulsory education:** these are focused on guaranteeing academic support and quick return to a training programme halfway between prevention and reactive intervention [1] [3] [30] [8] [37] [38] [9], like the Alternative Education Provision (London) or Transformations (United States).
- **Mentorship programmes:** these are conducted individually or in small groups of no more than six people. They are commonly part of other programmes, but are also found in specific initiatives [30] [8] [37] [38] like the Youth Service: NEET Programme (New Zealand) and Making a Difference: Big Brothers, Big Sisters (United States).
- **Programmes for young people who are "out of school" or unemployed:** these are aimed at a heterogeneous group of youths that includes "disengaged" and "disadvantaged" ones who are generally not active. These programmes combine education, training and direct work experience [15] [3] [39] [38], like Year Up (United States) and Folk High Schools (Denmark).
- **Short-term hybrid programmes:** these are programmes that combine education and job skills in a short and intense period [10], like I-Best (United States).

- **Programmes aimed at the NEET group that include flexible educational actions:** the NEET group has increasingly targeted on active policies since the late 1990s. This review includes programmes aimed at groups that have some educational component [4] [38] [9], like Youth Job Connection (Canada).

Questions influencing the review

In this report, we present the results of a review of second chance programmes and their impacts. They seek to answer the following questions: 1) What are the key elements for designing successful second chance programmes? 2) What strategies are the most effective in initially attracting and engaging these young people in second chance programmes? 3) What are the variables that improve young people's commitment and determine successful programmes? 4) What do we know about their cost-benefit efficiency?

Based on our analysis, this report makes a series of recommendations on implementing these programmes in Catalonia.

Review of the evidence

Reviews and studies included

This report is based on the analysis of 19 reviews conducted in the last 10 years (see Table 1). It is important to note that only two meta-analyses have been included, mostly based on active labour market policies that include some educational aspects that can be considered second chance initiatives [17] [8]. The rest of the studies are made up of systematic reviews, syntheses of evidence and evaluations and extensive literature reviews.

Table 1.
Systematic reviews and other syntheses of evidence

Study	Context	Type of programme	Type of study	Sample
Bloom (2010) [1]	United States	Second chance programmes	Synthesis of evaluations	11 programmes
Hossain and Bloom (2015) [15]	United States	Work programmes for disadvantaged youth	Literature review and synthesis of programme results	9 programmes
Clarke, Sharma and Bhattacharjee (2021) [10]	International	Intensive education and training programmes	Review of evidence	10 programmes
European Commission (2013) [32]	European Union	Second chance programmes	Literature review and programme analysis	15 programmes
Davies, Lamb and Doecke (2011) [3]	Australia and international	Programmes to connect vulnerable youth	Literature review and synthesis of programme results	52 programmes
Kutsyuruba *et al.* (2019) [4]	International	Programmes aimed at NEETs	Systematic review	102 programmes
Gutherson, Davies and Daszkiewicz (2011) [39]	United Kingdom and international	Alternative education for young school dropouts	Systematic review	120 programmes

Table 1. (cont.)

Study	Context	Type of programme	Type of study	Sample
Kluve *et al.* (2017) [17]	International	Active labour market policies	Meta-analysis	113 studies
Learning and Work (2020) [30]	Anglo-Saxon countries	Programmes with vulnerable youth at risk of becoming NEETs	Systematic review	58 studies
Mawn *et al.* (2017) [8]	International	Programmes aimed at NEETs	Meta-analysis	18 studies
McGirr (2020) [26]	New Zealand and international	Active youth employment policies and second chance programmes	Synthesis of evidence	*N. A.
Newton, Sinclair, Tyers and Wilson (2020) [37]	United Kingdom and international	Active youth employment policies	Systematic review	42 studies
O'Gorman, Salmon and Murphy (2016) [6]	International	Alternative education for low-educated youth	Systematic review	24 studies
Oh, DiNitto and Kim (2020) [50]	United States	Active youth employment policies	Systematic review	10 studies
Pilcher, Torii and Andow (2020) [38]	Australia and international	Action aimed at disconnected young people	Literature review	14 meta- studies, 31 primary studies and 10 reports
Puerto (2007) [44]	International	Youth Employment Inventory of the World Bank	Synthesis of evaluations	172 programmes
Rajasekaran and Reyes (2019) [11]	International	Programmes with disconnected and out-of-school youth aged 12 to 17 years	Systematic review	*N. A.
Te Riele (2014) [9]	Australia	Flexible education programmes for vulnerable youth aged 15-18	Synthesis of evaluations	20 programmes
Treskon (2016) [43]	International	Programmes for disconnected youth	Synthesis of evaluations	31 programmes

* Not available.

In support of this group of reviews, 11 other case studies and intervention policies are also included that come from important initiatives led by international organisations or that are repeatedly identified in the initial 19 studies. Also included are two recent evaluations of second chance schools in Spain. These studies are used to illustrate certain aspects identified in the reviews presented above and to delve into some of the second chance programmes considered successful.

Table 2.
Primary support studies

Study	Context	Type of programme	Type of study	Sample
Alegre *et al.* (2014) [31]	Spain	Active labour market policies	Evaluation	3,621 participants
Benda, Koster, and Van der Veen (2019) [2]	OECD	Active labour market policies	Quantitative analysis	Data from 64,000 participants from 19 countries
Broadbent, R.; Hart, K. and Papadopoulos, T. (2019) [57]	Australia	Flexible programmes for marginalised youth	Case study	1 school
Farré, M.; Cordoncillo, C. and Sánchez, D. (2020) [25]	Spain	Second chance schools	Case study	1 school
Jeliazkova, Minev and Draganov (2018) [7]	Europe	Evaluation of youth employment policies	Narrative analysis of public policies	9 counties from the EXCEPT project; 19 EU countries and 120 programmes
Santos-Brien (2018) [45]	European Union	Programmes with NEETs	Case study review	*N. A.
Savelsberg, Pignata and Weckert (2017) [48]	Australia	Second chance programmes	Qualitative case studies	4 schools of the TAFE programme
Schochet (2020) [47]	United States	Job Corps programme	Longitudinal evaluation	9,500 youth who participated between 1994 and 1996
Tapper, Zhu and Scuello (2015) [46]	United States	Alternative transition schools	Qualitative case studies	2 schools
Te Riele, Davies and Baker (2015) [56]	Australia	Flexible programmes for marginalised youth	Case study	1 school
Villardón-Gallego *et al.* (2020) [49]	Spain	Second chance schools	Qualitative evaluation	6 schools

*Not available.

All the studies reviewed in this report indicate a notable lack of rigorous evaluations of active labour market policies in general and especially of programmes that include training or educational return [10] [3] [4] [17] [8] [37] [38] [11]. The six factors explaining this lack of information are described here, which in turn justifies the wide and diverse selection of reviews chosen to prepare this report:

- **Employment outcomes vs. educational outcomes:** existing evaluations tend to focus very disproportionately on two types of outputs: getting a job and improving your salary prospects [31] [10] [3] [7] [17] [8] [26] [45] [46]. On the contrary, the theory of change that is part of second chance programmes, as defined in this report, is based on optimising young people's work transitions and educational return

Existing evaluations tend to focus very disproportionately on two types of outputs: getting a job and increasing salaries.

through improvements to their skills, knowledge and other socio-emotional aspects as way to get not just any job, but a secure one. Getting a job quickly tends to support assessments of whether an educational initiative works or not. However, the personal development of the participants in these programmes is not valued, nor is the goal of getting a well paid and valued job, which has always been absent in discussions on youth employment policies [7] [37].

- **Short-termism:** the processes of change for the populations at which these programmes are aimed are long and intense. There are very few long-term evaluations. This factor is key, since it has been shown that some evaluations that initially showed no impact or a negative impact have yielded positive results when carried out later [26] [47].
- **Variability:** the few existing meta-analyses indicating that educational initiatives have a null or harmful impact conceals an extremely important fact: there are programmes that work very well and others that do not. In other words, the explanation lies in the type of design and its rigour and not in the type of programme or initiative. Therefore, identifying successful programmes is key [8] [26]. Secondly, a programme's success often depends on its ability to meet the needs of the most vulnerable young people and not just to yield short-term results marked by the rhetoric of "employability" [45]. Intermediate progress within a long-term perspective (such as young people's comprehensive development based on their gradual empowerment and improvement in non-cognitive skills) is normally invisible in existing evaluations.

The few existing meta-analyses indicating that educational initiatives have a null or harmful impact conceals an extremely important fact: there are programmes that work very well and others that do not. In other words, the explanation lies in the type of design and its rigour and not in the type of programme or initiative. Therefore, identifying successful programmes is key.

- **Control groups:** the control groups included in these programmes are tricky to establish and can often unintentionally be better than the groups participating in the programmes. It must be borne in mind that many young people who drop out of education do return to it, with or without help, and obtain secondary school credentials [43]. The primary goal of many second chance programmes is "just" to get young people back on a path of training and education, of personal and professional development, rather than being only focused on getting a degree or a job. This means facing many barriers and ensuring that individual-type disadvantages (confidence or motivation) are addressed, which is something that is not reflected in almost any evaluation [4] [45]. Finally, the time that young people spend in second chance programmes is often long and intense. They are not actively looking for work during this time, which has a negative impact if the members of the control group get any job (which is known as the "lock-in" effect).
- **Contextual factors:** initiatives are rarely conducted in isolation, nor do they consist of a single aspect, making it difficult to isolate specific variables [1] [37]. Many authors indicate that contextual variables are very difficult

Changes in macrostructural factors, such as economic crises, welfare reform policies and labour market regulations, have a huge impact on job opportunities and can easily distort impact assessments.

to control, especially when conducting long-term evaluations. Changes in macrostructural factors, such as economic crises, welfare reform policies and labour market regulations, have a huge impact on job opportunities and can easily distort impact assessments [7] [17] [8] [11].

- **Limits in evaluating personal variables:** the success of second chance programmes is largely based on achieving the participants' personal and social development [48]. Variables such as self-esteem, confidence, personal satisfaction, empowerment and autonomy, the development of new social relationships and contact with people in the community are difficult to measure and are not included in quantitative evaluations. Second chance schools in Europe, for example, are based on the development of transversal competences, including socio-professional skills and other socio-emotional characteristics, which makes it very difficult to find evidence or record results consistently [49]. Furthermore, current assessment methodologies and tools may not be the most suitable for collecting these data and, when attempted, there are problems in making comparisons with other studies or control groups [26] [11]. Mixed methodologies and innovative tools are key to establishing comprehensive evaluations that include extracurricular aspects or community engagement, apart from academic aspects, and relatively few programmes use these approaches [46].

What are the key factors in designing successful second chance programmes?

The results show that intensive programmes that integrate a variety of services and focus on academics and personal development improve participants' long-term job prospects [31] [2] [3] [8] [26] [37] [50] [11] [47] [9]. The ability of these programmes to offer a high degree of control over their own pathways and their own security and empowerment are the most visible outcomes of second chance education [32].

Various studies show that second chance programmes or the educational aspects of active labour market policies improve learning, reduce disruptive behaviours, improve motivation, confidence and self-esteem and strengthen personal relationships and progression to other academic or job training pathways [10] [6] [39] [7] [17] [48] [49]. All the studies consulted stress that, regardless of the programme in question, attention to basic skills and physical and mental health must be a priority. Furthermore, improvements in mental health are identified as some of the most promising outcomes and if the monitoring of socio-emotional well-being variables were more efficient, these programmes would have an even greater impact [8].

The only meta-analyses identified in this review obtain positive, though faint, effects (between 0.04 and 0.05, with a 95% confidence interval) on the increase in employment and salary. These are very light results, but they may mean a big change for many young people, and even a way to prevent poverty among the most vulnerable groups [50]. Some studies show that where second chance programmes are included, youth employment policies reduce inequalities in social capital and

socio-emotional skills that originate in primary socialisation and are linked to social class [2]. Although most studies show that the most vulnerable groups benefit the most from these programmes, other important studies indicate just the opposite [8], so the unequal impact on aspects such as gender, ethnic group, social class, cultural capital and others is not entirely clear.

Some key takeaways for designing programmes described in the review conducted include:

- **Attention to personal development is important.** As mentioned, the improvement of non-cognitive aspects usually surpasses any other and has a greater impact on improving young people's educational return and transitions to work [26] [11]. This is why the impact tends to improve when programmes pay special attention to the mental health and well-being of the people participating in them [8].

The impact tends to improve when programmes pay special attention to the mental health and well-being of the people participating in them.

- **Programmes that include different services are more successful**, since they incorporate aspects of life and personal development together with academic aspects, the development of professional skills and job search support [4] [30] [26] [43]. Most research agrees that programmes that focus only on one aspect are rarely able to achieve a structural change that enables a return to education, so a comprehensive and aligned system of services is required [38].
- **Personal case management and coaching are essential aspects.** Most reviews indicate mentoring and psychosocial support as key aspects that have a notable impact on participants, with impact sizes of between 0.16 and 0.36 in relation to their behaviour, attitudes, well-being and interpersonal and motivational skills [17] [30] [26] [37] [11]. Job search support can be considered the safest and most successful of all the initiatives reviewed [17] [8] [26].
- **Work experience and clear pathways related to labour market should be provided.** The inclusion of experiences and knowledge about labour market largely improves young people's job transitions across the board [26] [48] [43]. Transitions to the labour market cannot be dissociated from the importance of identity issues and the fact that the participants are entering adulthood. This is very important when designing second chance programmes [32].

The inclusion of experiences and knowledge about the labour market largely improves young people's job transitions.

- **Collaboration and referral networks should be developed with other services and especially with ordinary educational centres.** Many second chance schools in the EU establish this type of collaboration, where professionals from ordinary centres and second chance programmes are temporarily assigned to gain skills and training [32]. Other studies locate the possibility of developing the flexibility and comprehensive care that make for successful second chance programmes

in the ability to develop collaboration networks with the community [4] [9]. The linking of the community and the family on the one hand and local employers and the courses they accredit on the other also helps to develop successful comprehensive programmes [39] [8].

A final aspect has to do with the theories of change and the disciplines on which these programmes are designed. While a wide variety of perspectives should arguably be included, such as psychology and social pedagogy, community intervention, neuroscience and behavioural economics [11], most active youth employment policies do not use these theoretical frameworks. This shows a predominance over economic and social policies and a shortage of disciplines that better understand and deal with behavioural change, connection and re-engagement, as illustrated by the lack of psychologists or specialists in coaching or mentoring in most interventions [8]. In contrast, second chance programmes are generally inspired by self-determination theory approaches and therapies based on behavioural change [39].

What strategies are the most effective in initially attracting and engaging these young people in second chance programmes?

One of the most important aims of any second chance programme is to reach the most vulnerable young people and keep them in the programme, while avoiding "creaming" or choosing profiles that will have the best outcomes [31] [2] [43]. Many vulnerable young people can only be reached through special effort and more than one strategy, especially those who must overcome notable psychological barriers such as a lack of self-esteem, insecurity and the rejection of everything related to education [10]. A good strategy to attract and engage young people is the first aspect of a successful programme, as it can help them to stay in it, as discussed in the following section.

The studies consulted help us to identify several factors of success to initially attract and connect young people:

- Launch awareness campaigns tailored to specific groups [3] [44] [45].
- Provide accessible local information, if possible by community organisations, reducing unnecessary complications [10] [3] [45].
- Emphasise the benefits of the programme [3].
- Connect with the aspirations of young people and fight against negative views on alternative education [32].
- Validate and create rigorous initial profiles that follow realistic individual plans [31] [45].
- Treat the user as an adult, allowing them to have useful roles and responsibilites. [45].
- Create and make economic incentives visible. Given that these types of initiatives can freeze earnings or access to a formal job for 24 months or more, youth outreach strategies should consider financial incentives or replacement salaries to assist participant retention [10] [8] [37]. In this sense, Newton speaks of financial magnets to underline the positive impact of financial incentives for vulnerable

youth. For example, in the Activity Agreement Pilot, 16- to 18-year-olds received £30 per week during the 20-week a personalised training programme and the results had improved by 13% three months after the programme ended.

Given that these types of initiatives can freeze earnings or access to a formal job for 24 months or more, youth outreach strategies should consider financial incentives or replacement salaries to assist participant retention.

In fact, the establishment of profiles and creation of target groups is one of the biggest challenges in these programmes. Since the end of the 1990s, when the term Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) was coined, groups of unemployed young school dropouts have been the focus of many youth employment activation programmes [26]. However, a growing number of experts advise against the use of the NEET category as a central element for establishing profiles and typologies [22] [23]. Despite the statistical validity of this term, as statistical data on the category has been collected and organised for years, especially in the EU, the main criticism is that it includes many profiles that have very broad needs and a very high level of vulnerability, while leaving aside other groups at risk in a temporary, insecure or part-time job [26]. The NEET category is above all a snapshot that hides the long-term and cumulative nature of youth unemployment among vulnerable groups [11].

Table 3 lists the groups and subgroups to which the literature normally refers, with a brief explanation of each. Cells that are shaded with a dark tone generally and ideally show the target groups for the second chance programmes considered in this review. Groups shaded with a light tone are more ambiguous, because sometimes they are included and sometimes not. Even though most second chance programmes target specific groups that tend to be significantly vulnerable, other programmes included in this review discriminate less and are of a more universal nature, similar to the role that adult education has played across Spain and the EU [51].

Table 3.
Types of NEETs and unemployed youth not on training pathways

Williamson (2010) [42]	Nelson and O'Donnell (2012) [52]	Eurofound (2012) [5]	Eurofound (2016) [41]
Possible Those who roughly know what they want to do. *Confused:* wanting to return to education or training if they find the necessary support. *Temporarily separated:* they need time and patience as they face aspects of their lives that are more important than studies or work.	**Disengaged** They face multiple barriers and require costly attempts at building connections.	**Disengaged** Discouraged and not looking for work. *Floating:* motivated, lacking support. *Core:* behavioural problems, only value work-related aspects.	**Participatory** People who have decided to return to education or training (around 8%) Made up mostly of very young people who have dropped out of school.
Problematic Young people who are already immersed in "alternative" sources of income or artists and middle-class groups looking to make their own way.	**Undecided** They need to build resilience and develop a personalised pathway.	**Not available** Family responsibilities, sick or disabled.	**Short-term unemployed** They are in the middle of a period of transition to work and their vulnerability is relative, (at around 30%).

Table 3. (cont.).

Williamson (2010) [42]	Nelson and O'Donnell (2012) [52]	Eurofound (2012) [5]	Eurofound (2016) [41]
Deeply alienated At high risk of disengagement and disaffection. Includes those who have an alternative lifestyle in the informal or illegal economy or have drug problems.	**Open to learn** Facing few barriers and strategically looking for particular courses or jobs.	**Short-term and long-term unemployed** They represent more than 50% of all NEETs	**Long-term unemployed** The "transition" to work has lasted more than a year and their vulnerability is high (around 20%).
		Opportunists They expect a specific job or training opportunity.	**Sick or disabled** They need a lot of social support and highly personalised measures (7% of people).
		Volunteer NEETs Disengaged and concerned about their personal stories.	**Not available** They have family responsibilities and their vulnerability is variable (at around 15%).
			Discouraged workers People who have thrown in the towel, very vulnerable and at risk of exclusion. They only seek out occupational programmes (6% of the group).
			Other inactive people Extremely mixed group: the most vulnerable and difficult to reach, the most privileged, artists or those working within the informal and illegal economies (around 12% fall into this category).

As can be seen, the primary importance of social class and educational attainment is made invisible in the NEET category. Therefore, it becomes more complex to assess the vulnerability and needs of each individual and group. Refugees and first- or second-generation immigrants are not included in this category either. Thirdly, there are no young people who are part of the "precarious" group [13], which consists of people who enter and leave insecure or precarious jobs that offer no room for professional development, no prospect for a higher salary and no help in lifting them out of poverty [7] [26].

The primary importance of social class and educational attainment is made invisible in the NEET category. Therefore, it becomes more complex to assess the vulnerability and needs of each individual and group.

One aspect that is often forgotten or relegated to the popular image of NEETs is that most of these people are looking for work but cannot find it—in Catalonia, these account for 70% of all NEETs, one of the highest percentages in the EU [31]. In other words, they are groups that have been excluded for the most part (first expelled or disconnected from the educational system and then from the labour market). Ironically, this popular image presenting NEETs as passive, lazy or disinterested represents a low portion of these young people [21] [12] [22]. Therefore, it is

important to establish new and more precise categories that include young people at a greater risk of suffering from job insecurity who suffer many of the consequences and characteristics of the NEETs [26].

What are the variables that help young people to stay in the programmes and that determine the programmes' success?

If we consider initiatives dealing directly with groups of young people on mostly educational aspects, there is very clear evidence for the factors that make for successful programmes and that show holistic and life-related support that goes beyond academics [32] [6] [39] [38] [11] [9] [45]:

- Active, practical/applied and student-centred pedagogies.
- Importance of informal education (be it sports, travel or art) closely associated with adulthood.
- Establishment and importance of positive, supportive and empowering relationships between students and teachers based on respect and shared spaces to interact naturally.
- The primacy of social pedagogy focused on offering advice and a comprehensive support.
- Have an "open door" policy that supports the participation of young people.
- One-on-one attention, with smaller classes, one-on-one mentoring, course modulation and opportunities to learn beyond the classroom.

Box 2.
Second Chance Schools (E2C)

In the context of implementing its white paper on education in 1995, the European Commission launched the pilot project "Second Chance Schools" (E2C) in 1997. Various reports published in 2001 and 2013 have discussed the success of the model and have recommended it as a major way to deal with dropping out of school and to help to bring young people into the labour market. Though diverse, its model shares a series of common principles such as: comprehensive support for the person and the adaptation of personalised pathways where basic skills and professional training are combined through work experiences.

The model is implemented in three stages:

- Stage I: Skilled and Specialised Initial Professional Training (Level 1 and 2).
- Stage II: Learning in the workplace. Training scholarships or internships.
- Stage III: Job training contracts.

Based on the support regarding the life/vital aspirations of each young person, while also promoting their employability, this model has been recognised by international organisations such as the OECD. In this model, the concept of transversal competence is key to making it possible for knowledge to be applied in specific contexts, so that the educational content is closely related to a behavioural objective. In addition, the education mission of the schools is consciously oriented to complement the requirements of the local economy and to commit to specific profiles.

Second chance schools in Spain and Europe are federated to ensure the quality of the model through an accreditation process. Recent case studies are beginning to show the highly positive effects that these schools seem to have, with some estimates stating that up to 87% of young people complete the training they offer and that a quarter return to formal education. This has inspired its proliferation throughout Catalonia, with the Government of Catalonia (Generalitat) decisively promoting a second chance programme and Barcelona opening a municipal second chance centre in 2019.

For further information:
http://www.e2c-europe.org/e2c/about-e2c.html

Villardón-Gallego, L.; Flores-Miranda, L.; Yáñez-Marquina, L. and García Montero, R. (2020). "Best Practices in the Development of Transversal Competences among Youths in Vulnerable Situations" in Education Sciences, 10 (9), p. 230.

The success of these programmes and their ability to connect with the participants greatly depends on the institutional climate that they manage to generate. The creation of a community environment that emphasises the feeling of belonging and that is emotionally and physically safe is key to engaging the most vulnerable groups. This environment is characterised by the prevalence of a "culture of care" where expulsions are limited and discussion and mediation are encouraged [6]. This multidimensional approach requires experienced and trained professionals [39] [11] capable of attending to behavioural, emotional and cognitive variables.

The creation of a community environment that emphasises the feeling of belonging and that is emotionally and physically safe is key to engaging the most vulnerable groups.

This model requires intense multi-component contact for a period that all studies place at around a minimum of six months [47]. In fact, some studies show that both educational goals and psychosocial support are mutually supportive: education helps to provide initiatives with clear individual pathways to emotional improvement and personal development, while attention to non-cognitive skills enhance the success of cognitive components [11].

The post-programme transition stage requires systematic support where young people can access resources, review their development plan, spend time with their mentors and tutors and get access to the network of relationships linked to the programme, even if they no longer participate in it.

A final important factor for gauging the impact of these programmes is the attention and follow-up provided to the youths once they have finished, which should be considered a fundamental part of them. The post-programme transition stage requires systematic support where young people can access resources, review their development plan, spend time with their mentors and tutors and get access to the network of relationships linked to the programme, even if they no longer participate in it [50] [11]. At the end of the programme, this follow-up must recognise that transitions can follow iterative processes, with different speeds, directions and possibilities. Therefore, it should be as flexible and personalised as possible [37].

Box 3.
Melbourne Academy / Hester Hornbrook Academy

The Melbourne Academy (MA) is a flexible learning programme that enables young people who have become highly disengaged from education to reconnect with a pathway to education. The programme was piloted in 2010 with just one class for 20 students. It would later become the MA, growing to six classrooms and establishing itself in six separate locations throughout Melbourne with a capacity of approximately 100 students in 2014.

Rather than employing a teaching service like a traditional school, a distinctive feature of the MA is its close partnership with various youth services, operating like a comprehensive hub. Importantly, the MA views itself as a central part of responses to the socio-educational issues facing Australian society. The model is characterised by having just a few students and two professionals per classroom, a teacher and a social worker or educator who work together ensuring young people's education and well-being. This fosters close relationships where professionals know all the students well, encouraging a family atmosphere and programmes tailored for them. The educational plans they offer can last from one to three years, thus providing stability to young people that have previously experienced repeated changes of programmes.

An evaluation carried out in 2015 concluded that the academy helped the participants to improve in their academic achievements, aspirations and motivations, as well as their attendance and participation; it also helped them to connect with community networks that had a positive impact on their social well-being. Having since become the Hester Hornbook Academy (HHA), a second evaluation in 2019 focused on the role of social educators in academies, which showed that these were key to preparing young people for teaching through relational pedagogy. In fact, 75% of the students rated these workers as good or very good, reaching the maximum values of the Likert scale they used.

For further information:
https://www.hhacademy.vic.edu.au/

Te Riele, K. and Davies, M. (2015). *Passport to a Positive Future Evaluation of the Melbourne Academy.* Melbourne: The Victory Institute.

Broadbent, R.; Har, K. and Papadopoulos, T. (2019). *The Hester Hornbrook Academy. Classroom Youth Worker Research Project.* Final Report. Melbourne: Victoria University.

What do we know about its cost-benefit efficiency?

Significant social returns are among the most important outcomes of these programmes.

There is very little information on the cost-benefit ratio of specific programmes [8] [37]. Though it is very difficult to establish the social returns that these programmes provide and quantify them in specific amounts of money, social returns are what produce the greatest impact [47]. In fact, the conclusion of most studies is that the costs outweigh the returns of these programmes as the participants get older, especially among the most marginal groups [3]. Positive returns can be classified into three types [4]:

- Short term: improvement of work experience and work-related skills.
- Medium term: greater willingness to work, to make career decisions and to follow training pathways.
- Long term: achievement of a job and advancement in work and training.

Thus, apparent weak results, such as an improvement of around 4%, may save more than £470 million in the United Kingdom [8]. Table 4 lists some global estimates and specific initiatives identified in the reviewed studies.

Table 4.
Cost-benefit ratio of educational and work programmes with vulnerable youth

Study	Description of the economic impact
Davies (2011) [3]	In Canada, a return of 251% can be estimated on the investment made to provide educational improvements to workers with low skills. Davies points to studies in the United Kingdom that show a return of 300%, where 60 million in social benefits can be gained from 15 million invested. Other aggregated calculations in the United States show returns of $2.50 for every dollar invested.
Gutherson (2011) [39]	Gutherson argues that the costs of alternative educational programmes in the United Kingdom are low, costing around £5,500 per student, and the estimated costs without such initiatives would be much higher.
Mawn *et al.* (2017) [8]	Mawn concludes that the costs of action are usually low (between $750 and $1,700) and that the benefits are proven. The average lifetime cost of these young people to the public sector can be £56,500, rising to £104,300 if other resources are taken into account. Loss of £77 billion in taxes not collected by the state.
Newton, Sinclair, Tyers and Wilson (2020) [37]	The benefits of the Youth Contract for 16- and 17-year-olds costs £2,200 and create a net benefit of £12,900 per person.
Te Riele (2014) [9]	Some estimates calculate that the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions (Australia) achieved a ratio of $1:$3.70 in social value.

Summary

The focus on education and training to solve youth unemployment problems among the most vulnerable populations has been described as myopic [26], cruelly optimistic [58] and off-base [7]. This is because second chance programmes try to respond to a problem that is structural and where the process of engaging with education or the labour market is cumulative, long, non-linear and complex, requiring a variety of quality forms of support [11].

Programmes that focus exclusively on improving employability and neglect training enhancement and educational return are usually less effective.

This is surely the most important idea arising from this review: second chance programmes do work and are an exceptional part of active labour market policies. In other words, programmes that focus exclusively on improving employability and neglect training enhancement and educational return **are usually less effective**. Now, it must be understood that these programmes require an initial investment in time and resources, their effects take place over the long term and they can often seem invisible. **They cannot and should not be viewed as low-cost quick-fixes** and they definitely should not divert our attention from a very clear idea: **the best weapon to fight against youth unemployment is a healthy and prosperous economy and an education system that does not expel a considerable number of young people**.

Second chance programmes can and do improve young people's transitions to work and facilitate their education re-engagement, especially when these manage to create a flexible and individualised training environment with clear pathways to adulthood and the labour market.

Despite the lack of more rigorous evaluations that could better describe the relationship between programmes and their effects, we can assert that second chance programmes can and do improve young people's transitions to work and facilitate their educational return, especially when they manage to create a humane, flexible and individualised training environment with clear pathways to adulthood and the labour market. Attention to mentoring and psychosocial support services, on the one hand, and to relationships and working with the community, on the other, are two other variables marking the effectiveness and uniqueness of these programmes. A final and fundamental contribution of this review is to warn about the **need to go beyond the NEET category and better understand the different profiles of vulnerable young people and their relationship with the local context**, involving them in these programmes.

Table 5.
Strengths and limitations of second chance programmes

Strengths	Possible barriers to implementation
Qualitative long-term studies indicate that second chance programmes can improve young people's educational return and employability.	The results are long-term and often difficult to measure. They seek the individual's comprehensive development, not just a quick fix. They are more effective if there are strong incentives, especially financial ones via work or paid internships.
Low cost compared to the social returns.	High starting costs, especially to hire professionals that this type of programmes require to be implemented effectively.
There are factors inherent to successful programmes, such as the variety and quality of the professionals involved, which help to establish a clear roadmap.	The evaluations indicate that the most important thing is the quality and rigour of the programme, not the type. The data available on the most successful programmes cannot be used to establish detailed causal relationships. Contextual variables (economic cycle) may have a greater impact than the programme does.
It is an essential response to support many young people in transition to adulthood with low employability.	It can divert attention from the preventive efforts necessary to alleviate this problem, such as the degree of inclusion in ordinary schools and the effectiveness of the range of programmes to keep students in school. They are not equally effective for all types of young people, but for those with a minimum of motivation who do not face very important barriers to re-engage, as indicated in Table 3. For the most vulnerable groups, complementary or alternative programmes of a more social and aid-related nature would be necessary, with a significantly higher investment.
They help youth to obtain educational credentials and develop motivational and socio-emotional aspects that are key to re-engaging in education and training and to improving work transitions.	Basic educational credentials are not related to getting "low quality" jobs, as there is no correspondence between basic qualifications and unskilled work. Most meta-analyses of active labour market policies [26] focused on getting a job fast as possible indicate that interventions focusing on education and training are those with the weakest impact. However, this is explained by the short-termism of these evaluations, which can strengthen the idea that "nothing works" with these young people, instead of understanding that second chance programmes do not have to be understood as short-term measures.

Implications for practice

The crucial age when young people begin to set realistic ambitions about their future is between the ages of 11 and 14. For many, disengagement from school is already highly noticeable at primary school.

Committing to a decisive policy on second chance programmes is still paradoxical and uncomfortable in terms of public policies, since it might reinforce the status quo regarding key institutions not working as they should. The crucial age when young people begin to set realistic ambitions about their future is between the ages of 11 and 14. For many, disengagement from school is already highly noticeable. Prevention measures and school reform are therefore top priorities, even for designing second chance programmes.

The first implication for practice **would be to improve the information on the target population and identify the different groups under the "NEET youth" umbrella**. This is key to adapting what second chance programmes can offer according to each young person's situations and needs (see Table 3) and thereby create personalised programmes. Firstly, this requires going beyond specific second chance plans and committing to a variety of them (for example, not relying on second chance schools and on plans that are excessively focused on young people's employability, but on both as well as on other initiatives). Secondly, it is important to commit to other conceptualisations such as "youths at a higher risk of having precarious employment" [26] to identify more accurate and practical profiles.

A second implication in strengthening the development of these programmes in Catalonia would be to insert the development of this "integrated and coordinated second chance system" [31] into **a programme of consistent education, labour and social policies**. Although the implementation of the Youth Guarantee initiatives and the explicit support of the OECD and the EU for second chance schools has been notable since 2013, these programmes run the risk of being seen as an alternative normalised pathway that may end up strengthening the existing rationale in both the labour market and the education system.

The third implication is that these initiatives must be designed to create **synergies with mainstream schools and to stimulate the local labour market** as key actors in the development of networks and community links that characterise the success of second chance programmes:

- Synergies with ordinary centres:
  - Share professionals and professional development pathways.
  - Establish equivalencies in qualifications.
  - Create pathways for entering/leaving the ordinary system.
  - Transfer good educational practices towards mainstream schools, so that these programmes' "responsive" action can become "preventive" in ordinary centres.
- Stimuli for the labour market:
  - Involve local actors in validating alternative routes to the labour market.

- Address existing negative prejudices regarding the hiring of youngsters coming from second chance programmes.
- Create qualifications and training pathways closely linked to the needs and realities of the local context.

The third implication has to do with **ensuring the quality and evaluation** of these programmes. The public organisations or public-private partnerships in charge of developing them must provide the necessary investment in experienced professionals and development plans to effectively meet young people's individual and training needs. Evaluations must be planned from the outset, ensuring continuous monitoring of what is happening and improve or update the programmes during their implementation and not just after they end. As some evaluations in Catalonia show [31], some results may show an unexpected or non-priority impact, such as the return to a training pathway instead of obtaining a job, which illustrates the ways in which accountability measures can inform future interventions. That is why second chance programmes must go beyond the idea of "getting a job" and include in their objectives the return to education and the improvement of employability as priority objectives, as reflected in the proposed theory of change at the beginning of this report (see Figure 1).

Current second chance programmes and initiatives should be closely based on existing evidence-based multidimensional models.

Finally, current second chance programmes and initiatives, such as the growth of municipal second chance schools or the New Opportunities programme promoted by the Government of Catalonia (Generalitat) should be closely based on existing evidence-based multidimensional models [32] [31] and guarantee:

- The creation of multidisciplinary teams based on a social pedagogy focused on care and personal development.
- A balance between psychosocial support, academic improvement and job skill acquisition.
- The creation of alliances among all key local actors.
- Realistic, motivating and gradual pathways towards more training, more work experience and better paid job opportunities.

Bibliography

[1] Bloom, Dan. (2010). "Programs and Policies to Assist High School Dropouts in the Transition to Adulthood" in *The Future of Children*, 20(1), pp. 89-108.

[2] Benda, L.; Koster, F. and Van der Veen, R. J. (2019). "Levelling the playing field? Active labour market policies, educational attainment and unemployment" in *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 39(3/4), pp. 276-295.

[3] Davies, M.; Lamb, S. and Doecke, E. (2011). *Strategic Review of Effective Re-Engagement Models for Disengaged Learners*. Melbourne: Centre for Research on Education Systems.

[4] Kutsyuruba, B.; De Luca, C.; Butler, A.; Godden, L.; Hussain, A.; Youmans, A.; Stasel, R. S.; Shewchuck, S. and Nesbitt, H. (2019). *Needs of NEET youth: pathways to positive outcomes*. Kingston: Queen's University.

[5] Eurofound. (2012). *NEETs Young people not in employment, education or training: characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[6] O'Gorman; E., Salmon, N. and Murphy, C.A. (2016). "Schools as sanctuaries: A systematic review of contextual factors which contribute to student retention in alternative education" in *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(5), pp. 536-551.

[7] Jeliazkova, M.; Minev, D. and Draganov, D. (2018). *Assessing youth employment policies in 28 European countries*. EXCEPT working paper, 55. Tallinn: Tallin University.

[8] Mawn, L.; Oliver, E. J.; Akhter, N.; Bambra, C. L.; Torgerson, C.; Bridle, C. and Stain, H. J. (2017). "Are we failing young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)? A systematic review and meta-analysis of re-engagement interventions" in *Systematic Reviews*, 6(20), pp. 1-17.

[9] Te Riele, K. (2014). *Putting the jigsaw together: Flexible Learning Programs in Australia. Final Report*. Melbourne: The Victoria Institute.

[10] Clarke, M.; Sharma, M. and Bhattacharjee, P. (2021). *Review of the Evidence on Short-Term Education and Skills Training Programs for Out-of-School Youth with a Focus on the Use of Incentives*. Washington: World Bank.

[11] Rajasekaran, S. and Reyes, J. (2019). *Back to School Pathways for Reengagement of Out-of-School Youth in Education*. International Development in Focus. Washington: World Bank.

[12] Cabasés, M. A.; Pardell, A. and Strecker, T. (2016). "The EU youth guarantee – a critical analysis of its implementation in Spain" in *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19(5), pp. 684-704.

[13] Dhakal, S. P.; Connell, J. and Burgess, J. (2018). "Inclusion and work: addressing the global challenges for youth employment", 37(2), pp. 110-120. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-12-2017-0290

[14] OECD. (2019). *Society at a Glance 2019: OECD Social Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

[15] Hossain, F. and Bloom, D. (2015). *Toward a Better Future: Evidence on Improving Employment Outcomes for Disadvantaged Youth in the United States*. New York: MDRC.

[16] ILO. (2020a). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of Jobs*. Geneva: International Labour Organisation.

[17] Kluve, J.; Puerto, S.; Robalino, D.; Romero, J. M.; Rother, F.; Stöterau, J.; Weidenkaff, F. and Witte, M. (2017). "Interventions to improve the labour market outcomes of youth: a systematic review" in *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 12.

[18] OECD (2020). *Employment Outlook 2020: Worker Security and the COVID-19 Crisis*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

[19] ILO. (2020b). *Youth & Covid-19: Impacts on Jobs, education, rights and mental well-being*. Geneva: Hossain, F. and Bloom, D. (2015). Toward a Better Future .

[20] Eurofound (2021). *Living, working and COVID-19 (Update April 2021): Mental health and trust decline across EU as pandemic enters another year*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

[21] Avis, J. (2014). "Comfort radicalism and NEETs: a conservative praxis" in *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 24(3), pp. 272-289.

[22] Crisp, R. and Powell, R. (2017). "Young people and UK labour market policy: A critique of 'employability' as a tool for understanding youth unemployment" in *Urban Studies*, 54(8), pp. 1784-1807.

[23] Lörinc, M.; Ryan, L.; D'Angelo, A. and Kaye, N. (2019). "De-individualising the 'NEET problem': An ecological systems analysis" in *European Educational Research Journal*, 19(5), pp. 412-427.

[24] Brown, P.; Lauder, H. and Ashton, D. (2011). *The global auction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[25] Farré, M., Cordoncillo, C. and Sánchez, D. (2020). *Avaluació de l'Escola Municipal de Segones Oportunitats (EM20)*. Barcelona: Ivàlua.

[26] McGirr, M. (2020). *Employability Development Theory: Policy Implications for Supporting Youth at Risk of Limited Employment (YARLE).* PhD Thesis. Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington.

[27] Bernardi, F. and Cebolla, H. (2014). "Social Class and School Performance as Predictors of Educational Paths in Spain" in *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, no. 146, pp. 3-22.

[28] CYD. (2019). CYD report 2019.

[29] LHH. (2019). Hidden labour market report 2019. Grupo Adecco.

[30] Learning and Work Institute. (2020). *Evidence review: what works to support 15- to 24-year-olds at risk of becoming NEET?* Leicester: Learning and Work Institute.

[31] Alegre, M. A. and Todeschini, F. A. (2014). "Joves nini: característiques i respostes efectives" ["NEET youth: characteristics and effective responses"] in *L'estat de l'educació a Catalunya. Anuari 2013*, edited by M. Martínez and B. Albaigés, pp. 233–256. Barcelona: Fundació Jaume Bofill.

[32] European Commission (2013). *Preventing Early School Leaving in Europe – Lessons Learned from Second Chance Education.* Brussels: Publications Office of the European Union.

[33] Mediavilla, M. (2017). "Are scholarships and grants effective when it comes to the continuity and improvement of educational results at primary and secondary school level?" *What Works in Education?* No. 6. Barcelona: Ivàlua and Fundació Jaume Bofill.

[34] Escapa, S. and Julià, A. (2018). "What impact do guidance and counselling programs have on students?" *What Works in Education?* No. 12. Barcelona: Ivàlua and Fundació Jaume Bofill.

[35] Ferrer-Esteban, G. (2019). "Multi-tiered interventions and forms of support for meeting educational needs: what works to improve learning and reduce school dropout levels?" *What Works in Education?* No. 15. Barcelona: Ivàlua and Fundació Jaume Bofill.

[36] González, S. (2020). "Are programmes to combat school absenteeism effective?" *What Works in Education?* No. 17. Barcelona: Ivàlua and Fundació Jaume Bofill.

[37] Newton, B.; Sinclair, A.; Tyers, C. and Wilson, T. (2020). *An initial evidence review to identify what works and inform good practice among practitioners and employers.* Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies.

[38] Pilcher, S.; Torii, K. and Andow, Jo. (2020). *Evidence scan of educational interventions for children and young people disengaged from education.* Melbourne: Mitschell Institute.

[39] Gutherson, P.; Davies, H. and Daszkiewicz, T. (2011). *Achieving successful outcomes through Alternative Education Provision: an international literature review.* CfBT Education Trust.

[40] European Commission. (2016). *Sustainable activation of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). Practitioner's toolkit.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[41] Eurofound. (2016). *Exploring the diversity of NEETs.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[42] Williamson, H. "Delivering a 'NEET' Solution: An Essay on an Apparently Intractable Problem" in *Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth.* Stevie Upton (Ed.), 7-20. Cardiff, United Kingdom: Institute of Welsh Affairs.

[43] Treskon, L. (2016). *What Works for Disconnected Young People: A Scan of the Evidence.* MDCR Working Paper.

[44] Puerto, O. S. (2007). "Labor Market Impact in Youth: A Meta-Analysis of the Youth Employment Inventory". Washington: Social Protection and Labor Unit of the Human Development Network & The World Bank.

[45] Santos-Brien, R. (2018). *Activation measures for young people in vulnerable situations: experience from the ground.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[46] Tapper, D.; Zhu, J. and Scuello, M. (2015). *Re-engaging youth for high school success: evaluation of the Good Shepherd Services Transfer School Model.* New York: Metis Associates.

[47] Schochet, P. Z. (2020). "Long-Run Labor Market Effects of the Job Corps Program: Evidence from a Nationally Representative Experiment" in *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 40(1), pp. 1-26.

[48] Savelsberg, H.; Pignata, S. and Weckert, P. (2017). "Second chance education: barriers, supports and engagement strategies" in *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 57(1), pp. 36-57.

[49] Villardón-Gallego, L.; Flores-Miranda, L.; Yáñez-Marquina, L. and García Montero, R. (2020). "Best Practices in the Development of Transversal Competences among Youths in Vulnerable Situations" in *Education Sciences*, 10(9), p. 230.

[50] Oh, S.; DiNitto, D. M. and Yeonwoo, K. (2020). "Exiting poverty: a systematic review of U. S. postsecondary education and job skills training programs in the post-welfare reform era" in *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, pre-printing. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-09-2020-0429

[51] Martínez, M.; Rius, J. and Office of Educational Planning (2019). *Les escoles municipals de persones adultes: estat de la qüestió* ["Municipal schools for adults: the state of affairs"]. Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona.

[52] Nelson, J. and O'Donnell, L. (2012). *Approaches to Supporting Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training: a Review (NFER Research Programme: From Education to Employment)*. Slough: NFER.

[53] *OECD* 2016. *Society at a glance: OECD social indicators 2016*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

[54] Quintini, G. and Manfredi, T. (2009). "Going Separate Ways? School-to-Work Transitions in the United States and Europe" in *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, 90. Paris: OECD Publishing.

[55] Felgueroso, F.; M. Gutiérrez-Doménech, and S. Jiménez-Martín (2013). "¿Por qué el abandono escolar se ha mantenido tan elevado en España en las últimas dos décadas? El papel de la ley de Educación (LOGSE)" ["Why have school dropout rates remained so high in Spain in the last two decades? The role of the Education Law (LOGSE)"]. Fedea: Colección Estudios Económicos 02-2013.

[56] Te Riele, K. and Davies, M. (2015). *Passport to a Positive Future Evaluation of the Melbourne Academy*. Melbourne: The Victoria Institute for Education, Diversity and Lifelong Learning.

[57] Broadbent, R.; Har, K. and Papadopoulos, T. (2019). *The Hester Hornbrook Academy. Classroom Youth Worker Research Project. Final Report*. Melbourne: Victoria University.

[58] Bessant, J. and Watts, R. (2014). "Cruel optimism: A southern theory perspective on the European Union's Youth Strategy, 2008-2012" in *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 19(1), pp. 125-140.

"What works in education?" Collection

1. **What works in education?: The question that has to be asked**
   Miquel Àngel Alegre,
   Is the introduction of pay-for-performance salary incentives for teachers linked to students' academic performance advisable?
   J. Oriol Escardíbul
2. **Are individual tutoring programs effective in addressing diversity?**
   Miquel Àngel Alegre,
   What grouping strategies respond to criteria of efficiency and equality?
   Gerard Ferrer-Esteban
3. **Are summer programs effective in improving learning and educational outcomes in students?**
   Miquel Àngel Alegre
4. **What impact do after-school activities have on children's and youngsters' learning?**
   Sheila González Motos
5. **Are social and emotional learning programs effective tools to improve students' skills?**
   Queralt Capsada,
   Using self-regulation and metacognition in class: what works and under what conditions?
   Gerard Ferrer-Esteban
6. **Are scholarships and grants effective when it comes to the continuity and improvement of educational results at primary and secondary school level?**
   Mauro Mediavilla
7. **School Choice and Allocation Policies: What Effects Do They Have on School Segregation?**
   Miquel Àngel Alegre
8. **Does school leadership affect student academic achievement?**
   Álvaro Choi, María Gil
9. **Is pupil assessment a mechanism for improving school performance?**
   Sheila González Motos
10. **Do behavioral programs improve pupils' attitudes and outcomes?**
    Miquel Àngel Alegre
11. **Do programs to encourage parental involvement in education improve school performance?**
    Jaume Blasco
12. **What impact do guidance and counselling programs have on students?**
    Sandra Escapa, Albert Julià
13. **Education inspection: which models work best?**
    Álvaro Choi
14. **Does permanent training for teachers help to improve students' educational outcomes?**
    Núria Comas López
15. **Multi-tiered interventions and forms of support for meeting educational needs: what works to improve learning and reduce school dropout levels?**
    Gerard Ferrer-Esteban
15. **Does student learning improve through project-based instruction?**
    Marc Lafuente Martínez
17. **Are programmes to combat school absenteeism effective?**
    Sheila González Motos
18. **What do we know about the effectiveness of digital technologies in education?**
    Mireia Usart Rodríguez
19. **Networks between schools for educational improvement: What practices are the most effective?**
    Georgeta Ion and Chris Brown

First edition: February 2022

fbofill@fbofill.cat, info@ivalua.cat
www.ivalua.cat
www.fundaciobofill.cat

Author: Alejandro Paniagua
Translator: textosBCN (Dustin Langan)
Edited by: Bonalletra Alcompas
Publishing Technical Coordinator: Anna Sadurní
Technical Coordinator (Fundació Bofill):
Miquel Àngel Alegre, Núria Comas
Technical Coordinator (Ivàlua): Jordi Sanz
Design and layout: Enric Jardí
ISBN: 978-84-124829-0-4