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PREVENTING EARLY LEAVING IN VET: **THE PATHWAY APPROACH**

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International seminar *Preventing early leaving in VET: new indicators and strategies*
University of the Balearic Islands, Mallorca

PHBern

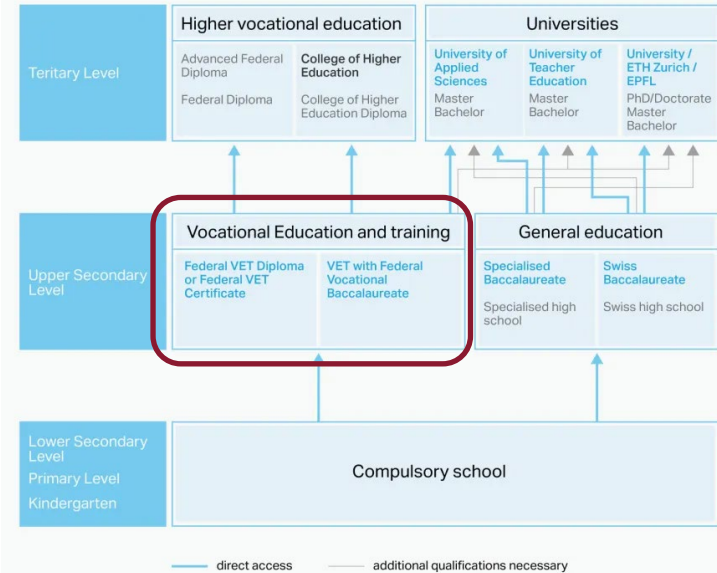
CONTENT

1. Introduction
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VET IN SWITZERLAND

- Upper secondary level
- 2/3 of all youths in VET
- Mainly apprenticeships
- Employers decide whom to train
- Workplace training=participation in every-day work (3-4 days a week)
- Trainers are not pedagogues
- Schools provide general and occupation-specific education
- Teachers are qualified (university degree)

The Swiss education system



RESEARCHING DROPOUT AND EARLY LEAVING

Early leaving from education and training

Persons aged 18 to 24 who fail to complete upper secondary education and do not have an upper secondary qualification.

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Early_leaver_from_education_and_training

EU: 9.6 % (2022)

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Early_leavers_from_education_and_training

Early leaving a particular (VET) programme

research on «VET-dropout»

Why do people quit their VET before its regular end?

What happens to them?

FOUR LONGITUDINAL STUDIES

LEVA early leaving (dropout) in VET
1300 employers and VET learners, reasons and consequences

PAI pathways from pre-vocational programme to VET
2700 refugees and late arriving migrants

TREE transition from education to employment
pathways of more than 6000 learners

MEGY school (dis-)engagement
Learning pathways of 1300 upper secondary students



High-quality education and training:
what it involves and how it
contributes to successful
pathways of learners

VET QUALITY



High quality VET includes varied and demanding activities in the workplace and school, opportunities to participate in decision-making, suitable workload, support from competent supervisors, colleagues, trainers and teachers.

Böhn, 2022; Frieling et al, 2006; Holman, 2013; Keller et al. 2015
Dehnbostel, 2007; Nägele, 2013; Velten & Schnitzler, 2012

High-quality VET fosters positive learning outcomes and encourage learners to finish their VET programme in due time.

Kälin et al., 2000; Quante-Brandt & Grabow, 2008; Stalder & Schmid, 2016

Low VET-quality is a risk for early leaving

Böhn, 2022; Stalder & Schmid, 2016; Masdonati & Lamamra , 2009; Mischler, 2014;

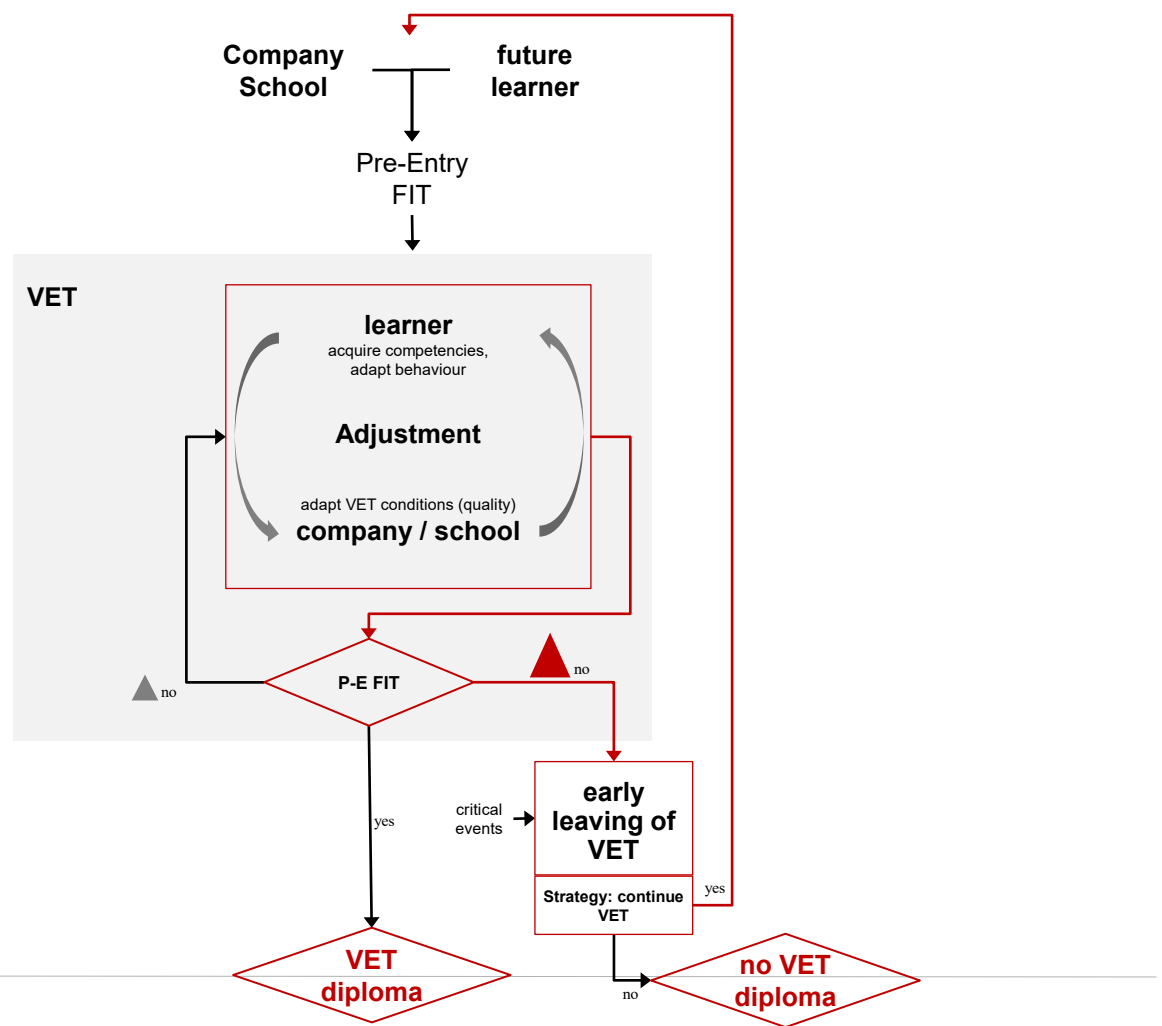
THE PATHWAY APPROACH

Key factors of success:
Build on resources!

Learners:
capability & engagement

Educators:
High-quality education
competence combine theory
and practice and to guide
learners

Model «career success of early leavers in VET»
Stalder & Schmid, 2016



EARLY LEAVING IN SWITZERLAND

Early leavers aged 25

9.3%

Early leavers from VET programmes
(VET dropouts)

24%

<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/querschnittsthemen/monitoring-legislaturplanung/alle-indikatoren/leitline-1-wohlstand/abschlussquote-sek-ii.html>

<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildung-wissenschaft/uebertritte-verlaeufe-bildungsbereich/sekundarstufe-II/aufloesungen.html>



IS THIS A PROBLEM?

Early leaving (aged up to 25)

Education policy
target:
reduce rate to 5%
has been clearly
missed

Early leaving in VET

Migrant background: 30% (Swiss 23%)

2-year apprenticeship: 33%

Occupational fields: Hospitality and catering, construction,
sales, hairdressing up to 40%

-> Preventing early leaving in VET is essential

Reasons for leaving VET early

WHY DID YOU DROP OUT? WHY DID SHE/HE DROP OUT?

Learners were asked:

What were the main reasons why you left the VET programme early?

Workplace trainers were asked:

What were the main reasons why the learner left the VET programme early?



Source: LEVA; Stalder & Schmid, 2016

THE WORKPLACE TRAINERS' VIEW



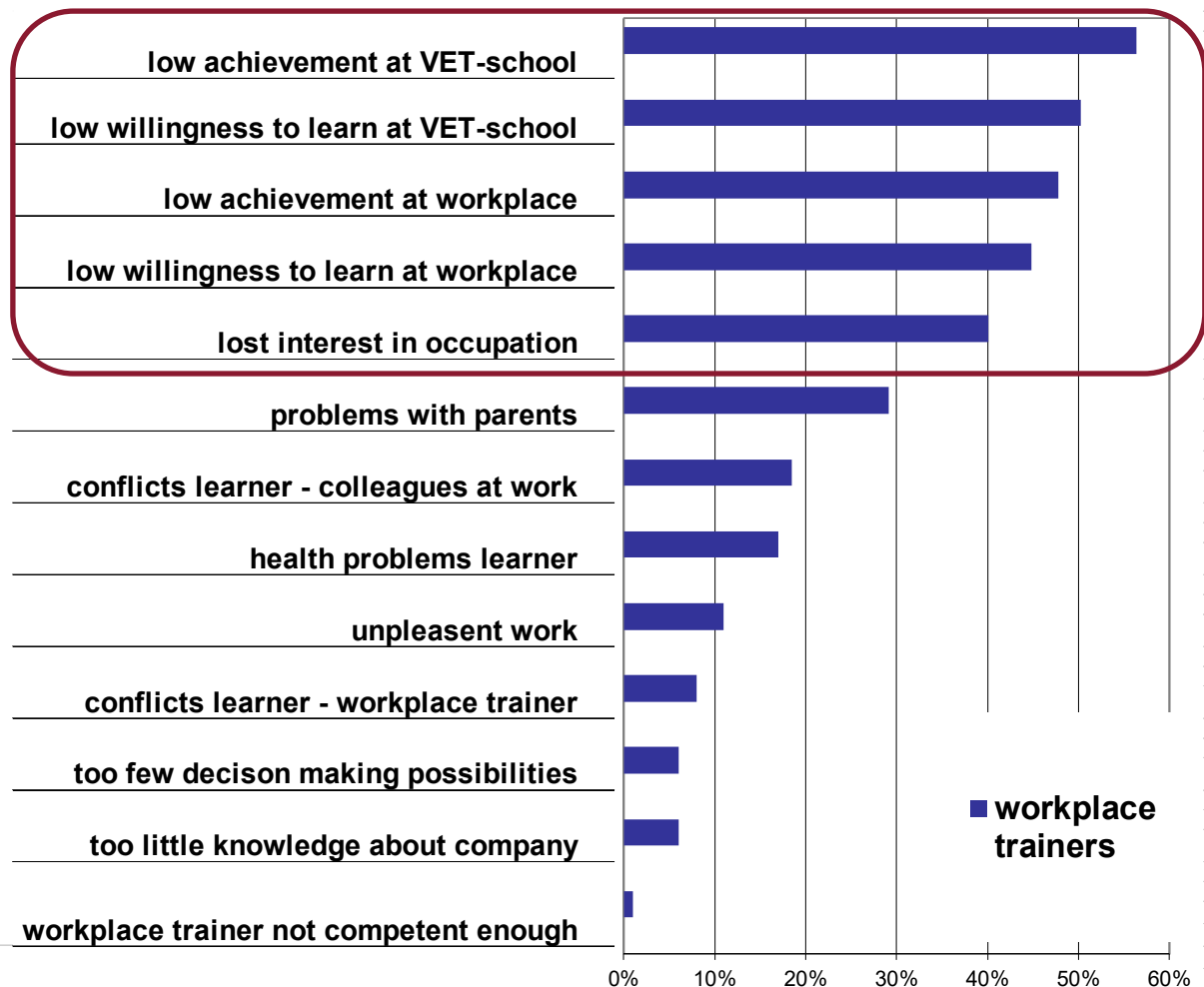
Source: LEVA; Stalder & Schmid, 2016

THE WORKPLACE TRAINERS' VIEW

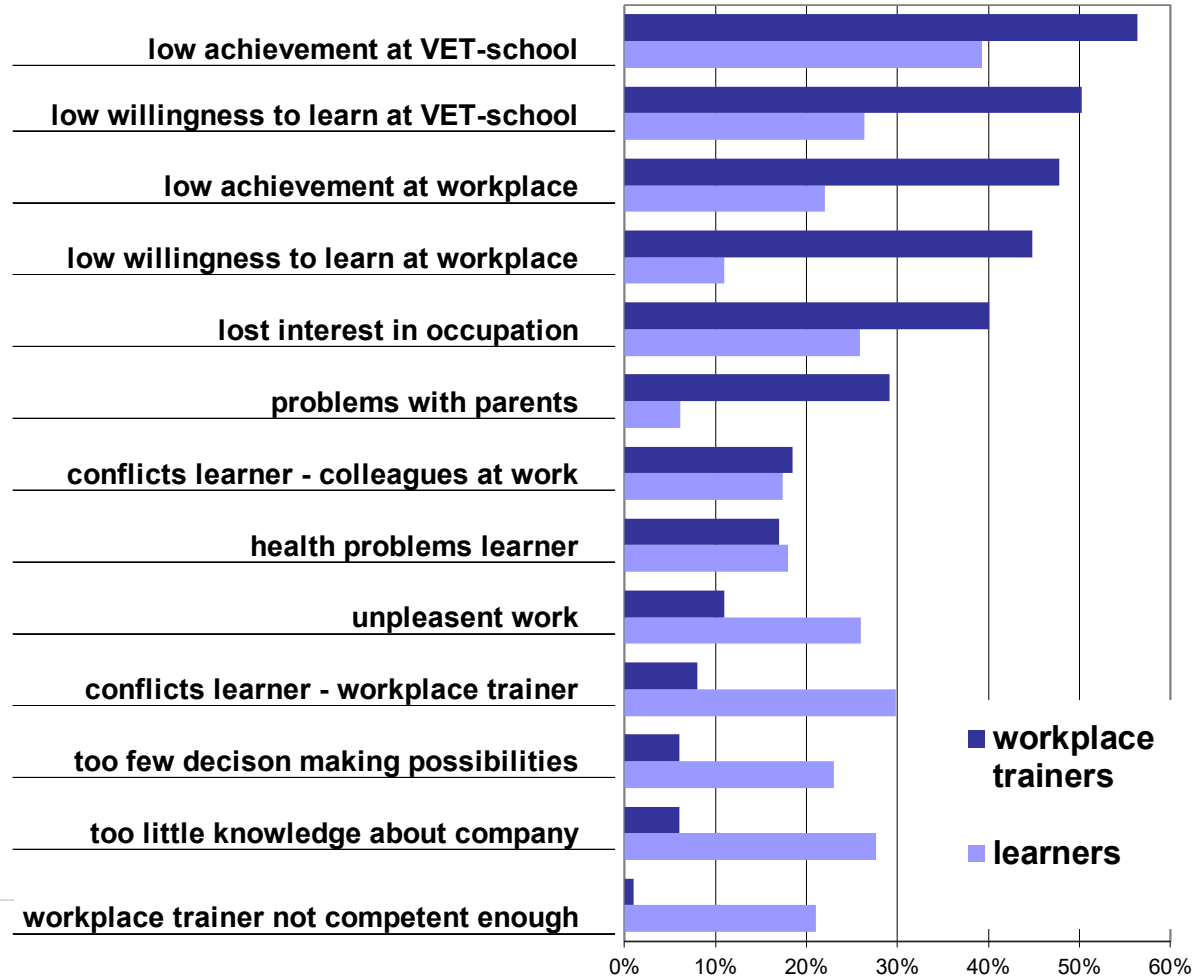
The reasons for early leaving lie primarily with the **learners**:

they are not motivated,
do not try hard enough
and perform poorly

Source: LEVA; Stalder & Schmid, 2016



THE LEARNERS' VIEW



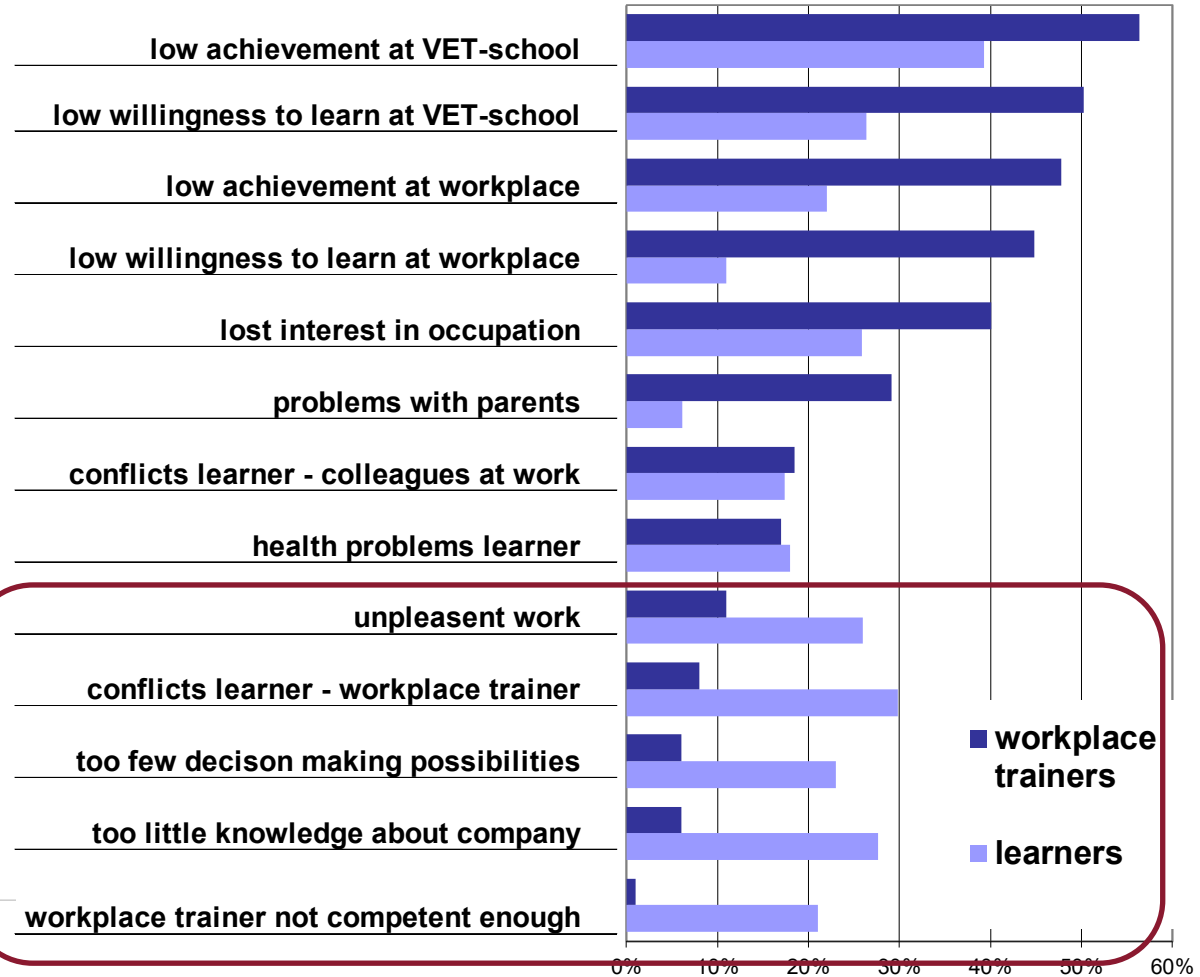
Source: LEVA; Stalder & Schmid, 2016

THE LEARNERS' VIEW

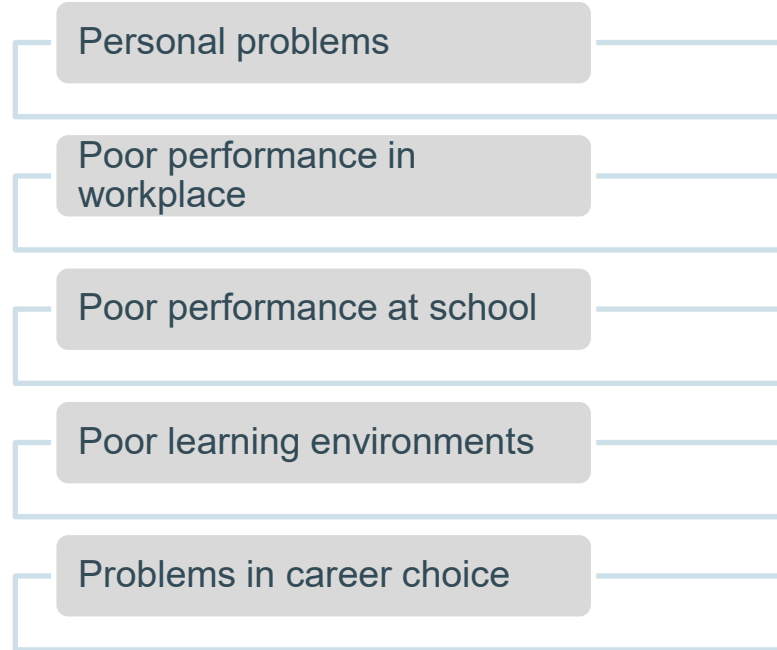
The reasons for early leaving lie also with the poor **training quality in the workplace**

the work is not enjoying and hard, conflicts with trainers are too great to overcome, guidance and support is poor

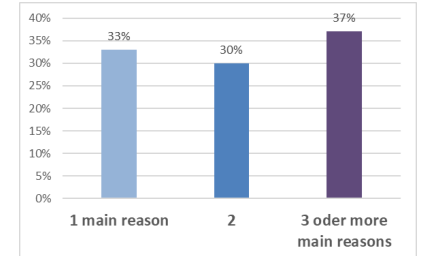
Source: LEVA; Stalder & Schmid, 2016



REASONS OF EARLY LEAVING ACCUMULATE

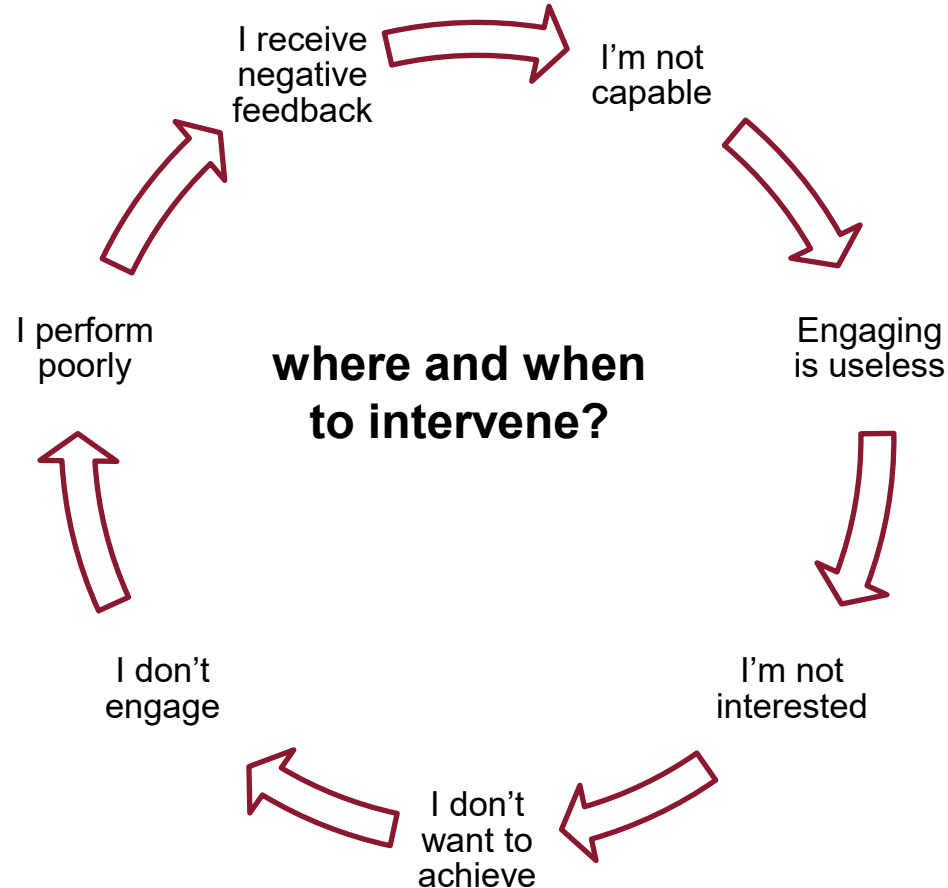


In most of the cases multiple factors combine
e.g., poor achievement at school coupled with being over-challenged and feeling not integrated in school



Source: LEVA; Stalder & Schmid, 2016

THE VICIOUS CERCLE OF DISENGAGEMENT



Preventing early leaving of VET

AREAS OF PREVENTION

What might help?

- Intensify career choice process and career guidance before VET
- Improve academic and transferable skills before VET
- Improve academic and transferable skills during VET
- Increase VET quality and support measures in the workplace and VET school

AREAS OF PREVENTION: WHAT MAKES IT SO DIFFICULT?

But

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how it “really is”, cannot be known in advance; must be experienced

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- Improve academic and transferable skills during VET
Some students do not have access or don't want to take additional classes; for others, additional teaching is just not enough

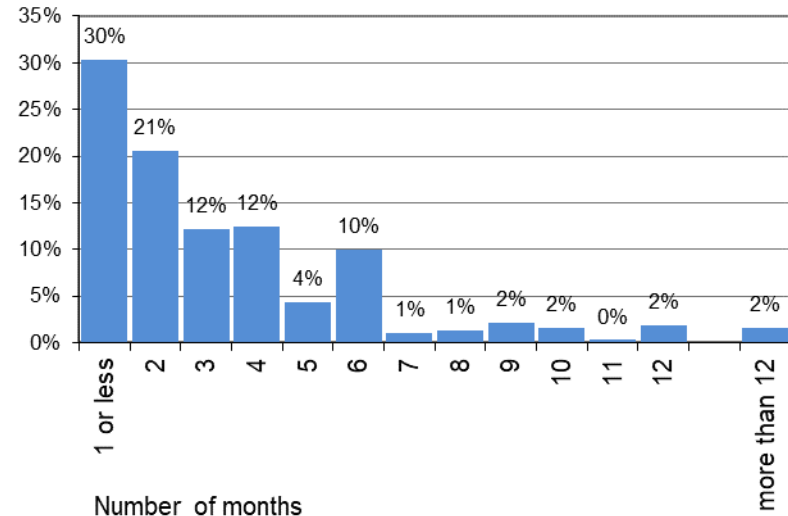
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Some students do not have access or don't want to take additional classes; for others, additional teaching is just not enough
- Increase VET quality and support measures in the workplace and VET school
Resources are limited, groups of learners very heterogenous

RAPID INTERVENTION IS NEEDED

But:
Time to react and
intervene is sometimes
short – too short



How many months before you decided to quit did you first seriously consider it?
(learners answers)

Source: LEVA; Stalder & Schmid, 2016

HELP SEEKING AND RECEIVING IS NOT EASY

Have you tried to find a solution together with the trainer or other persons to avoid early leaving?



Did not ask for help
Was not offered help
to prevent leaving
VET early

EARLY LEAVING IS SOMETIMES INEVITABLE

- Health reasons
- Family reasons
- Pregnancy, Maternity
- Having to earn money
- Delinquent behaviour



In sum,
Strengthening efforts to
prevent early leaving
from VET is important

but not sufficient

Source:
INVOL, Stalder et al., 2024
LEVA; Stalder & Schmid, 2016

Fostering re-entry

EMOTIONS AFTER EARLY LEAVING VET

Early leaving of VET: can be a solution



«I felt relieved»

«A burden was
taken away from
me»

«I could finally
sleep again»

«I was looking
forward to start
with something
new»

GOOD NEWS AND NOT SO GOOD NEWS

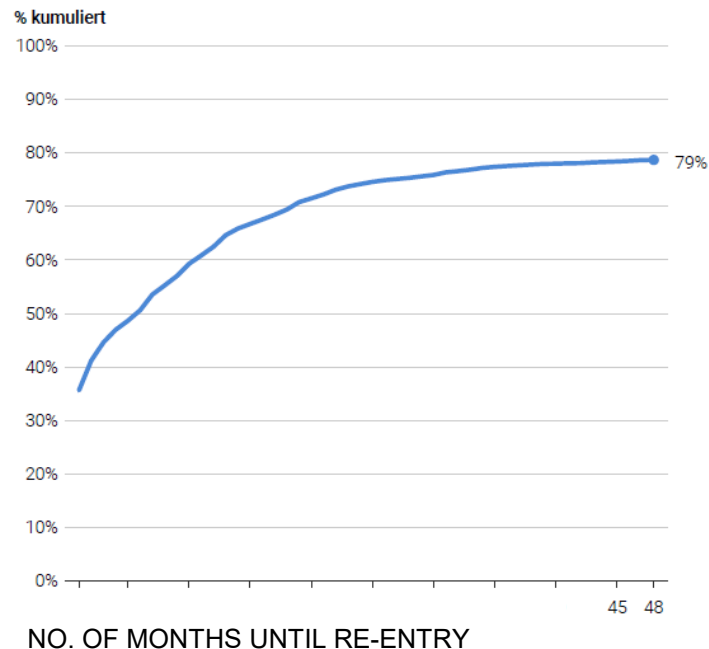
- The vast majority of the learners re-enter VET (79%)

(BFS, 2023)

Less successful are learners

- from two-year apprenticeships
- with migrant background
- who «gave up»
- who started working after leaving early
- who had to quit because of family reasons

(Stalder & Schmid, 2016)



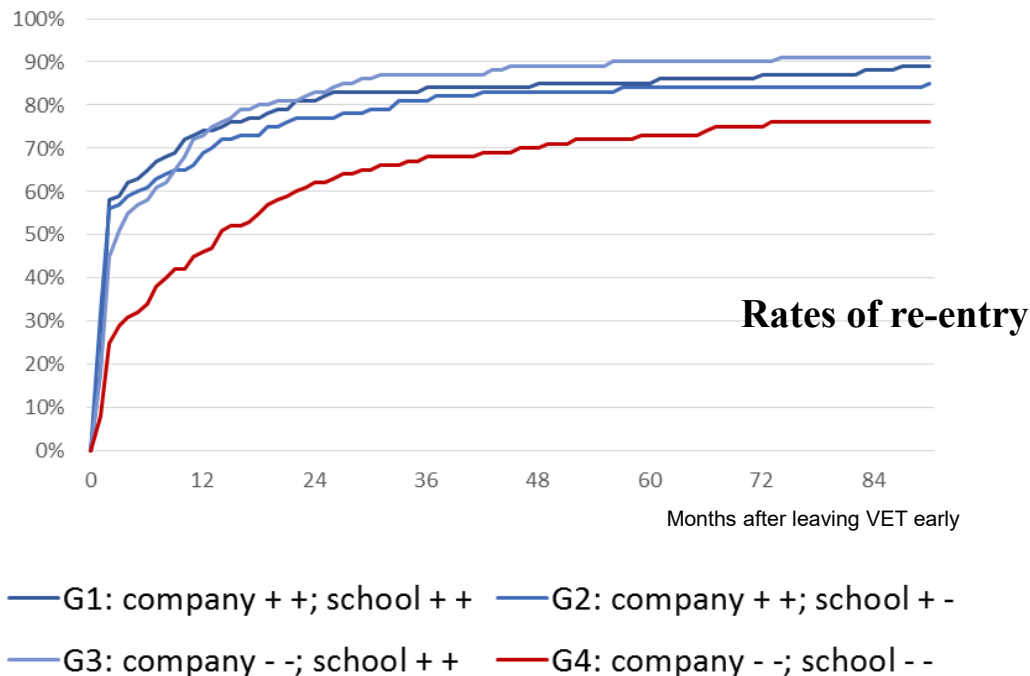
Quelle: BFS – LABB

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HIGH VET-QUALITY INCREASES CHANCES FOR RE-ENTRY

High VET quality in workplace AND/OR in school: better chance for re-entry

Poor VET quality in workplace AND in school: higher risk for late or no re-entry



Source: LEVA; Stalder & Schmid, 2016

N (G1) = 151, N (G2) = 298, N (G3) = 373; N (G4) = 224

Survival-analysis, Kaplan-Meyer-Estimators; Log-Rank-Test: $\chi^2(3) = 40.1, p < .001$

HIGH VET-QUALITY INCREASES CHANCES

... for re-entry

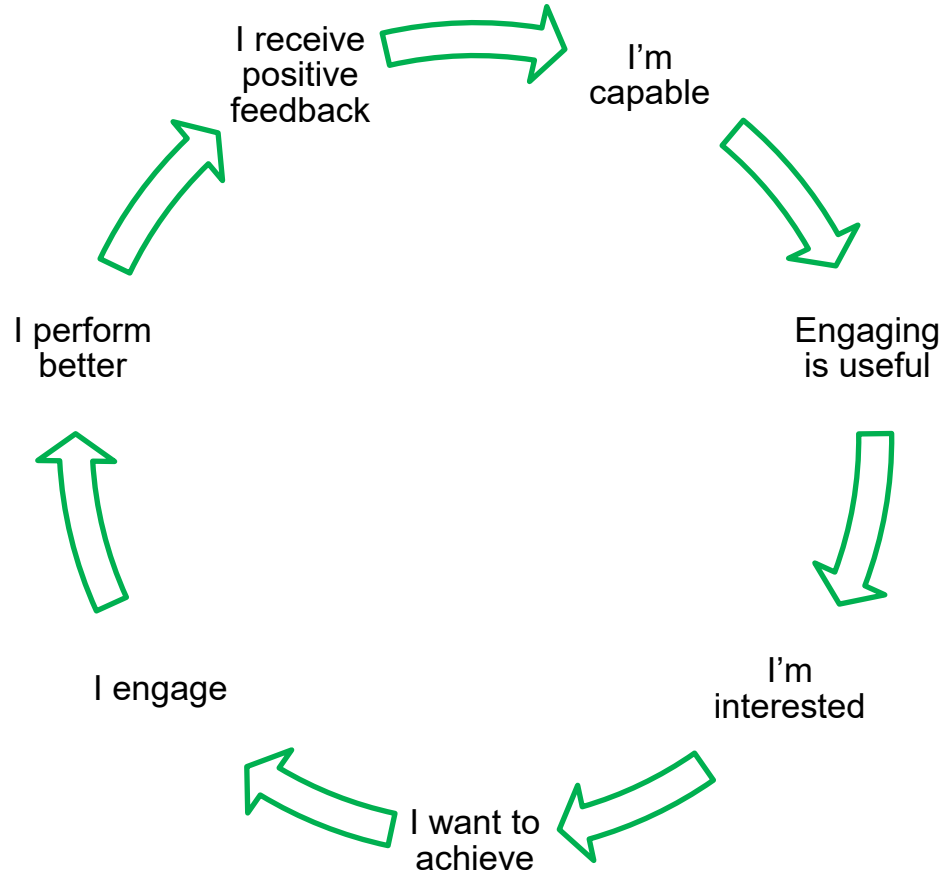
- High VET quality in previous (!) programme -> positive learning experiences
- Teachers or trainers support learners in finding a new programme



... and successful completion of the new VET

- Favourable (better) learning conditions in the workplace and school
- Higher motivation, engagement and satisfaction of learners
- “I’m at the right place now”

THE POSITIVE CYCLE OF ENGAGEMENT



Source: MEGY (adapted)
Stalder & Weich, 2022

Preventing dropout and early leaving

Conclusion

WHAT DOES (PROBABLY) NOT HELP (ENOUGH)?

Focus on

- improving career choice only
- single explanations for early leaving VET
- the «drop-out event» rather than the pathway
- prevention only
- blaming and shaming

insufficient



WHAT DOES (PROBABLY) HELP MORE?

Focus on pathways

before – during – after VET

Focus on VET quality

- Ample learning possibilities, interesting and meaningful tasks, supportive and competent teachers and trainers
- Build networks among and between teachers, workplace trainers, career counsellors

-> Foster sense of belonging, fulfilment, “can do”, “want to do”, satisfaction, career prospects



Focus on VET-policy

- Increase standing of VET!
- Foster re-entry later in the career
- Allocate sufficient resources

**Thank you for
your attention**



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