INStAnt!

The quick-and-easy update on attendance issues, developments, activities, and resources

Welcome to Issue 5 of **INStAnt!**
We are delighted that you support INSA via your membership and hope this newsletter helps you in your work. In this May 2021 issue, the INSA Communications Committee offers a sample of practical and scientific developments in France, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Scotland, as well as updates on INSA's work. To contribute to future issues or share ideas about INSA, please contact us at info@insa.network

International

School Attendance Problems - A Research Update and Where To Go

In April 2021, the Jerring Foundation published, in collaboration with INSA, an international anthology on school attendance problems. The anthology consists of 13 chapters by twenty authors from INSA who provide an update of research on school attendance problems. The anthology is intended to stimulate studies in the field of school attendance and absenteeism. It can be downloaded for free via the website of the Jerring foundation.

Call for Papers - Orbis Scholae

INSA, in collaboration with the academic journal Orbis Scholae, is hosting a call for papers. The special issue focuses on improving knowledge of how school absenteeism is defined and measured across different countries or states/regions. It will present the broadest overview so far on how school attendance and absenteeism is defined and measured. We invite country-specific manuscripts (or state/region-specific) which address the following questions: (1) How is school absenteeism conceptualized in your country? (2) What indicators of absence are being recorded? (3) How is this data reported? and (4) How do schools and central authorities respond to this data? More detailed information can be found on the INSA website or by contacting Guest Editors for the special issue, Dr Gil Keppens and Dr David Heyne, via: Gil.Keppens@vub.be.

In addition, the deadline for submissions to a special section of Continuity in Education has been extended until July. A special section of this journal will focus on activities or studies about what can be done to support students continuing their education and development, despite difficulties or disruptions in their lives. It includes investigations on how school attendance can be classified and identified, and which approaches can be used to prevent and manage school attendance problems. More information can be found on the Continuity of Education webpages or by contacting the managing editors at info@insa.network.

INSA's Second Conference - Save These Dates

INSA is proud to announce the re-scheduling of the 2nd INSA Conference. It will be held online, on October 13th and 14th, 2021. The conference will feature four outstanding keynote speakers: Hedy Chang (Director, Attendance Works, USA), Megan Gilmour (CEO 'Missing School', Australia), David Heyne (INSA Co-founder, Leiden University, The Netherlands) and Chris Varney (Founder & Chief Enabling Officer, 'I CAN Network', Australia). Details about registration and abstract submission are coming soon to the conference website. The members of the Conference Organising Committee look forward to welcoming you in October: Glenn Melvin (Australia), Irma de Wit (Netherlands), Lana Van Den Berghe (Belgium), Lisa McKay Brown (Australia), and Naoki Maeda (Japan).

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INSA's My Country Updates

INSA, with the support of country representatives, has updated many of the My Country spaces. These spaces provide country-specific updates on activities and achievements, helpful links and resources, and information about people and organizations working on school attendance.

News from Ireland

It is widely acknowledged that school refusal can be a particularly challenging issue for young people, parents, and professionals. Yet relatively little is known about this group of young people and the impact of school refusal in the home and school environments. In the project 'Exploring Perspectives on School Refusal in Second Level Schools in Ireland', Roisin Devenney and Catriona O'Toole address this gap by bringing to the foreground the experiences of professionals, parents, and young people, and exploring the impact of school refusal on their day-to-day lives. The project employs a mixed methods design, including a survey at secondary school level in Ireland (N=106), followed up by interviews with education professionals (N=17), interviews with parents (N=10), and narrative, arts-based interviews with young people (N=5). To date, this research has highlighted key concerns that relate to experiences of emotional distress, and the negative influence of inter-related forms of power (social, economic, cultural, and ideological) that impact on the lives of young people and their families with regard to school refusal. For more information, you are welcome to contact Roisin Devenney and Catriona O'Toole (Supervisor).

News from Schotland

The project 'Family Background and Educational Attainment: An Investigation Into the Mediating Role of School Absenteeism' investigates the extent to which differences in school attendance explain social inequalities in educational attainment and post-school destinations among pupils in Scotland. By linking census data and school administrative data from the Scottish Longitudinal Study, this project is able to examine socioeconomic disparities (e.g., parental education, neighborhood deprivation, housing tenure) in different forms of absenteeism and whether the reasons for absenteeism (e.g., truancy, sickness absence) have a differential impact on attainment and post-school outcomes. So far, results demonstrate that all dimensions of socioeconomic background increase the risk of being absent from school. Young people from rented households and households where individuals have no formal qualifications are most likely to be absent from school. Moreover, using recently collected national data, the researchers have found that these socioeconomic inequalities in school absenteeism are higher after the first round of COVID-19 school closures than in previous years. To learn more about the project please contact project leaders Edward Sosu or Markus Klein.

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News from the Netherlands

The project 'MASS-PS' (Medical Advice for Sick-Reported Students in Primary Schools) focusses on sickness absence among Dutch primary school pupils. School sickness absence has rarely been studied, and the focus on primary education is even more rare. Using early intervention, the researchers hope to address underlying problems and prevent future absenteeism. What has been learned so far? The first study in this project, examining the prevalence of school absenteeism in primary schools, shows that sickness absence is the most prevalent type of absenteeism in Dutch schools. Extensive sickness absence (defined as more than nine school days or more than four periods) applies to a worryingly high number of pupils: 13% or more, depending on the school type. The results can be found here. The results of other studies in the project will be shared soon, including stakeholders' views on sickness absence and the development and evaluation of the MASS-PS intervention. To learn more about you are welcome to contact Esther Pijl.

In more news from the Netherlands, Volume 53 of 'JGZ Tijdschrift voor jeugdgezondheidszorg' ['JGZ Magazine for Youth Health Care] features a series on school attendance and absenteeism in The Netherlands and Flanders. The special issue includes 14 articles in Dutch. Visit Journal Articles in the INSA website.

News from France

In Paris, pupils from underrepresented minorities (e.g., migrants, children from low-income families, ethnic minorities) seem less likely to be identified as school refusers. Why is this? And what prevents these children receiving appropriate care? In the project 'From refusing school to receiving mental health support', Laura Benoit and colleagues aim to address these questions by investigating how underrepresented minorities who are absent from school find mental health support. Results so far show that biases are shaping the understanding of a child's absenteeism, prior to their referral for medical care. Children from vulnerable populations are more likely to be seen as truants when they miss school (presuming a lack of interest and engagement around schoolwork), whereas the absenteeism of children from more privileged groups is more likely to be understood in terms of emotional distress. Furthermore, migrant parents are less likely to reach out to teachers or school counselors when their child is emotionally distressed at school. Consequently, the children of migrants are less likely to be identified and referred for psychological assessment and support. This problem also impacts the scientific understanding of school refusal. The authors point out that psychiatrists and psychologists may conceptualize school refusal from a biased perspective because they see fewer children from vulnerable populations. To learn more about the findings, contact Laura Benoit or read the articles which can be found here and here.