Narrative Perspective of the School Trajectory of At-Risk Students

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Abstract. Students' engagement in the educational task has been a matter of growing interest over the past few years as a factor in tackling one of the leading academic problems, namely school dropout. This brief research report offers an overview of how engagement in the educational trajectories of young people at risk is manifested. It was studied by applying the life course theory as the backbone of the research. A qualitative methodology has been applied, using a biographical-narrative approach through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The total number of subjects interviewed was 10. The main results indicate that: a) there are stages in which events that facilitate positive or negative engagement predominate more strongly; b) in general, there is a higher presence of negative critical events that lead to a decline in the quality of the students' engagement; and c) there are a series of factors that stand out in each of the stages of the students' trajectories. One of the main conclusions that can be drawn is that the traineeships are dynamic and flexible. Students may have the possibility of returning to their studies.

Keywords: engagement; educational trajectories; narrative inquiry; life history; life course theory

1. Introduction

There are issues in education that are as old as school itself. Because they are backed by extensive research, some of them are transformed as they are studied in greater depth (Garnica et al., 2019). This is the case of the problem addressed in this text, namely the school dropout of vulnerable subjects or so-called at-risk students (Bernárdez-Gómez et al., 2021; Thureau, 2018; Vandekinderen et al., 2018) and how these students return to their studies (Cuconato et al., 2017; Portela Pruaño et al., 2022; Ribaya, 2011; Tomaszewska-Pękała et al., 2017). The following text presents some of the results of a broader research project which studied the factors that benefit, or not, the engagement in school of young dropouts and returnees. Thus, the objective of the research was to explore the various factors

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that intervene in students' engagement through the stages of the educational trajectories of young people who have dropped out of school.

The need for education aimed at reducing social inequality is strongly advocated by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNESCO, 2016), in both the fourth and tenth goals, which aim for quality education and the reduction of inequalities. Likewise, organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have identified social inequality as one of the barriers to equitable education (OECD, 2018).

This research addresses the circumstance of those that have been a priority for educational administrations over the years and continue to show their relevance. From the obsolete Europe 2020 Strategy to the current SDGs or the Horizon Europe Framework Program (Reglamento UE, 2021) they propose to achieve goals dedicated to educational quality and to enhance well-being in schools. Moreover, the well-being of students in educational institutions is directly linked to the educational quality offered by educational systems (Viac & Fraser, 2020). Thus, the challenge is no longer to retain vulnerable students, but to find a friendly space in the educational institutions where they can develop their studies and maintain their engagement throughout their educational trajectories.

1.1. Trajectories

The study of educational trajectories is based on the study of the life course of individuals (Hutchison, 2019; Monarca, 2017). This is a theory that has been widely studied in the field of social sciences and has become relevant to social science research over the years (Blasbichler & Vogt, 2020; Christodoulou et al., 2018; Portela Pruaño et al., 2019). The paradigm on which the life course theory (LCT) is developed has a multifactorial character, as does the drop-out issue (Hutchison, 2019). The various factors identified in previous research are consistent (Bernárdez-Gómez, 2022; Gottfried & Hutt, 2019). Thus, through the life course theory, events are presented that significantly affect students' trajectories. These events are the factors that can be found in the work of authors such as Salvà-Mut et al. (2014) or Nichol et al. (2016) who refer to different spheres of proximity to the individual: micro-, meso- and macrosocial (Salvà-Mut et al., 2014). At the same time, it should be noted that the various events that occur manifest a different intensity. On the one hand are life events, which are present throughout the entire trajectory but have no special significance for the subjects (Kang, 2019; Tarabini, 2018) and on the other hand, there are critical events, strong enough to generate transitions in the trajectories that can cause a modification in their direction.

The various events that occur in an individual's trajectory substantially affect the implication they present (Crosnoe & Benner, 2016). One of the multiple definitions of the construct of engagement is that of the attachment that students exhibit for their studies and the intensity with which they dedicate themselves to the educational task (Emery et al., 2020). However, when different events cause a deterioration in students' engagement at the compulsory schooling stage, a process of disengagement begins (Yusof et al., 2018). This refers to the situation in

which students begin a progressive withdrawal from the educational experience offered by the school (Gebel & Heineck, 2019). Thus, the various data extracted from the research process indicate the type of engagement that is most prevalent in the trajectories of students who drop out. The stages in which these students present more events that produce positive or negative engagement are presented as well. Finally, the events that produce the quality of engagement whether in a positive or negative direction, are identified.

1.2. Student engagement

Student engagement, a construct which reflects the students' commitment to their school tasks, has been studied in depth in recent years (Cooley et al., 2021). Research on student engagement was initiated by the question of how the teaching-learning process develops based on the qualitative characteristics of the school history or academic life and the results produced by students (Boyaci, 2019; Mayhew et al., 2016; Teuscher & Makarova, 2018). Astin, who studied the issue of student involvement, defined it as the amount of energy invested by the student in the educational experience (Astin, 1993). This energy, modulated by the learning process, relates to the quality of involvement (Zabalza & Zabalza Cerdeiriña, 2022) that is understood as a continuous phenomenon in an individual's experience.

The idea of non-involvement or the low quality of it in students has manifested itself in literature as an abstract issue that relates to any field (Bernárdez-Gómez, 2022). It is therefore a heterogeneous phenomenon throughout the students' careers for which there is a lack of terminological agreement, referring to it as demobilization, internal or virtual absenteeism, or lack of belonging or affiliation (Fernández Enguita, 2011). The meeting point of all of these definitions is the final product of a procedural result of slowly moving away from the connection between the student and the school, diminishing the feeling of belonging (Mena et al., 2010; Tomaszewska-Pękała et al., 2017). This separation between student and school relates to a possible dichotomy between those students who adjust well to the institution and those who present problems. Therefore, all students are affected by the phenomenon, with multiple levels of intensity, in different ways and with different results. Any student can be affected; however, it is more pronounced in the stage of compulsory attendance. Diminishing disengagement has been one of the subjects of concern at the European level in recent years (Reglamento UE, 2021). These results usually relate to the situation of those students in a context of risk.

1.3. At-risk students

School risk affects vulnerable students who "suffer learning difficulties with some severity in the educational systems, institutions and classrooms we have" (Escudero & González, 2013, p. 13). The subjects at risk, those students who experience difficulties in their education, are not a *rara avis* regarding educational problems. In fact, as a phenomenon, it tends to be considered more of an epidemic within the educational system than a set of isolated cases with few repercussions (Karacabey & Boyaci, 2018). This makes it a widely studied question for which answers are still being sought.

Broadly speaking, the subjects who are in a situation of risk would be those who "due to certain personal characteristics and perhaps a set of them, as well as social, community and family, have high probabilities of reaching undesirable results by being exposed to the influence of situations and contexts of risk" (Escudero, & González, 2013, p. 20). In this definition it should be noted how these subjects, despite their singularities, are highly influenced by the realities in which they are framed, these being those that will promote, or not, situations of risk (Barros et al., 2019). Likewise, these students will be those who later have the highest probability of absenteeism, abandonment, or school failure (Jurado & Tejada, 2019; Rubio, 2017). As an undesirable result, they do not have sufficient skills to subsequently integrate into acceptable patterns of family, society and working life (González & San Fabián Maroto, 2018). This happens since there is the danger of not developing the individuals' potential in the face of the risk situations by which they may be affected during their educational career.

2. Method
2.1. Objectives
The aim of the following research has been to explore the various factors that intervene in the students' engagement through the stages of the educational trajectories of young people who have dropped out of school.

2.2. Design
Taking into account the stated objective and the previous research that has been carried out on this issue (Deterding & Waters, 2021), this research study was carried out according to a qualitative approach. Specifically, the design had a biographical-narrative nature. Through the development of this methodological design, it was possible to establish the various events that unfolded in the students' trajectories (Brandenburg, 2021) with the intention of gathering information and understanding the different relationships that have developed during their life course (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020). This methodology attempts to make sense of and construct meaning from isolated events that are evoked in the individual through the researcher (Portela Pruaño et al., 2019, 2022). The reconstruction and analysis of the experiences enable the comparison of the various events that have taken place. This inherently involves a reflective and introspective process of an individual who compares different events in another individual's life or an aspect of it.

2.3. Data collection
The data collection technique used to carry out the research was to conduct life histories by means of semi-structured in-depth interviews. There is agreement that this is the best technique for carrying out biographical-narrative research (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020). This tool allows the researcher the necessary immersion in the study problem and sufficient flexibility to develop the interview according to the different needs that arise as it is carried out (Deterding & Waters, 2021). The interview was validated using the individual aggregate method (Traverso Macías, 2019) by sending an initial draft and receiving feedback from experts in the research area. This interview was structured in three different stages. First is a series of initial questions that served to verify that the

interviewees have the requisite characteristics for inclusion in the sample for the study and to establish the personal and sociohumanitarian context from which they come. Second is a central block dedicated to investigating each of the stages established in the student's career, namely the stage prior to dropping out, the stage in which the student is absent and the stage of reincorporation. Finally, the third stage is a series of questions dedicated to delving into some aspects that have not been sufficiently clear and to assess the trajectory of the students' lives, as well as their prospects.

The core questions asked to the subjects were the following:
- Over the years, what has your life been like outside of school?
- Tell me about yourself; how are you or how do you define yourself?
- Tell me about the schools you have been in; what was the atmosphere like?
- About those schools, what was your experience in your school and in high school? What would you highlight?
- What would you highlight both positively and negatively? Why?
- What was the process of deciding to drop out of school like?
- What did you do while you did not attend school?
- What influenced you the most to go back to school and not drop out?
- What was the process of going back to school like?
- What have been your expectations along the way?
- How do you think those experiences (that you have talked about) have affected your life?

2.4. Sample
The sample was selected on a non-probabilistic purposive basis and the study was carried out in the Region of Murcia, Spain. Three criteria were considered for its selection: a) young people who had dropped out of school ; b) they were at the time of their participation involved in studying in some of the measures aimed at fostering their reincorporation into the educational system; and c) the size of the sample. This last aspect was one of the most relevant, since twice as many individuals were selected as recommended by Hernández-Sampieri et al. (2018) for these studies, namely from three to five individuals. Finally, this study's sample comprised ten young people, aged between 17 and 29 years old, from programmes considered to be back to training. Specifically, four of them were related to basic professional training, four to professional training programmes and two were entrance exams. These types of reinstatement programmes are dedicated to "students at risk of educational exclusion and/or which feature personal characteristics or schooling background which result in a negative appraisal of the school framework" (Bernárdez-Gómez et al., 2021, p. 257). In this way, we guarantee one of the requirements of the candidates, having gone through a situation of distance and reincorporation from the school. In this way it can be confirmed that the candidates have experienced a spell away from school and are subsequently being incorporated back into the system.

2.5. Data analysis
The analysis of the qualitative data was carried out using two complementary analysis techniques: content analysis (Friese, 2020) and Barton and Lazarsfeld's

(cited in Taylor et al., 2015) qualitative data analysis model. These two techniques were employed sequentially with the support of the analysis software ATLAS.ti. Firstly, a content analysis was performed whereby a) the information was reduced, and the data prepared for coding; b) it was structured through categorization;   and c) relationships among the different categories were extracted. Secondly, it was complemented by Barton and Lazarsfeld's (1961) model of analysis of d) systematizing the relationships by means of code concurrences; e) making matrix formulations by means of semantic networks; and f) conducting a theory-supporting analysis.

The advantage of the qualitative analysis procedure of Barton and Lazarsfeld (1961) was pointed out by Glasser and Strauss (1967) who indicated that an analysis could be performed by this procedure from a simple to a more complex level. The use of this procedure has acquired greater relevance to be able to be used through the support of data analysis software such as ATLAS.ti (Friese, 2020). This facilitates the monitoring of the steps of the analysis procedure by having tools that help in each of the steps, as has been done in previous research (Belmonte Almagro & Bernárdez-Gómez, 2021).

The categories that were used in the analysis can be found in Table 1. Among them are categories related to the involvement perceived by the students, the type of event, the stage in their educational trajectories in which the event has taken place and the type of event, depending on the level of approach of the student.

Table 1: Codes and groups of codes used in the analysis

Level of student approach		Engagement type	Stages in educational trajectory	
Macrosocial	-Education and training system -Dominant social values -Links between training and employment	-Positive Engagement -Negative Engagement	Previous primary stage	Stage away
Mesosocial	-Community -Family -Peer group -Educational centre	**Life course theory** -Life events -Critical events	Previous secondary stage	Reinstatement stage
Microsocial	-Individual characteristics -Interpersonal relationships		Distancing stage	Timeless

3. Results and Discussion

The trajectories of various students have been reconstructed and each of them has revealed the uniqueness of each of the individuals to whom the story behind them belongs. The focus is on how the engagement manifests itself through these life

stories. This provides an answer to the research objective, namely to explore the various factors that intervene in the students' engagement through the stages of the educational trajectories of young people who have dropped out of school. On the one hand, the results reveal how engagement manifests itself in terms of quality in the stories as a whole and, specifically, in each of the stages of the trajectories (Hutchison, 2019). On the other hand, the main events in the students' trajectories and their relationship to the quality of engagement are also reflected (Bernárdez-Gómez, 2022).

3.1. Engagement in students' trajectories

Firstly, when focusing on how engagement is reflected in each of the subjects' events, it can be seen that there is a tendency for events of a negative nature to emerge (Figure 1). In both the critical events, which are more important for the subject, and in the life events, the everyday events, there is a greater link with events that provoke a negative engagement in the students. However, if focusing only on life events, no notable difference is detected between the events that cause distancing in the student or greater engagement in his or her studies. Co-occurrence coefficients[†] of 0.57 and 0.47 are presented, reflecting a very slight difference in this aspect. On the other hand, it can be observed that there is a substantial difference between negative and positive critical events, with the former being the most frequent. This indicates that, in the trajectories of these individuals, there is a prevalence of events that led to their dropping out of school. This is because the events that are decisive for the direction taken by their engagement occur with seven points of difference in their co-occurrence coefficient and almost quintuplicate the number of events.

		● ◇ Negative_Engagement ⓘ 451	● ◇ Positive_Engagement ⓘ 379
● ◇ CRITICAL EVENTS	ⓘ 53	47 (0,10)	11 (0,03)
● ◇ LIFE EVENTS	ⓘ 811	457 (0,57)	382 (0,47)

Figure 1: Co-occurrence between types of events and different qualities of engagement

On the other hand, focusing on identifying where the events are concentrated according to whether they have a negative or positive engagement, there are also two differentiated aspects (Figure 2). The events with the highest negative engagement occur in the stages before students drop out of their studies. It can be observed that there is an outstanding co-occurrence coefficient (0.48) in the stage before the dropout occurs. It could be pointed out that there is a certain progression between the stages prior to dropout, since the number of negative events multiplies, while the number of positive events remains the same. Regarding the events that develop a positive engagement, most of them occur in the re-entry stage, with a much higher co-occurrence coefficient than in other stages. In the following section these are discussed in more detail.

[†] Co-occurrence coefficients are offered by the ATLAS.ti software from the relationship strength between two codes.

		Negative_Engagement 451	Positive_Engagement 379
Previous Primary Stage	196	123 (0,23)	86 (0,18)
Previous Secondary Stage	319	248 (0,48)	86 (0,14)
Reinstatement Stage	196	43 (0,07)	165 (0,40)
Stage away	95	48 (0,10)	52 (0,12)

Figure 2: Co-occurrence between different engagement qualities and stages of the trajectories

3.2. Factors related to the quality of engagement

As has been seen so far, there are some stages in the students' trajectory that differ from the others owing to the quality of the engagement of the events that take place during this time. It can be noted that the factors in the stages are heterogeneous. In all the stages of the various subjects there is a diversity of events that refer to the great variety of factors that can affect the school trajectory. However, there is a series of factors that predominate over others in each of the stages. These factors are shown in Figure 3. In the semantic network, in addition to the different relationships between codes, the total number of citations of a code (letter G) and the relationships with other codes that have been established for that code (letter D) are found.
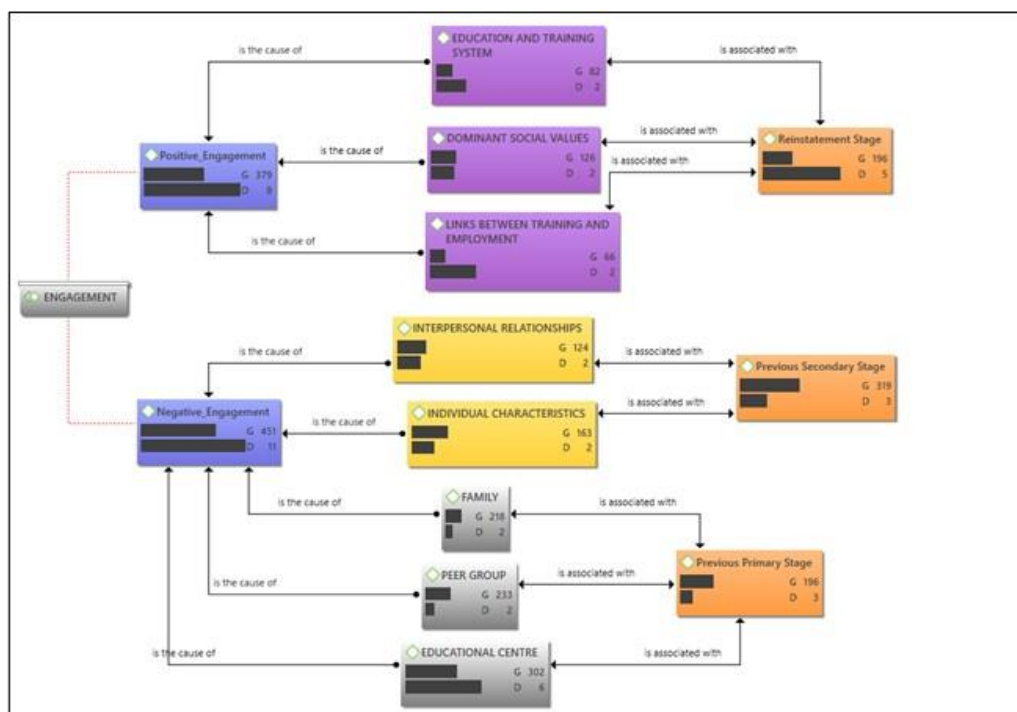

Figure 3: Semantic network of the relationship between quality of engagement, factors and stages of the trajectory

This semantic network emerges from the different co-occurrences that we have been able to find between the factors and the different stages as reflected in Table 2. The network has been created according to the various events that occur in each of the stages and whether these events produced an engagement of a positive or a negative nature.

Table 2: Co-occurrences between types of events present in the trajectories and each of the stages through which they pass

	Previous primary stage		Previous secondary stage		Stage away		Reinstatement stage	
	No. quote	CooC	No. quote	CooC	No. quote	CooC	No. quote	CooC
Individual characteristics	11	0.03	49	0.11	26	0.11	51	0.17
Interpersonal relationships	27	0.09	64	0.17	10	0.05	7	0.02
Community	19	0.08	26	0.08	8	0.06	6	0.03
Family	70	0.20	65	0.14	31	0.11	50	0.14
Peer group	59	0.16	139	0.34	25	0.08	18	0.04
Teachers	54	0.16	79	0.19	20	0.08	44	0.13
Educational Centre	99	0.25	157	0.34	17	0.04	57	0.13
Education and training system	5	0.02	23	0.06	11	0.07	37	0.15
Dominant social values	17	0.06	31	0.07	25	0.13	54	0.20
Links between training and employment	4	0.02	8	0.02	22	0.16	39	0.17

Mesosocial factors at the primary education stage. For the first stage, that which takes place before the students' dropping out from school in primary and secondary education, events that lead to a decrease in the quality of engagement derived from factors close to the students, those at the micro- and mesosocial level are more influential. Thus, events related to the school, the family and the peer group stand out, especially in the primary education stage. Although they do not have a high co-occurrence coefficient, they have many citations. As can be seen from the following quotes, for students, the relationship established with each of the groups indicated is particularly relevant. In fact, they have a notable presence when defining the trajectory followed by students at risk of exclusion.

> *It helped me because I used to say to dad, I don't understand this, can you help me, but maybe he didn't come to help me and that, I don't know... it bothers me because from childhood to adolescence, he doesn't ask me: - hey, what's wrong with you?* (D3:35)‡

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‡ For the citation of the material, the coding offered by the analysis software has been used, where the D indicates the interview number, and the next number indicates the citation within that document.

I remember one of them very fondly, one in particular who was my tutor in class. [...] The man must have retired years ago, he was older, he was a good guy, he was a constant source of laughter. (D1:41)

If each of the factors that exist is addressed individually within the dimensions of the mesosocial level, one of the first difficulties in this analysis is the wealth of factors that make up each of these dimensions. Starting with those that have shown less relevance in the trajectories of the students, namely those referring to the community, it can be observed that the presence of the same is anecdotal, which would indicate a low relevance for the students of this factor (Ribaya, 2011). It could also indicate, *de facto*, a limited influence, appearing tentatively in the stage before the distance when the subjects mention the environment in which they develop their studies and highlight how harmful it is to their studies because it is an environment far removed from the school culture (Salvà-Mut et al., 2014).

If the order is followed that marks the relevance of the events according to the number of appearances it has in the coding, the family is presented as a dimension that has a significant influence on how the life stories of the students are configured. It can be observed that, throughout all stages, there is a constant presence of events related to it These relate to circumstances as varied as the negligible cohesion of the family unit (Garnica et al., 2019), the excessive responsibility of students with roles that do not belong to them, at least because of age, or the insubstantial involvement of the family itself (Tarabini, 2018) in the education of their children and, by extension, in what happens in school.

On the other hand, the peer group also acquires considerable relevance, mainly in the stage prior to dropping out, which has already been pointed out as one of the stages in which factors associated with the friendships of students have a great influence (Cooley et al., 2021; Salvà-Mut et al., 2014). The main events that are presented in the stories of the students are linked to those derived from fraternizing with subjects of low educational level and who present problematic behaviour or behaviour oriented to distancing themselves from the school and who are frequently opposed to the educational fact.

Finally, at the mesosocial level, the school is the main dimension that generates events that influence the trajectories of students. The importance of the school in the educational trajectories of students lies, on the one hand, in the multitude of factors that make up this dimension and, on the other, in the high relevance that the organization has in the lives of students as a psychosocial context in which to spend much of their time (Bernárdez-Gómez, 2022; Tarabini, 2018).

Microsocial factors at secondary stage. At the stage of secondary education, the phenomenon is similar, with microsocial factors becoming relevant for them in terms of their individual characteristics and the relationships closest to them. By the time they reach adolescence, they are at a stage in their development where the events closest to them (personal relationships and their individual characteristics) become more important. How they handle their personal characteristics, and the influence of their closest circle will be decisive in the way they develop their trajectory at the time the most negative events occur.

Mathematics has always been very difficult for me; I see a number and I don't know what to do with it. (D2:48)

There are teachers who have given me many opportunities, of course, who have helped me [...] and they are good people who have been very good to me. (D5:54)

On the other hand, the stage during which they have dropped out does not represent a particularly significant stage for the students. However, there is a sense of how macrosocial factors begin to manifest themselves in the trajectory and later become the most influential. In this way, through the quote, an example can be observed of how dominant social values influence the trajectory of a student who has dropped out of education.

I was ashamed to be asked or that we were among us, talking in the group of friends at home and, maybe, we would talk about it: at seven euros an hour for six days 7×6... and I would stay, oh my God, don't ask me. (D9:44)

Among the various factors at the microsocial level there are examples of the diversity of events that affect the trajectory of students. If individual characteristics are considered (Monarca, 2017), problems of security and self-esteem of the subjects or behavioural problems that are externalized, such as aggressiveness or delinquency or that develop internally, such as depressive states (Kang, 2019), stand out. These difficulties, according to Salvà-Mut et al. (2014), are related to the school complement and factors directly caused by the schooling of students, where a considerable number of them refer to the negative experience that students have when passing through school (Boyaci, 2019; Teuscher & Makarova, 2018), This is due to issues such as low levels of participation or sense of belonging or a lack of academic skills, as well as experiencing learning problems or having specific unmet educational support needs (Yusof et al., 2018). However, events related to students' interpersonal relationships are also significant, since, in addition to being a difficulty for them, they have a deep connection with the events associated with individual characteristics. This is because, in the absence of valuable and relevant relationships for them, both other students and the teachers themselves will lack references that generate a positive experience in the institutions or the feeling of belonging that they lack (Tarabini, 2018).

Macrosocial factors at reinstatement stage. Finally, and on a positive note, the engagement of students is presented as improving in their re-entry phase. Events related to dominant social values, the relationship between training and employment or specific training at this stage cause a considerable increase in their engagement. At this stage, students perceive the importance of training owing to the intervention of factors beyond their control. This leads them to assume that they cannot prevent them and that it is therefore necessary to align themselves with them.

They didn't think so much about you, it's like university, you know? ... Simply: I'll give it to you (professors giving the homework) if you like it, fine, if you don't like it, if you don't like it at all, get a life, that's it, I wash

my hands of it like Pilate. In VET they give you the opportunity to meet, to say: I like this, I'm going to do this. And above all, they are looking out for you. (D2:62)
Because I need a job, and I need to try to pick up everything else, to learn everything I haven't learned. (D5:83)

The different events that can be found reflected in the quotations that refer to the macrosocial level of the factors affecting the stages of the educational trajectories of the students are strongly linked to the factors mentioned in the previous levels. This is because many of them reflect these or because the actions carried out by a person at the individual level are a direct consequence of the society and culture in which they are immersed (Fernández Sierra, 2017; Jimenez, 2008; Salvà-Mut et al., 2014). These are the main sources from which factors emerge at the macrosocial level.

An example of this is the dimension related to the education system. Although, in the life stories, the events on the different programmes and measures aimed at alleviating the problem discussed here are manifested, are still legislative issues that have their extension in what happens in the school. Therefore, there are events of which it is impossible to think of as improvements or changes at a single level; these must be structural.

Another of those factors that are rooted at all levels is that of dominant social values. Students assume a self-image based on the influence of preconceived collective ideological patterns on them or their surroundings (Barros et al., 2019; Karacabey & Boyaci, 2018). The danger of this derives in the assumption of future eventualities by the fact of belonging to an ethnic group, growing up in a certain environment where education is not valued or that the references of the subjects are immersed in a culture that does not value education positively. Faced with this, there could be some cause for concern, since the front on which to act is global and diffuse.

On the other hand, although it does not present such a strong link with the other levels, the last of the dimensions, referring to the relations between training and employment, is manifested mainly in the stage of reintegration and in which students remain distant. The main reason for this is the new perception that the subjects develop of the training, namely as a motivating element that facilitates the opportunity of accessing a job and supposes an improvement of their expectations in the labour market (Emery et al., 2020). One of the main incentives is employment-oriented training, and the subjects' assumption that the path they are taking is the right one (Nichol et al., 2016; Yusof et al., 2018). However, the high level of involvement they show is a singularity that takes time to appear (Gebel & Heineck, 2019). This raises the question why they were not aware of that need before dropping out of school.

4. Conclusions
The meeting point of the students studied here is the end product of a processual result of slowly moving away from the common ideas between the student and the school, with the feeling of belonging disappearing and the quality of

engagement gradually decreasing. Likewise, this distance is reduced by re-involving themselves in their studies through various factors that produce that effect. This separation between student and school relates to a possible dichotomy between students, namely those who accept the institutional system and those who present problems. Thus, it is a phenomenon that affects all students, with varying levels of intensity, in different ways and with different results. Similarly, it is a process with a very marked expressive aspect through the students' boredom with the organization of the school and the educational programmes, both rigid and outdated, manifesting as a tedious and irrelevant experience of their education.

The various events that occur throughout each student's school career are not episodic or disconnected from one another. Therefore, the purpose of constructing life histories is to try to understand the continuities and how the different events and experiences that occur in each of the school trajectories divert and take different directions in the lives of students and in their passage through school. The various school trajectories that have emerged have been reflected, to a greater or lesser extent, in the different trajectory models that have been taken as a reference. Although certain differences found between the emerging patterns and those used as a reference show how the models of trajectories are more focused on processes of absenteeism, dropping out or school failure do not fully follow the trajectory of a person returning to training, finding even slight differences in the stage prior to leaving school. However, it is necessary to point out that the perspective that students have of their life courses, despite the fact that their trajectory develops in one direction or another, is dynamic and reversible. They use their own resilience as a tool for correcting the situation in which they find themselves and are not permanently affected by it.

Finally, and according to the objective set, it should be noted that the different manifestations of student engagement are strongly linked to the different stages of their career. This is owing to the strong relationship that is established between some factors and a certain quality of engagement. There are factors that facilitate the involvement of students and others that facilitate their distancing. Likewise, it was also verified how, in each of the stages of its trajectory, there are also factors the presence of which predominates.

4.1. Limitations of the research
It is necessary to point out the limitations encountered in carrying out the study: a) The vast amount of knowledge that has been generated previously and the desire to bring it all together and analyze every little aspect, but it is impossible. In addition, it would have been possible to have continued with the analysis of the data in a more extensive way, but this would also have been an almost endless task. b) It would have been interesting to have more informants for the life histories; however, in the current conditions for a doctoral thesis, this would have been complex to say the least. The situation with the pandemic has been extremely limiting, not only in terms of this aspect, but also regarding the possibilities of accessing the field.

Ethics
This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Commission of the University of Murcia (Id: 3226/2021).

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