

Experiences of education and learning of young people who have been in foster care: Defining success

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How is **educational success** experienced and determined by young people who have been in **foster care**?

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Being in foster care

- ✗ Trauma experience
(Flynn, Tessier, & Coulombe, 2013; Palmieri & La Salle, 2017; Tessier, Flynn, & O'Higgins, 2018).
- ✗ Lack of support
(Clemens, Helm, Myers, Thomas, & Tis, 2017; Day et al., 2012; Johansson & Höjer, 2012; Voices of Children and Young People team, 2019a).
- ✗ School and home mobility
(Clemens et al., 2017; Morton, 2015; Voices of Children and Young People team, 2019a).
- ✗ Higher rates of academic underachievement
(Flynn et al., 2013; Palmieri & La Salle, 2017; Voices of Children and Young People team, 2019b).

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Current Understandings

- ✗ Most research investigating educational experiences of children and young people in foster care has predetermined definition of educational success.
- ✗ Only two other studies have investigated foster care experienced children's understandings of educational success (Coulling, 2000; Huxtable, 2016).

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Methodology

- ✗ In-depth case study
- ✗ Seven participants
- ✗ Semi-structured interviews
- ✗ Snowball technique
- ✗ Ethical considerations: confidentiality, risk of psychological harm, voluntary consent and dissent

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- ✗ Finishing high school
- ✗ Selection to participate in leadership development course
- ✗ Speaking up for herself and others

Success according to Athena

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Relationships

Teachers	Carers and social workers	Friends
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodating High expectations Sympathetic Trustworthy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Love and care Support decisions Provide opportunities and meet basic needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of belonging Success

"But then to know that my school thought of me as a great leader and someone good to represent the school made me feel pretty proud."

Having a voice

- Space
- Voice
- Audience
- Influence
- Advocate

"I think that the thing that worked best for me was just basically speaking up and having a voice."

Navigating school and foster care

Feeling different	Trauma	Resilience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different experiences Stigma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional regulation Social interactions School engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overcoming obstacles Working hard

"But I think it was 'cause, you gotta understand in my time, I had to leave [foster care], and go into the training flat when I was 17. I was only Year 12. So your whole high school, like you can't just relax and stuff to be honest."

This research explored how educational success was experienced and identified by young people who were in, or had been in, foster care.

Understandings of 'success' reflected participants' values, past experiences, and their joy in overcoming barriers faced.

Children and young people in foster care should be given agency to determine their own meanings of educational success.

Implications

- Acknowledge
- Listen
- Action

