

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF DROP-OUT RATE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IBARAPA EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OYO STATE

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ABSTRACT

This paper appraised the causes and effects of drop-out rate among secondary school students in Ibarapa East local government area of Oyo state. It delved into the concepts and types of school drop-outs, the characteristics of potential drop-outs as well as the determinants of drop-out rate among secondary school students in the area. Other things discussed in the paper are the effects of school drop-out on the society and how to prevent dropping out of students in our secondary schools. Some of the recommendations made include free and qualitative education for all at the secondary school level as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution and National Policy on Education, provision of adequate learning facilities in the school environment as well as enlightenment for parents and civil societies on the importance of education to the individuals and development of the country as a whole.

KEYWORDS: Causes, Effects, School Drop-out rate, Secondary school students

INTRODUCTION

The issue of school drop-out is one of the cankerworms bedeviling the education industry globally (Ubogu, 2004 & Nwankwo, 2006). The rate at which secondary school students are dropping out of school is alarming. It is not limited to Ibarapa East local government area but has become a global phenomenon. The issue of school drop-out in Nigeria has been with us for a very long time. Oliva (2014) noted that drop-out is one of the most serious problems that have continued to bedevil our educational system since independence in 1960 from the colonial administration. He noted further that even before our independence, the problem of drop-out has already established its grips on our educational system.

The Millennium Development Goals on education was initiated to ensure that by the year 2020, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to access quality education. Unfortunately, the rate at which young people drop out of school prematurely is also one of such problems bedeviling the realization of the MDGs by the year 2020.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS OF SCHOOL DROP-OUT

The concept of school dropout has been given several definitions, though varying from one person to another. According to Oladunni (2004), “for someone to drop out of college or a race, means, they leave it without finishing what they started, and if a person is described as a drop-out, it is someone who has left school or college before they have finished their studies”. Mallum (2001) sees school drop-out as “Premature withdrawal of students from schools. This means that school places remain unfilled because large numbers of children fail to continue at school”. In the words of Ubogu (2004), a school dropout “is a child who has failed in general school adjustment which is not necessarily a matter of specific learning disability but rather a broad educational disability”. This means that dropping out of the school is due to failure to cope with the school environment and system. According to Bedard (2001), “Individuals who leave school prior to school graduation can be defined as school drop outs”. A dropout is considered a student who for any reason other than death leaves school before graduation without transferring to another school (Kotwal, 2007). So, from these definitions, one can say that school dropout is the untimely withdrawal from school and these students who withdraw from school prematurely end up not obtaining any certificate of graduation.

TYPES OF SCHOOL DROPOUTS

There had never been any recognizable and universally acceptable classification or types of school drop-outs, however, an attempt is hereby initiated below for the purpose of constructive criticism and modification where it is deemed necessary. This classification as earlier noted is not based on any prior pattern and/or standard but a self-designed classification by the researchers.

1. Circumstantial Drop-outs

This is the type of drop-out arising from all situations or the circumstances that are prevailing in the environment at a particular time which forces the student who may be or may not be a potential drop-out, to drop-out of school. In essence, all students who dropped from school due to environmental factors like poor access to the appropriate type of education or school, changing nature of climate and weather conditions, security and safety of the environment, quality of school, availability of jobs, motivation, ill-health, among others are classified in this group.

2. Status Drop-outs

When students drop-out of school because of certain social, economic and political factors, they are regarded as status drop-out. This type of drop-out is already a potential drop-out before they eventually dropped out of school. For example, students who leave school before graduation because of family background, caste system in the society, poor educational background of both the family and the society, disabilities, due to genetic reasons, gender preference and political reasons.

3. Cohort Dropouts

The cohort dropouts are those who jettison school before completion as a result of the influence of the group to which they belong. The influence of peers or friends here is of great relevance to the nature of the dropout, for example, early marriages, unwanted pregnancies, among others.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POTENTIAL DROP-OUTS

Identifying who has potential to dropout is not an easy task. Nevertheless, Palmore (2007) established that on the average, the early school leaver is less talented academically than their contemporaries who graduate from secondary schools. To corroborate this, Livingstone (2009), asserts that the performances of a drop-out in the academic aspect or programme of studies of the school rates lower than that of their classmates, who win high school diplomas, but their achievement in the non-academic or co-curriculum aspects (which are otherwise referred to as programme of social activities) of their schooling, rates higher than the students who graduate. Palmore (2007) also opined that the intellectual ability of a child contributes immensely to his early dropping-out from school.

Contrary to the above, Litcher (2007) opined that most students who stay in school to completion have been found to possess Intelligence Quotient (IQ) lower than some drop-outs. Considering these two opposing views, one finds it difficult to conclude that Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is a yardstick for identifying potential drop-outs since a reasonable percentage of students with above-average IQ dropped out of school (Livingstone, 2009).

According to Osanyin (2001), students in isolated communities are at an increased risk of not achieving their potentials before leaving school because of factors such as limited access to students' services and programmes as well as lack of cultural diversity. As such, for the fear of the unknown, their interest for schooling is reduced and this eventually leads to dropping out of school. Livingstone (2009) stated that students, who as a result of any retardation or not being promoted to another class are likely to drop-out of school. To Livingstone (2009), the situation becomes worse when a student is asked to repeat a class twice or thrice before graduation. Thus, the fact that a child was not promoted should immediately alert the entire school staff that so so and so pupil requires special help and attention as well as individualized activities if he/she is to develop academically, intellectually and socially. Therefore when a student does not pass from one class to another, it is a signal that the student may be passing through a stage of confusion, which could lead to dropping out of school.

Poor attendance and absenteeism are the beginning of a slippery slope towards dropping out of school. Once students start to lag behind in their studies, they may find it difficult to catch up. The low self-esteem that results from not being able to catch up can also make the students to be tempted to give up on school.

The ethnic-group that a student belongs to, may also play a part in his risk of dropping out of school, most especially, in the areas where education is not valued.

THE CORRELATES OF STUDENTS' DROP-OUT

A lot of reasons have been adduced to why students drop-out prior to graduation. Some of these factors cover the characteristics of students and their immediate circumstances. Others, according to Osanyin (2001) are factors of school itself and those outside of schools, which include government policies on the overall educational system, just to mention a few.

Student and Family Factors

The factors resident in families like single parenting, non-placing value on the education of the children and neglect of the girl child education have one influence or the other on the drop-out rates among our secondary school students in this local government area specifically and in Nigeria generally. Litcher (2007) stated that children tend to take up the values prevailing in their own family through their daily observations and when the family interest is not in schooling, such children as soon as they encounter difficulties drop-out of school easily. In their own assertion, Oransaye & Odise (2006) noted that the growing apathy to schooling among parents and children in Nigeria is to be related to the changing value system in the society. According to them, people now 'worship' money and wealth in Nigeria and rarely have regards and respect for education and educated people. To them, there is a misconception that one gets rich quicker without going to school and those who go to school rarely get rich. Consequently, many parents and students have been misled, thereby encouraging drop-out in Nigerian schools. But Nwankwo (2006) is not happy with parents whose preference is for menial jobs which brings quick monies to solve domestic problems. He envisaged a changed value system as well as total re-orientation in the society.

School Factors

Noting the differences in drop-out rates among schools, it has been observed that the characteristics of schools and their programmes that appear to be associated with early school leaving, have influence on the drop-out rate among secondary school students. This investigation has considered the academic and social dimensions of schooling in public schools and that of the private schools and it is important to note that, besides students dropping out from the system, there are those who drop-out within the system. These are students that wilfully leave one public school and enter a private school (Nwankwo, 2006).

One of the strongest correlates of early school leaving is the lack of academic success. According to Rumberger & Thomas (2000), schools in which students have limited opportunities for academic success appear to have greater or higher drop-out rates. Students who, more often, get low grades, fail many subjects, and are retained in the same grade are more likely to leave school prior to graduation. Students who experience difficulty meeting the academic demands of the school tend to leave rather than continue in the face of the frustration of failing to achieve good grades. The lack of opportunities for success can be viewed as an imbalance between the academic demands of the school and the resources with which the students will use to meet those demands. The availability of such resources appears to be related to the structure and organization of schools. Public, urban, and large schools and those with higher students-teacher ratios tend to have higher dropout rates'. The failure of students to find positive social relationships in schools and the lack of caring and supportive school environment also appear to be related to increased rates of dropping out. Positive

relationships between teachers and students and among students are parts of those that hold students until graduation.

Oransaye & Odise (2006) while corroborating this also found lower drop-out rates in schools where students receive more supports from teachers for their academic work and where teachers report that students receive more guidance about both school and personal matters. In addition to issues of access to academic success and social acceptance within schools is the issue of the availability of schooling. This is primarily an issue in areas where secondary schooling is not widely available. Although, this situation tends to be more prevalent in the developing countries like Nigeria, completing secondary school in such circumstances often takes students far from home and family and community supports, and so makes dropping out more likely.

Financial Reasons

Some students leave school for financial reasons so as to assist their families on their business/trade. Secondary school education involves both apparent costs and concealed expenses. Many schools assess a number of student fees, the bulk of which go to provide materials for courses. Nwankwo (2006) observed that, although, it is a general practice for public schools to purchase textbooks at public expense, some schools require their students to buy all or some of these books on the bills of their parents. The poor student who cannot pay the fees is confronted with a serious problem. Many students from lower socio-economic status homes have left school because their fees and other expenses were so high that they could not afford to remain in the school. Ubogu (2004) also discovered that “socio-economic factor caused school drop-outs in Nigeria. Thus, it could be said that poverty is conversely related to dropout. This equally means that children from rich homes or families have lower risk of dropping out from school over their colleagues from poor families or homes.

Social and Peer Influence

There are instances where children are being given the necessary supports by parents or guardians for schooling, yet they still drop-out of school. Since children grow up and interact with different people in the society, there is every tendency that such interactions are often obvious in the behaviour of the individuals especially the adverse effects which could also influence the interest of the child’s schooling which may lead to withdrawal from school before graduation. Nwankwo (2006) opined that peer group also exercises considerable influence on the adolescence by setting a pattern of values and behaviour for an individual. In his study, peer group was found to have influence members to drop-out of school to join their activities such as going to the beach and parks; to work as carriers of log and baggage during school hours; etc. Even, some of the drop-outs themselves attributed withdrawal from school to peer group influence.. Adams (2006) stressed that as a child associates with friends who are smokers, drunkards or drug-addicts, he is likely to develop a negative behaviour to school. This is because adolescents adopt the group’s behaviour in their quest to be acceptable in their peer groups leading them to behaving defiantly to the norms of the society. This deviant behaviour may result in suspension or expulsion from school. Ubogu (2004) in his perspective also added that, engaging in deviant behaviours such as stealing, smoking, dishonesty, disobedience, drug abuse, examination malpractice, cultism, armed robbery among others could result in dropping out of school.

Gender and Early Marriage

Another factor worthy of mentioning is the gender related and early marriage cases. It is generally observed that, having or engaging in early sexual relationship may result in unwanted pregnancy, which may also have an adverse effect on students' dropping out from schools. Litcher (2007) states that early sexual relationship is a vital factor associated with dropping out among adolescent students. While corroborating the above, Osanyin (2001) revealed that ... early sexual relationship may lead to unwanted pregnancies and early marriages could cause school dropout.

Nwankwo (2006) opined that those students that dropped out on sex differences and gender discrimination are female students. Thus, female students drop-out of schools in greater number than their male counterparts. According to Kotwal (2007), the huge drop-out rates, however, indicate that girls more often than boys, are needed for other activities such as looking after other siblings, for domestic work and help with farm work. The girls who are denied educational opportunities disproportionately as compared to boys suggest clear cut discrimination in household behaviour. The implications of such unequal treatment result in limiting the opportunities and choices that the girl children may have both in the present and in the future.

The attitude regarding education of girl child was and is still negative in most communities today. Thus, making the social environment such that education is considered meaningless for the girls and this brings to light the reason why some asked the questions "what will a girl gain by studying" since they believe that the girl education is beneficial to only her husband, thereby attaching much importance to the education of their sons whom they perceived will support them in return in their old age.

Perception of Individuals' Goals for Education

The degree to which individuals perceive the goals of education level credence to the importance attached to it. Support for schooling can vary from community to community and society to society. For example, in Nigeria there is the long-held view that schooling is essential for a democratic society, as reinforced in the minimum qualification for certain political offices or positions as well as meeting the increasing technical requirements of the Nigerian economy. These ideologies of support for schooling are reflected in specific policies, such as educational requirements for jobs, and in media campaigns emphasizing the importance of staying in school. Natriello (2009) while supporting this also opined that the relevance of schooling and school completion as perceived by students has an impact on dropping out rate. When conditions outside the school indicate to students that school completion is important for their current and future success, students are more likely to remain in school until graduation.

Academic Factors

There are a range of desirable qualities that students are expected to develop. These are feelings of self-worth, an understanding of ethical theories and values, love for the country and the development of aesthetic and moral sensitivity. Formal education systems are designed to prepare students to live in the real world, as professional educators. The teachers consider it as their serious duty to guide their students on the right path. The students on the other hand must develop societal values such as a sense of responsibility and commitment in order to become valuable members of society. Their involvement in school activities will enable them to do that. Yet, students who drop out of their secondary school programme

usually do so because of academic reasons. It may be that they can no longer cope with the demands of an academic programme and they feel that the formal education system has nothing again to offer them and in many cases, hence, they drop-out.

Government policies

The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) stated in The National Policy on Education that the school system will be on the 6-3-3-4 plan. It opined that the system will be flexible enough to accommodate both formal and non- formal education and will allow leaving and coming back to the school system. This is because the curriculum is diversified to cater for those who wish to leave the school system at certain levels and those who wish to come back to school to complete their course of study. Hence, the rate at which secondary school students are leaving school at will to engage in diverse socio- economic activities calls for the review of the policy statement (Adesina, 2010). This is with a view to saving scarce resources which would have been put into alternative use from being wasted on those who will not like to complete their school programmes.

CONSEQUENCES OF SCHOOL DROP-OUT ON THE SOCIETY

No matter what the causes of school dropouts are, there are definite consequences of leaving school before graduation and these consequences have serious negative effects on the educational, social and economic lives of the country. Rumberger (2013) said that dropouts are more likely to engage in crime and other nerve racking activities in the society.

Nwankwo (2006)) stated that the productivity capacity of educated workers in industry suffers when students drop-out of school. He also observed that dropouts make a similar proportionate contribution to the government through tax and the dysfunction associated with dropped out, thus higher rate of admission to mental hospitals, higher rate of incarceration and increased number of inmate in the prison. The problem drop-outs are likely to encounter after they leave school are mostly personal, some of which are unemployment, low aspiration and higher incidence of delinquency which are similar to the ones that make them drop-out of school. To this, Gerber & Redmon (2009) stated that a person who dropped out of school is more likely to be unemployed than a high school graduate. If they are able to find work, it will be relatively a low paying one with little opportunity for career advancement.

PREVENTION OF DROPPING OUT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

In order for the community to intervene and help dropouts, community members must know what dropouts themselves think about their situation. In this regard, Ubogu, (2004) revealed that in a recent interview with drop-outs, on what they thought would have improved their ability to finish school, responses indicated that, clear supports provided within a school environment and also from the communities would improve a potential dropout's chance for staying in school.

In addition, youth mentoring programmes exist to provide role models and help a child to develop socially and emotionally. Mentors help students understand and communicate their feelings, relate to their peers, develop relationships with other adults and stay in school. Community members are often willing and able to serve as mentors but do not know how to get involved in schools. Other considerations are briefly discussed below.

- 1. Provision of Quality Education:** Quality Education is one that is sound and educates the learners to be active and productive members of the society. Quality education could be defined as one that focuses on the whole child – the social, emotional, mental, moral, physical and cognitive development of each learner regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socio – economic status or geographical location. It prepares the child for life, not just for testing. A child that has been neglected by home should be rehabilitated and shown love by the teacher. The students should be free enough with their teachers and should be able to discuss their problems with them. The advice the teacher will give students will be towards providing a lasting solution to such students’ problems. However, students that are not free enough might keep to themselves or resort to taking hard drugs thereby compounding their problems. On the long run, they might drop-out of school and later turn to hardened criminals (Foyewa, 2019). The teachers, therefore, are expected to play the role of counselors, parents and mentors to the students. Any bad habit earlier found in a student can be curbed if it is discovered earlier enough. Government should make resources available and direct course of action to ensure that each child enters school healthy, learns and practices a healthy lifestyle; earns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for children and adults; is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and wider community; has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified and caring teachers; is challenged academically and is prepared for success in school for further study and for employment and participation in a global environment (Maisamari, 2019, and Oke, Ogunwuyi, Olorode and Adeniran, 2019).
- 2. Re – designing of the curriculum:** There is need for Nigeria to re - design the school curriculum and teaching for the purpose of preventing students dropping out of schools. The school curriculum should be made to include issues related to global challenges of violence, peace and security, terrorism and inequalities among others and not just for certification alone. Most students passed through the school without having the school passed through them. Most of the curricula contents are not very interesting and relevant to the immediate needs, and most importantly, the teaching and learning activities done by the teachers in the classroom are very dull (Nwankwo, 2006). Hence, such students dropped out of school and engage themselves in criminal activities since they have to survive. Also, priorities within the country and the globe have changed, and the original focus of education in the country has changed. Therefore, the Nigerian curriculum must be re-designed to meet the newly articulated aspirations and global challenges. The curriculum should be a planned, purposeful, progressive, systematic and interesting process to create positive improvements in the educational system. Our system of education should be directed towards making provision for self-job opportunities after leaving schools. Nigeria education system should be engineered towards entrepreneurship. Acquisition of skills for self - reliance should be the focus of our educational system if the drop-out rate will be reduced. Similarly, curriculum at each level of our educational system should include the teaching of consequences of evils and punishment for these anti-social behaviours. The newly-envisaged curriculum should further emphasise the teaching of morality in schools. According to Foyewa (2019) in Oke, Ogunwuyi, Olorode and Adeniran (2019), “once in a while, the curriculum should give access to learners visiting prisons, juvenile homes and police cells. If learners are exposed to various punishment criminals and evil ones in the society are awarded for committing crimes, there is the possibility that they might not drop-out of schools and be afraid of involving themselves in such activities.”
- 3. Provision of Inclusive learning and teaching:** As a country, we need to create equal opportunities for our students to succeed regardless of their gender, ethnicity, cultural

and socio – economic background or disability, by recognizing and harnessing their diverse cultural backgrounds and identities while creating opportunities for them to learn from each other. By so doing, we make their differences asset rather than liabilities. Teaching and learning should also facilitate all students' sense of personal and professional identity and sense of belonging within a field, so that their background can contribute to their success. Teachers should design a diverse range of teaching, learning and assessment approaches that recognize and support the needs of students both as individuals and as members of a learning community, removing barriers to learning and creating a more equitable experience to assist all students, regardless of health issues or language support needs. In addition, it should counter the effects of unconscious bias in individuals and in institutional structures through creating and implementing evidence based policies. Students work and learn better in an inclusive teaching and learning environment which depends on teachers' attitudes, curriculum content, interactive classroom communities, appreciation of the value of different backgrounds and opinions, and social culture on campus (Maisamari, 2019 and Oke, et al., 2019).

4. **Increase Investment in Education:** Top schools around the world are realizing the need to increase investment in their education. Nigeria has the opportunity to be at the forefront of this innovation in education if we act now. The UNESCO requirement that 26% of the annual budget of any country should be allocated to education has never been met by all successive governments in Nigeria. If educationally developed countries and continents desire that much, then the developing and underdeveloped countries need that much (Maisamari, 2019 and Oke, et al, 2019).
5. **Make room for Pedagogical Strategies:** There is the need for a definite change in pedagogical strategy of fact-based traditional lecturing to interactive teaching. Teaching today, requires new approaches that favour generic learning and the ability to develop intellectual skills far beyond memorization of facts, formulas and events. For education in Nigeria to measure up to that of developed countries in the world, innovative teaching and learning methods that are participatory should be employed, while teachers need to become facilitators, motivators, guides and co-participants in the teaching and learning processes (Maisamari, 2019 and Oke, et al, 2019).
6. **Create world class learning spaces:** New forms of pedagogy require high quality, digitally – rich and multi – functional teaching spaces. Trends towards shared space for learning and teaching in formal schools in the country highlights the continuing need for the provision of social spaces within schools and classrooms that enable students to meet and foster a sense of community. Library space must include a variety of learning, teaching and study spaces that are open to everyone across the schools. The provision of spaces for study, collaboration and social activities should correlate with modern modes of office working. The need for increased flexibility is also driven by the differing requirements for students at different sites and the changing needs of our community throughout the year (Maisamari, 2019 and Oke, et al, 2019).

CONCLUSION

It could be concluded that the factors responsible for school drop-out are numerous and interrelated. No particular factor or cause can be said to have contributed to school drop-out in secondary schools in Ibarapa East local government area of Oyo state. The need for the parents, government and all stake holders in education to leave no stone unturned in order to dismantle the practice of drop-out in our educational system cannot be over-emphasized. Determining which influences are involved in specific students' drop-out patterns will permit the design of more potent interventions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Total educational system should be overhauled bearing in mind the need, goals and aspirations of the learners and the society at large.
2. Teachers should be adequately provided with the needed facilities in order to motivate the learners to develop his total potentials. This will reduce the temptation of dropping out from school.
3. Teachers should be adequately motivated to enhance their optimum performances in preparing the learners to shun social vices.
4. Teachers in particular and adults in the community should be role models and good examples for youths to emulate.
5. The government and school officials should change their attitudes towards religious and moral education in schools. The subject should be accorded some attention and importance, as done for science and social science subjects, so that total development of youths can be enhanced.
6. Visitation panels and inspectorate divisions as well as bodies responsible for supervisory roles of our higher institutions of learning should be given the necessary incentives to do their work so as to improve on the standards and quality of Education.
7. Good governance must be accorded high priority, as this will generate high and considerable level of attention and support for the government.
8. Secondary school curricula should integrate vocational and entrepreneurship skills into their programmes. This should be made compulsory in schools. This is one of the ways government can save its face from the cries about students' drop-out.

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