
FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR RISING DROPOUT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ALIERO, Haruna Sani

Guidance and Counselling Unit,
Usmanu Danfodiyo University,
Sokoto, Nigeria

Abstract

The thrust of this paper is to highlight the factors responsible for the rise in primary school pupils' dropout and its implication on national development. The definitions and concepts of school dropouts were outlined. Some major factors for school dropouts were identified. Efforts of the government in tackling the problem and its implication on national development were enumerated and discussed. Conclusion and recommendations were presented. It was recommended that the government needs to show a strong commitment and ensure that all necessary teaching and learning facilities were provided. An enabling law should be enacted by the government to curtail the menace of early marriages among school girls. Finally, parents, teachers and communities should make a meaningful contribution towards arresting the ugly trend.

KEY WORDS

Dropout, Primary Education, National Development

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Introduction

Education is a key component of economic growth and development. It has a direct influence on the entrepreneurship, productivity, growth which increases employment opportunities and women empowerment (Vision 2030). Education is the training of the entire person to an individual not only to read and write or be proficient in a given job but also to become a useful and acceptable member of society. What is important in education is the quality and the type of functional education the society has to offer to its members. It is often said that education is the foundation of a nation. A nation cannot afford to hold its arms and watch a large portion of its population unable to read and write and unable to contribute to its national development? Or unable to provide an opportunity to get enough basic education to its members to be able to contribute to the development of their society?

One of the important indicators of national prosperity and its bright future is its ability to equip its citizens with skills for employment and prepare them for the task of nation-building. However, the government cannot provide for all the needs of its citizens in the country. People must use their skills to be creative. They should learn to invent new things to generate money

National Development planning refers to the articulation by the government of economic, social, cultural, educational and political development of a nation.' It is also the allocation of a Country's resources (human and material) to various segments of the country for national development. Allocation of funds should be to agencies

and establishment where people can enrol for training and skill acquisition. For example, the national poverty eradication programme (NAPEP) has helped thousands of Nigerians to established businesses of their own. A practical example of this is Keke NAPEP, which is visible in every part of the nation.

A nation cannot be strong when a great majority of its citizens live in ignorance in this era when knowledge means strength. No economy can be great and dynamic until there is enough high and intermediate level manpower available to direct its workforce.

The number of out of school children roaming the street is better seen than imagined. When children are supposed to be in school; they are seen roaming about in different directions. They are easily characterized by their leader, who is always in front with a bowl of baked flour called ‘masa or waina’ on his head and surrounded by other young children of different ages each carrying a plate. They wear dirty clothes and most of them without shoes. Once a potential buyer is spotted they move closer and chant *sadaka fi sabilillah* (charity for the sake of Allah). Whatever is given to them, is immediately distributed among the group members.

Smith (2003) reported that caution is required in interpreting terminologies such as drop out or early school withdrawal etc as the decision to drop out of school may be by exogenous factors rather than factors intrinsic to students themselves. Rumberger and Lamb (2003) reported that structural disequilibrium may not only be caused early school leaving but also health problems, poverty which will, in turn, result in dropping out.

Jarjoura (1996) found that those who leave education early for personal reasons were more prone to display offending behaviour; than those leaving for economic reasons who appeared less inclined to offend

Perhaps the focus should not so much be on dropping out as a problem of perceived or actual failures of pupils, schools and the cost associated to it, but as an indication and origin of fundamental inequities (Smeyers and Depaepe,2006 p.89)This perspectives shift focus towards school attendances and completion as a right of citizens that is to be safeguarded in any democracy and calls for a more positive view on the many determinants of dropout.

Concept of School Drop out

A student is considered a dropout when one withdraws from school before completing a course of instruction. A student is also said to be a dropout when withdraws from high school after reaching the legal age to do so.

In the United States of America, dropouts refer to a student quitting school before he or she graduates or avoiding entering a university or college. Sometimes, it is difficult to ascertain as students may stop attending without terminating enrolment.

By dropping out rate, we are talking about the number of people who leave school or college early or leave a course or other activity before they finish it. It is important to note that the high rate of school dropouts in western countries sharply contrast to the

economic and social objectives designed to achieve sustainable economic growth. In African countries, there seem to be no effective economic policies designed for sustainability; even where there is, implementation becomes a hurdle.

Current situation of drop out in Nigeria

The current situation of primary pupil drop out in Nigeria is that children drop out of school principally to fulfil their financial needs. Parents do not have money to meet the school expenses of their children. Most of the time there is nothing to feed the family. The family, therefore, rely on the child for their daily sustenance. This situation is similar to what is obtained in South Africa as reported by Hurler and May (2002).

Secondly, some parents are not conscious of the training of their wards; they are only interested in what the child can bring to the family in terms of financial assistance. To concentrate on the affairs of the family, the child drops from school.

Despite increasing attention on part of the Nigerian government school dropout continue to be a serious problem. The growing literature on school dropout showed that school dropout, when compared to their graduated peers, are more often associated with unemployment, poverty, health problems, sustained dependence on public assistance, single parenthood in females [juveniles delinquency] Christenson, et al., 2000, Rumberger and Lamb, 2003; karfman , Alt and Chapman, 2004, Vizcain 2005)

Factors Responsible for the rise in primary pupils dropout

There are several factors responsible for the rise of dropout. Some of these factors include the following:

Lack of awareness on the part of the parents: Majority of parents especially those living in the rural areas have no basic understanding of the need to enrol their children to schools. Most of them believed that since western education comes from white men, it is evil. This is why anything western is looked upon with disdain and in contradiction with Islamic tenets. The very few that allow their children to go to school were threatened and compelled. However, a lot needed to be done to clear this misconception, one of which is intensive public enlightenment campaign embarked upon by the government and other relevant stakeholders, massive sensitization involving Islamic clergies to explain why parents should allow their wards to school. Following this development, things have started changing for the better. Parents now allow their children to attend a school which is a significant development.

Economic status is considered as the position of an individual on a socio-economic scale which measures such factors as education, income, types of occupations and place of residence (Mosby 2009). Similarly, Parents economic status is seen as the standing of a person or group in a community or society based on education, occupation, income which is often used as a benchmark for investigating health profiles (Segens, 2012).

Okwonkwo (1995) noted that by deprivation of basic social amenities at home posed a serious challenge in the child intellectual development which can lead to dropping out in search of these amenities. Yoau (2000) identifies parent's educational background and student's cognitive ability as significant predictors of children educational attainment

The various studies mentioned above points to the fact that the provision of social amenities by the parents helps significantly in the child's intellectual development and retaining the child in school. Similarly, there is a relationship between parental educational background and student's academic attainment. An educated parent knows the value of education and can do whatever it takes to ensure that their child is educated.

School fees not affordable: The current economic recession has manifested itself in the various dimension of human endeavour. A low-income earner could not adequately cater for the needs of his household. The stress of maintaining a family on a low income or something entirely inadequate affects child education (Salawu 2002).

It is important to note that the ability of the parent to shoulder the needs of their children play an important role in a child's educational development (Aliero 2017). The ability to cater to the child needs to prevent him/her from dropping out of school. Similarly, Wasagu (2002) noted that poverty and access to education cannot be separated. He observed that in Nigeria, where the large portion of the population fall below the poverty line and the rise in the population of the core poor have created conditions in which many Nigerian families could not afford to send their children to school. When the economy is strong, low-income earners will be able to take care of their family adequately. This means the child schooling needs will be well catered for blocking any available chances of dropping out. However, the effects of weak economy transcend to the low-income earner, making it difficult for him to cater for the schooling needs of his child which may cause drop out.

Meagre budgetary allocation: Budgetary provision allocated to education is very meagre. The allocation cannot cater for the mandatory monthly salaries of teachers, apart from instructional materials and other provisions for the welfare of the teachers. No adequate funds for the training and re-training of teachers. This development implies that education of primary school pupil is seriously affected. This is because no adequate chairs and tables, no instructional materials and even extracurricular activities to attract the child's attention to school.

Lack of accessibility to allocated funds: To utilize allocated funds constitutes a major setback in the educational development of the child. After the necessary budgetary allocation, it takes a very long time before the actual budget is passed into law. It is not the allocation of the funds that matters, but the accessibility of the funds which most of the time makes project implementation impossible. It is therefore pertinent to note that to be able to implement the outlined project, there must be easy accessibility to the allocated funds.

Infrastructure: Infrastructure is considered as a basic requirement for the development of any society. Human resource can be facilitated through education.

Education should be able to help an individual to possess skills, attitudes and values, that will enable them to live a useful life and contribute to the development of the society. Without the development of these skills, values and positive attitudes, an individual cannot be effectively developed.

Government concentrate on physical infrastructures at the detriment of human resource development. After all, the importance of human resource development to national development cannot be overemphasized. A situation where people depend on the government for everything is not ideal for the progress of the nation. School leavers and graduate must learn how to use their skills to create private businesses. A graduate of mechanical engineering should be able to establish a workshop. A graduate of woodwork and carpentry should have a workshop to make upholsteries and make legitimate money out of it. This can only be possible when they are employed hence the need for human resource development. Self-employment is necessary because people will not depend on the government for a job; one will manage his/her income, he decides whether to invest or save and no one dictates to him/her. He is also an employer of labour because he cannot work alone. This can greatly help to reduce drop out.

Parental investment: Parental investment can most of the time affects the continuity of children education or otherwise. However, where the parents came from low socioeconomic status, they invest in the education of the boys hoping that the boys will take care of them in the future when they grow older. Leving and Zhang (2008). Since the investment in girls education is not catered for, girls tend to leave school earlier than boys.

Schooling expenses: Schooling expenses constitute an important factor for early drop out of students from schools. Researches indicate that parents are very unwilling to pay for the school fees of their wards. For example, Hunter and May (2002) noted that school fees were the significant reason for dropout rate before secondary school graduation in South Africa. Similarly, Brown and Park (2002) observed that in rural China, parents' incapacity to settle school fees constitutes a major setback for school dropout in elementary school.

Absenteeism: Various Studies indicates that irregular attendance is a major factor for school dropout. it can impact negatively for early dropout from school. For example absent of extracurricular activities affects children regular attendance. The availability of this facility impacts positively on children attending schools. What is normally obtainable in most developing countries especially in the rural areas is that these facilities were either non-available or minimally provided. Sometimes, the cultural beliefs of the parents serve as a predicament in preventing children to participate in extracurricular activities which in turn makes learning dull and boring.

Teachers attitudes to students: Teachers behaviour and the teaching strategies have a significant impact on sustaining children to attend schools. Teachers are expected to be friendly, impartial, motivators and close associates to students. He should master his subject matter, command respect, approachable. He should not exploit students or seek for any favour from them. Students found their classes boring being absence from school for a very long time as a result of teachers attitudinal behaviour. He should exhibit absolute justice and fair play to all.

School Distance: This is an important determinant for school dropout among students. When school is far from home and there is no effective transportation system, a parent may be afraid of sending their children to school. Children are more likely to attend a school that is closer home than the one that is far. Ainsworth et al (2005) noted that closeness to school had a positive motivating impact, especially on girls.

Early marriage: This is one of the most important cultural factors leading to school dropout especially in the rural areas. This is because parent regards girls education as of no value when they get married Holcamp (2009). When girls reach the age of puberty, parents preferred them to be married rather than continuing with schooling. This has helped in the increase in dropout rate among students.

Early Pregnancy: Teenage pregnancy is also one of the significant factors of school dropout among girls. This is mostly found in rural areas. Mixed schooling and free interactions among sexes have greatly contributed to this development. Similarly, exposure to blue films, pornographic films, sexual harassment and social media have all contributed to this anomaly. This is why it is generally noted that the major reason for girls to drop out of school is early pregnancy.

Cultural factors: Many traditional values, cultural norms and beliefs tend to have conflicting roles in the educational development of students most especially in the developing world. Abena (2008) observed that parents in rural areas are more concerned with the role of girls as mothers, preparation of family menus and other domestic duties. Thus, to them, continuity of schooling more especially by girls is not necessary.

Street hawking: This is a prominent feature among families of low socioeconomic status in the country. At the age of 6, a child is expected to contribute to the economic development of the family by hawking commodities especially of low economic value example, pure water, groundnut, cake and other agricultural goods of the season. Some are used as a shop attendant or commercial bus commuters. All these activities prevent children from attending schools regularly which may eventually result in dropout. The reason for all these was that, for girls, they are expected to contribute to the revenue generation venture of the family to realize money for the purchase of household items during the marriage. For boys, they are expected to raise money for the payment of school fees, parent-teacher association, school uniform and other related levies. Sometimes children hawk to raise money to feed the family. The accumulation of all these trends creates a vacuum in school attendance which will lead to low-level achievement and consequently results in dropout.

According to the society for the protection of the right of the child (SPARC) Islamabad a local (NGO) advocating for the right of the child 35228 high school pupils in Pakistan drop out of the education system each year due to corporal punishment. In South Asian Countries, Pakistan ranked on top of the list whereby 10% of population terminating their 12 years of school before graduation.

Implications for National Development

It is a fact that there was a relatively large inflow of oil revenue since the mid-'70s which had translated into comparable advancement and development in almost all sectors of our economy. Rather than Nigerians to have comfort, pleasure and satisfaction; bad leadership, greediness, nepotism, bribery and corruption have plunged this country into a high rate of unemployment, poverty, unreliable power supplies and other social predicaments.

These problems could best be described as constraints and could be directly responsible for non-realization of the national developmental objectives. These constraints do not exist in isolation, their continued existence makes them accumulate and become difficult to control.

Good national development is that which is well-coordinated by the government including all sectors of the nation (social, cultural, political, economic and educational). The nation resources both (human and capital) are well allocated to these sectors based on the need of the time for national development. This can help produce adequate manpower to drive the economy. Citizens need to be educated and empowered with skills and knowledge to be employed. Absence of trained and sufficient manpower to run the economy has implications for national development. Some of these implications include;

Absence of trained manpower to drive the economy: The first implication of pupils dropping out of school is on the economy. People that are supposed to be trained to drive the economy are not in school. The absence of this training indicates a shortage of manpower that will move the economy. Since there is nothing to drive the economy, it means that there is no development. Development is a process involving the reorganization of the entire economic and social system. Development should lead to an improvement in income and output (products). The presence of trained manpower could lead to radical institutional changes, social structures, as well as reducing the gap between the rich and the poor and the reduction of absolute poverty.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will be seriously affected: Gross domestic product is the total values of goods and services produced within a country borders during a fixed period. GR stands for generated revenue Gross domestic product added to internally and externally generated revenue gives the national income (N.I) Since the potential drivers of the economy are out of school, it will harm the economy which will translate into an absence of infrastructure, lack of institutional changes which will lead to high rate of poverty and unemployment.

Unemployment: In a nation, all sectors of the economy either in industry, social services, business that are both private and public requires personnel who possess a variety of skills and abilities to be able to fit into the productive sector of the economy. These skills and competencies do not just come from heaven but are anchored through training. The skilled and trained manpower are the drivers of the economy. They create employment. It helps to develop manpower and national income, and active participation of the economy is ensured.

Citizens of a nation possessed different talents: These talented individuals should use their area of expertise to develop the nation. The government on its parts must work towards assisting these talented individuals

Crime rate will be increased: The country has witnessed unemployment in the previous and present years. The problem has continued to affect the youth in the labour market since the economic fortunes have changed for the worse. Many of the people that are out of school are jobless and go about roaming the streets (since they are out of school). Many have engaged in the business of armed robbery, drug trafficking and other social vices in the society.

According to the World conference of education report in 2011, it was projected that all children must have access to complete quality education by the year 2015. It is the fundamental right of children to get qualitative and functional education.

Efforts by Government in Addressing the Problem of Dropout in Primary Schools.

The federal government of Nigeria established the NSIP in 2016 to address the problems of out of school children, poverty and hunger across the country.

The program under the NSIP (National social insurance program) concentrates in providing a, more equitable distribution of resources to the vulnerable population including children, youths and women since 2016. The program has helped more than 4 million beneficiaries through the nook and crannies of the country under a transparent process, supported by the ministry of budget and national planning [MBNP] and other reputable MDGs Millennium development goals and other similar goals.

The programs are as follows;

The N-power programme; the programme aims to assist the young Nigerians between the age of 18 to 35 to acquire and develop skills that will enable them to become change agents of their community and active players in the domestic and global markets of 30,000 Naira monthly.

The conditional cash transfer [CCT]; the program is directly targeted to those on the lowest poverty level improvement of their nations, lowering the rate that contribution and capital development through the provisions of cash benefits to different groups, the poor and vulnerable, the beneficiaries are tied to fulfilling soft and hard corresponding which will enable recipient improvement in their standard of living.

Government enterprise and empowerment programme [GEEP]; this is a micron lending programme aimed at finding loans between 10,000 to 100,000 at no monthly cost to the beneficiaries.

The target beneficiaries are traders, citizens, enterprising youths, farmers and women. The homegrown scheme feeding programme [HGSF]; this program aims to provide school feeding to young children and focused on increasing school enrolment, minimizing malnutrition [especially among the poor families and those not capable of eating a 3 meal a day. The programme will make community women to be employed as cooks and helping farmers to stimulate the economy.

The programme had already started in selected states of the Federation. The programme had brought succour to most parents in sending their children to school. Children are greatly motivated and encouraged to come to school. The fear of what to eat during breakfast has been silenced. Another thing is the quality of food served to children was very commendable. It has a well-balanced diet and useful in the development of body tissues.

Methodological Approaches to Understanding Dropout

Various methodologies and research approaches were used in studies relating to school dropout. Researches which touches on dropout were drawn from information on a wide range of approaches as follows:

Quantitative approach- These researches drawn from household surveys / large scale questionnaire.

Statistical and econometric approach

Interviews with school dropout to elicit information from students on school dropout. These approaches have their advantages and weaknesses. Studies which used structured interview and questionnaire to obtain information on causes or reason for dropping out from school can provide an overview of factors influencing dropout in a particular context. However, these and similar studies are less likely to see drop out as a series of interacting issues and events which vary according to social context, individual situation and expectation from the environment.

This study used a combination of these approaches to draw its information which helps in shaping the composition of this research.

Discussion

The problem of neglecting human resource development has led to other social predicaments. Many of the jobless out of school children go about roaming the street; others have turned into armed robbery and drug traffickers. What then are the solutions? First is the restructuring of educational opportunities. This will greatly help to reduce the rate of unemployment in the Country. The second option is adequate manpower planning. The whole problem of unemployment could be attributed to poor manpower planning. In response to this issue, the Federal government has articulated a series of programmes for unemployed youths with loans to establish a trade or other simple jobs to depend on. Another option is for the government to make teeming unemployed youths employed and sufficient members of society.

In a bid to make its citizens employed, the introduction of vocational subjects like introductory to technology and home economics are all geared towards making the graduate at any level to be employed. Similarly, the government has established Universities of technologies and agriculture to enable graduates to develop technical skills that will help them to establish on their own. Farms settlement schemes are available in some parts of the country which are made to be given to those that are trained in agricultural education to practice agriculture. They are provided with housing and some substantial acres allocated to them to practice.

It is important to note that substandard primary education system and deficiency in training of teaching staff are some of the major causes of dropout among students. It is evident today that our primary school lack basic learning facilities. Currently, some primary school does not have adequate chairs, tables, chalkboard etc. Some have their roof blown up, doors and windows burgled. Parents are responsible for the purchase of reading and writing materials. The above-mentioned trend makes the school not enjoyable and left the child with no other options than to drop out.

Similarly, training of teaching staff is very deficient. Today, we have very few teachers training colleges which are responsible for the professional training of teachers at a lower level. Most teachers lack basic professional training that qualifies them to teach. The teacher has no methodology to create good learning relationship with his pupils. Pupils thus find the class boring, making them stay away from school for a long time resulting in dropout.

The attitude of teachers to students is an important factor which deserves consideration. Teachers should know that they are nation builders. They build the character of the citizen who constitutes the workforce of the nation. They should exhibit justice and fair play in their dealings with students. Favouritism and nepotism should be completely shown away from in their interactions.

The harsh economic problems prevent parents from taking the responsibilities of their children education more especially those who are from lower socioeconomic status compared to those who are from higher status. Parents with lower socio-economic status faced a lot of difficulties in bearing the expenses of education of their children. Absence and Inadequate learning resources exist more especially in developing countries when compared to developed countries and this is because dropout rates are higher in the developing parts of the world.

Traditional and cultural motives also play a significant role in the high incidence of early dropout, especially for girls. On the one hand, human perceptions constituted by various factors such as education, socio-economic status, and environment play a prominent role. These predicaments constitute educational barrier especially in developing regions of the world.

Early marriages and pregnancy are important variables which should be given adequate considerations. The parent should be enlightened on the dangers of early pregnancy which mostly results from early marriage. A lot of health issues are reported arising from early pregnancy which invariably leads to drop out. Intensive sensitization should be provided to the parents at the grassroots in partnership with other private organizations to reverse the trend.

Teachers can use technology as a tool to motivate and maintain students' attention. Learning should be made student-centred this will allow a facilitative learning process. Think of a technology that can make students excited about coming.

School dropout threatens future economic growth and the development of a democratic nation. School graduates constitute the manpower of the nation. They drive the economy. Their availability or otherwise dictates the prosperity of the

nation. The absence of high, medium and low-level manpower may spell doom for the progress of the nation.

Similarly, school dropout may cause political contributions, excess in demand for school services, increased rate of crime which contribute to major social problems. The school graduates are the future political leaders of the country. They will assume leadership roles and occupy positions of authority. To be able to give meaningful contributions for national development there is need for them to complete schooling. Other school services could only be adequately occupied by school graduates which will help immensely in reducing the crime rate, one of the major social issues the country is battling to control.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper examined the factors responsible for the rise in primary pupils' dropout and its implication on national development. This paper argues that several factors are responsible for this development. It is an indisputable fact that the government is making a giant stride towards alleviating the problem. However, a lot needed to be done. The school feeding programme is just one of the many steps the government is using to salvage the situation. The government should as much as possible and as a matter of urgency provide all the necessary facilities required for effective teaching and learning to take place. A strong commitment needs to be demonstrated by the government to curb the menace. Parents, teachers, communities and relevant should make a significant contribution in ameliorating this anomaly.

Recommendations:

The paper has the following recommendations

Adequate budgetary allocation should be allocated to education in line with UNESCO minimum standard of 26%. In 2018, only 7% of the total budget was allocated to the education sector.

Functional education should be provided by the government. The type of education provided in our institution of learning should be functional and able to provide technical skills and knowledge to make students employed. This type of education can provide necessary skills capable of producing high and intermediate level manpower that will turn the economy around. Lack of these skills and initial capital makes students roam the street looking for jobs.

Members of the school community should provide an enjoyable school environment. The headteacher should find out from members of the school community what they will contribute to the school programmes either by participating in events or by giving donations.

When the school environment is enjoyable, the student will want to participate and stay in school all the time. Its meaningful relationship with adults and positive school environment are ways to motivate students to always want to be in school.

The members of the community should have a complete sense of belonging; the participation of children in school is a pride to all. Similarly, when children are out of school we all lose. Dropout rates impact on the entire community just as graduation rate increases students' support from other community.

Teachers should endeavour to inform students of the negative consequences of dropout as it affects their wellbeing. School graduates earn averagely based on their educational qualification. A school dropout has no educational qualification, which can only make him be placed on menial jobs.

The government should enact enabling laws to deal with the problems of early marriage and other cultural practices to prevent students from dropping out.

Non- governmental organizations (NGO'S) should organize motivational talks for students. Emphasis should be laid on the acquisition of technical skills. Former students should be invited to share their experiences with the students in school.

Suggestions for Further Research

There is a need for research in the area of students drop out and how it affects the economic conditions of a country.

There is a need for research will be healthy for policymakers to control dropout in educational institutions

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