

AN ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL DROPOUT: PROPOSALS FOR CURBING IT

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Abstract

The frequency of school dropout in educational institutions especially in the secondary schools impinges on the integrity of the system, it should be recalled that every country invests in its youths because they are the country's future human resources, out of which will emerge leaders in politics, academics, technology and business of various dimensions. This paper attempted to identify the causes and effects of secondary school dropout. Proposals were proffered on how to curb the menace

Introduction

The Nigerian secondary school students are at present, in a state of serious crisis, painful stress and lack, an understanding of the value for education. Value occupies a central position in all human endeavours, consistently guiding human efforts along the lines of what is considered important and worthwhile (Obasi, 1987). The menace of dropout in secondary schools is hydra-headed and takes various forms, which has affected the lives of our youngsters in the society. This has over the years created a great concern to all who are concerned with the administration and management of secondary schools.

It has been observed by Ihebereme (2006), that school dropout has become the headache of any Nigerian who still cherishes the central role of education in nation building, particularly its intellectual excellence in all spheres of sustainable development, in fact, the emerging problem of school dropout has posed a worrisome outbreak of social malaise to the entire Nigerian populace Chijioko (2006:82), reported that, "the increase rate of dropout in secondary education system is a clear indication of failure in academic standard and high degree of indiscipline behaviour by teachers and students". Indeed, the quest for wealth appears to be the ultimate goal of our today's youth. The get rich quick syndrome, which is prevalent among students, no doubt, leaves much to bear on the character and value of education they receive. In effect, some students tend to withdraw from school without completion of their secondary education (Iwundu, 2005).

The Concept: Dropout

The concept dropout has continued to remain elusive. Experts and writers still hold divergent views of the concept. For example, Nduka (2005:102) asserts that "a dropout is, any loss of registration and failure to complete a programme of education". This implies that the inability of a student to complete a circle of academic pursuit constitutes dropout and this is, waste to the students endeavour and sustainable development in the society. In consonance, Ihebereme (2006:206). stated that, "any student leaving the college (other than death) without a certificate is a dropout". However, these definitions have been variously criticized as they ignore to encompass repeaters, transfers and stop out students who may not necessarily graduate with their mates but they have not left the school system.

Ejimadu (2006), maintained that, dropout means total withdrawal of a student from formal schooling either with positively or negatively keyed reason. By implication, students who were expelled from school and those on suspension, who out of shame, arrogance or frustration have decided to quit schooling, are all categorized as dropout (Ejimadu, 2006).

The ailment of dropout therefore, is destructive and undeserving element to programme success.

Causes of Secondary School Dropout

Many reasons have been adduced that predispose and lure students into the ugly practice in our present day secondary schools. They include:

1. Family Attitude to Education

Education the world over has been known to be an enduring investment. It takes time to mature before yielding fruits.

Unfortunately, many families especially the poor and the uneducated households are impatient with the long-term programme of educating their child. Usually, they bring in, the negative attitude to bear on education. For example, these parents equate the earning capacity of a road side mechanic who

has built a house, married a wife with a student who has spent six years in the secondary school, without even, the hope of gaining employment. Calculating this quick earning over few months apprenticeship drowns the aspiration of parents. Consequently, some of their children withdraw from school because of lack of continued support and incentive from their parents (Ihebereme, 2006).

2. Non - Provision of School Materials

Most families cannot comfortably provide the needs of their children for schooling, for instance, students' needs, such as school fees, books uniform etc are very essential. If parents fail to provide these school needs, their children will always be sent away from school. It will subsequently, affect their performance and lead to school dropout. Thus, once, a student drops out of school, he will be driven to the arms of deviancy (Idem, 1989).

J. The Labour Market

The Nigerian labour market seem to be saturated, if not, why do we still experience unemployment problem among school leavers? (Udoka, 2005:60). This situation, to a large extent, affects the confidence most parents have in educating their children. Udoka (2005), has observed that, since parents are not too sure that their children would gain employment after receiving secondary school education, interested students in schools are demotivated. This increases the rate of dropout because parents see the next alternative to schooling more profitable, materially. In contribution, Mbah (2004:85), laments that, "the present condition of the educated in Nigeria is a lamentable one, yet the prospects for the future youths has been engulfed by material possession".

The above claim has accounted to no less measure for the increasing number of school dropout.

4. Family Climate

Family climate has great influence in the direction and development of interests, abilities, aptitudes and values of children. Nowadays, most Nigerian homes are characterized by a number of changes. Many parents work from morning till onset, in a bid to make ends meet. It is a common scenario, in the Nigerian homes, to see children, left alone at full liberty to watch films that have negative influence or disastrous consequences because their parents pay little or no attention at all to their engagements after school. It is obvious that, in most of these films, wealth is adorned and recognized, as the only index for success in the society, the craze for material acquisition, eventually confirm the high rate of dropout noticed in secondary schools (Nweke, 1990).

5. The Teachers' Attitude

The failure of the teacher to assume role model to students in whatever thing they do in the school and even outside the school, compel students to lose sight of righteous deeds and probably go with wrong deeds. Although, it is common with some teachers to go to school late, dress shabbily yet, some teachers flare up with annoyance at the slightest mistake of students' lateness to school. After all, one of the unique qualities of a good teacher is possession of character worthy of emulation. Some students therefore, shun schooling as a result of the repelling behaviour of their teachers, coupled with moral ethical values.

6. Principals' Leadership Role

The leadership style of the Principal contribute to students dropout in secondary schools, if there is no cordial relationship between the principal and the students, if students are not involved in decision that affect them, if rules and regulations are too strict, if school offenders are not duly punished, etc. Students may be low-spirited to continue schooling hence, fostering dropout (Okeke, 1984).

The Effect of Secondary School Dropout

The effect of secondary school dropout is noticed both in the individual, the principal and the teachers, and the society at large. They are highlighted as following:

a) The Student

A student may become frustrated for the rest of his life, in the process of battling with the inescapable condition of waywardness and hopelessness. In effect, he may resort to drinking alcohol and abusing drugs. Invariably, alcoholism and drug-addiction may affect the student in many ways e.g. it could

lead to ill-health like cancer of the lungs, mouth thrush, liver complication, kidney failure, mental derailment and other serious diseases.

In addition, the student may be involved in indecent sexual acts such as prostitution, homosexual, lesbianism, etc. Such ugly practice may end the individual to become an HIV/AIDS victim or contact other venereal diseases. It is not a hidden fact the HIV/AIDS is on the increase in Nigeria today, 'the most unfortunate thing is that, most of the victims are adolescents who constitute the largest population in secondary schools. Revealing the alarming increase rate of HIV/AIDS, Achi (2004), opines that, in 1999 the percentage of infected persons stood at 5.4 million. Similarly, Ononiwu (2003) asserts that by 2001, over three million Nigerian students were living with HIV/AIDS and projected that by the year 2006, over four million youths between 15-45 years would die of HIV/AIDS.'

h) The Principals and the Teachers

The effect of dropout is also felt in the school by the principals and the teachers. Commenting on this issue, Ogini (2005), states that, teachers no longer feel safe in their homes, as they cannot predict their fate in the hands of those school dropouts. This is so, because teachers are afraid of being attacked by those of them that abuse drugs of various kinds. Some of the school dropout, who are being used, as political thugs may seize the opportunity to threaten the teachers' life in a bid to retaliate for their misfortune.

The principals also face a lot of set back when classrooms, dormitories, administrative blocks, vehicles etc are vandalized by dropouts. Sometimes, they may set the principal's office and even staff-room ablaze. The principal may lose vital documents to tire disaster. Sometimes, the life of the principal may be threatened by the school dropout through occult means.

c) The Parents

The parents at home are not safe either. Many parents today, have developed the dreaded sickness of hypertension simply, because they have victims of dropout in their houses. When the parents remember that they have wasted a lot of money and resources on irresponsible children who later become dropout, they feel like ending their life to avoid shame. Some parents have been stigmatized and demoted in their various associations, because of the news of harbouring school dropout in their homes. Other terrible effects of dropout on parents are marital instability, separation and divorce (Ihebereme, 2005).

d) The Society

The society will be polluted with dropout because their dubious activities will retard progress and development. Most dropouts invade the society and terrorize them as armed-robbers, fraudsters, drug-addicts, prostitutes, ritualists, human kidnappers, etc. The society would not produce enough manpower who are supposed to handle different sectors of the economy in future, Ihebereme (2005:101), argued that, "school dropout has seriously damaged the image of our country, Nigeria". She further stated that, in some parts of the world, Nigerians are treated with suspicion and distrust, because the moment they see a Nigerian, they feel they have seen corruption and insincerity.

Proposals for Curbing Secondary School Dropout

In the face of the foregoing menace of school dropout in secondary schools in Nigeria, the following proposals for curbing it become compelling. They are:

- (1) School administrators should ensure that the serving counsellors already in the schools, are actually rendering counselling service to the students.
- (2) The government should put across in the television, radio, newspaper and other media houses the punishment meted out for dropouts. Such punishment, by legal implication, must not entertain any interruption from any source.
- (3) The government should, on regular basis, pay workers their salaries, as and when due. so that working parents will conveniently provide their children's school materials whenever they need them.
- (4) Principals must maintain a good administrative climate devoid of threat or intimidating or autocratic leadership style, as this will enable students to feel free to come to school with prosperous view.
- (5) The government should make provision for employment, to the secondary school leavers whose parents can no longer cater for (their education at higher level.
- (6) Value education should be taught as a separate compulsory subject besides intensifying the implementation of the affective components of the entire school curriculum to instill the right character.

- (7) The government should establish an appropriate quarter where students can lodge their complain of any teacher who deviates from his role model expectation.
- (8) Secondary school curriculum has to be modified. A lot of teaching should be geared towards character formation, standard and moral conduct in order to reduce corrupt practices in the school premises, which may likely warrant student expulsion.
- (9) The government should recruit monitoring officers whose duty would be to visit beer parlour, restaurants, hideouts, campus-joints so as to catch the drug-addicts and drunks.
- (10) Seminars on ethics of the teaching profession should be conducted for teachers from time to time to encourage them to slum negative behaviours.

Conclusion

Secondary education in general has been recognized world wide as an important level in the educational system. There is therefore, need for all and sundry to prevent any hindrance for the system, to evolve productivity. Consequently, if the menace of dropout is not checked, and put to an end, more havoc will be wrecked in the society. Herein lies, the imperativeness of adopting the proposals enumerated by the author in this paper.

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