

School Dropouts: Causes and Implications for National Development

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Abstract

Education affects the mind, character and physical structure of every learner because all activities such as cultural heritage of the society are transmitted to the learners for the development of their attitudes, abilities and attributes. Thus, it is an agent of change both for their development and that of the society. Children who left school before completing their school programme have caused a lot of serious damage and danger to the environment because they did not receive complete training through improved relevance, quality and efficient education from the formal school system. Thus, they could not exhibit literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills including the ethical, moral and civic values to be good citizens. They are categorized as half-baked graduates who do not have the ability to contribute to the development of the nation. Hence, they are harmful to themselves, the family and the nation. This paper is aimed at examining school dropouts as a menace to the society. The paper relied on related journals and empirical literature. The paper also discussed the causes, statistics of school dropouts in Nigeria, problems associated with school dropouts and guidelines for reduction of school dropouts. Recommendations were made among others that – every school should engage in active learning to occupy the learners. Effective communication should be between the teachers and learners so that they could be counseled and encouraged on the usefulness and realities of their careers and the correct usage of methods and instructional materials by the teachers for effective teaching.

Keywords: Dropouts, implications, reduction.

Introduction

Education is a tool that influences an individual to be useful, upright and productive for the development of the nation. Education has some vital indices for measuring and categorizing the development of any nation and also the eye – opener of an individual, acts as a tool for social, political, economic, cultural, scientific and technological development of any nation. (Adamu and Adole, (2015), Age & Adenuga 2021).

For this purpose, everyone should be educated to be useful for national development because complete education enhances the ability, creativity and skills of an individual to fit in properly into the society so as to avoid being a menace to the family and nation. School dropouts have been worldwide issues with negative impacts on both the individual and the society. The paper is focused

on causes, statistics of school dropouts in Nigeria, problems associated with school dropouts and guidelines for reduction of school dropouts for national development.

School Dropouts

A school dropout is any pupil or student who leaves school before completing the programme of studies. For this purpose, Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA), an affiliate to UBE was established and used in teaching out of school children before they are enrolled into the basic education. The Better Education Service Delivery for All operation project for Nigeria is sponsored and organized by World Bank to support the government's Universal Basic Education programme focused on children who are out-of school by giving them equal opportunity to education to improve literacy with an aim to respond to specific needs at the state and local levels. (World Bank, 2017).

The purpose and commitment of World Bank is also to transform and improve the educational standard in Africa and Nigeria in particular to retain the children in schools at the basic level with the intention of placing every child in the free education policy of the state. (Adeola & Akolam, 2019). Therefore, the State Universal Basic Education Board (RSUBEB) organized teachers' professional development programme where 1,500 teachers benefited from this training. This gave World Bank the credibility to fund the programme in the state and the first part of the money was released to fund the out-of-school programme of the state.

Meanwhile, the Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board (RSUBEB) proposed a scheme of work for Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) Programme 2020. The scheme is specifically for English Language (Literacy) and Mathematics (Numeracy) skills split into three terms so that the children can read and count before being enrolled into UBE schools within their communities. Though the classes are held eight times a month, twice a week for nine months with a total of twenty four periods, twenty is used for class work, one for revision and the remaining three (3) for examination. Furthermore, for the success of the programme, the facilitators are to bear in mind that since the pupils are in school for the first time, they should be innovative and flexible as they use the scheme of work for teaching.

BESDA programme started after years of research studies on children who have been out of school without having the opportunity to acquire basic literacy and numerical skills and are not able to count or read. The implementation agency is Universal Basic Education Commission and World Bank as the financial organization invested \$611.00 million into BESDA project in Nigeria to bring out-of-school children into the school (classroom) in order to develop literacy and support accountability for results in basic education, where the sectors are Education and Health. World Bank also collected data which are used to organize need-based state plans and to establish designed planning throughout the federal and state levels. In other words the collection of data helps to plan and harmonize projects all over the country and the procurement plan dated 28/11/2018 covering January 1, 2019 – June 20, 2019 with UBEC as the project implementation agency, having a cordial working relationship with all the relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the programme.

Members of House of Representatives applauded the BESDA and demanded that the federal government should ensure that there is proper implementation of BESDA across the 36 states and the federal capital territory of the nation. For the development of education in the state, the RSUBEB

inaugurated 1,400 learning centres for the commencement of the Better Education Service Delivery Programme in some communities in the state. This programme was initiated by the World Bank and launched in Port Harcourt in collaboration with Federal Ministry of Education, UBEC and the SUBEB to eliminate the challenges of out-of-school children in 17 states of the nation, gearing towards the provision of basic education to those children that are affected between the ages of 6 – 11 years in the state who do not have access to formal education. The programme enrolled 924,590 children from 10,193,918 that was the figure of out – of school children and for proper coordination; every child must be enrolled with a national identity number in order to know the progress of the child under BESDA project.

Similarly, 36,000 out of school children were brought back to school in 1,225 BESDA centres that have been built in the 23 Local Government Areas in Rivers State. The Director, Research Planning and Statistics of the State UBE Board ascertained that 1,225 facilitators were used in the programme, 14,400 Jolly phonics books were distributed to the children, including 40,000 free school uniforms as well as 40,000 free school sandals and 1,800 supplementary reading. (Akujobi, 2020) which were given to the participating local government areas in the state. All these became successful because of the collaborative support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the state.

Thus 36,015 pupils were enrolled into the BESDA programme in the state by Rivers State UBEB, Port Harcourt, 18,430 were girls while 17,585 were boys indicating that this figure gave a representation of 32% of the 110,654 children that were out-of-school in the state between the ages of 6 and 11 years. He, (The Director, Research Planning and Statistics of the State UBE Board) also said all hands must be on deck to ensure that those roaming the streets are brought back to school because they are the ones constituting environmental problems in the society. In this regard, workshops were held to circulate information about the usefulness of BESDA for every child to benefit from the programme. For the success of BESDA, RSUBEB drilled staff on BESDA social safeguard norms in order to arouse their interest with safety measures that are required in the implementation of BESDA programme in Rivers State. Kuni (2021) also opined that as at 2020, 22,782 were enrolled in Rivers State and added that the Minister of Education Adumu Adamu, disclosed that \$500million loan was taken from World Bank to empower the adolescent girls under the scheme namely Adolescent Girls Interactive for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE) for them to be useful in the society.

Meanwhile, Samphina (2021) carried out a research to examine school dropout and the management challenges in the implementation of UBE programme in Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna state, Nigeria. It was found out that there was no enough provision for teachers for effective implementation of UBE programme while the infrastructural facilities were inadequate and funding was not adequately provided for effective implementation of the programme. Mordi (2016) also investigated on impact of the Universal Basic Education Programme in Addressing Rural Secondary School Dropout in Walden University. It was to understand the perception of teachers of how the UBE programme impacted the drop out problem and what could be done to the UBE Programme for it to be more effective. It was therefore suggested and recommended that there should be better planning, implementation, monitoring and involvement of stakeholders for higher developments

describing the responsibilities and importance of stakeholders to reform the UBE programme in order to produce better impact reforms in Nigeria.

Causes of School Drop Out

The success of an educational system is characterized by the reduction of school dropout. This could be done by meeting the needs of the learners both at home and school as failure to do so may result to school dropouts. Multiple factors contribute to school dropout of both pupils and students which could be seen from the school, government, family, learner and the society. Andrew (2019) posited some causes stated below:

The school

When the population of the learners enrolled is higher compared to insufficient infrastructure; lack of sensitivity of the education authorities and teachers to the needs of the children; poor relationship between the teachers and learners and irregularity of the teachers in school creates an avenue for lack of interest in learning on the part of the learners. In addition, suspension of the learners from school, conflicts between work and school when the learner combines working and schooling result to school dropout.

However, Samphina (2021) viewed that some of the challenges facing the UBE leading to school dropout are shortage of qualified teachers, low learning achievement of the learners, wrong use of fund and insufficient instructional materials and lack of proper planning. Also, there are some personal factors which contribute to the dropout rate such as poor health, malnutrition and motivation, child labor and poverty, teachers' absenteeism and school location. Consequently, the rate of drop out in the rural areas is more than the children in the urban area because of the lack of infrastructure and public enlightenment.

The Government

The failure of the government to provide infrastructure and social amenities that can improve or increase the population of schools such as school bus, provision of hostel for students' accommodation, free uniform, school feeding and books to the school, results to school dropout. When the government does not see the need for public enlightenment programme both in schools and the society so as to encourage and enlighten the communities, parents and learners about the importance of basic education, there will be no interest in school work leading to school dropout.

The family

Malfunctioning of the family such as broken homes, single parenthood, engaging the children as house helps, bereavement, unemployment, lack of sponsorship, lack of parental care and guidance in studies are issues that influence school dropout from the home or family. Others are low social-economic status of the family, lack of family support which could be as a result of illiterate parents or low educational status of parents where it becomes difficult to encourage or give counsel to the children to be properly educated.

Again, when girls spend more time on domestic work such as cooking, caring for their sibling, farming and trading, it encourages dropping out from school because more time is spent on the domestic work thereby creating more interest on the house chores than the school. Child labor increases (over use of the children in and outside the home) by parents or guardian who cannot afford to send the children to school for household work, hawking goods for sale and doing menial jobs.

The Learner

Distance of schools from the house, constant absenteeism from school, poor academic performance in school and lack of interest in academics influences school dropout. Other reasons of dropping out of school could be illness which reduces motivation to stay in school and boredom in some lessons. School dropout occurs more with day students than boarders and mixed school than single sex schools because they are opportune to mix up with different people including their peer group which influence their attitudes, value and behaviors for good or bad. Some young people (boys) dropout of school to make money through illegal means such as oil bunkering while some girls get involved in early marriage resulting to early pregnancy. In addition, some boys drop out of school to engage themselves in business and trade because at graduation, they may not find a job that suits their qualification.

The Society

Economic reasons such as trading, menial jobs, lack of food, agriculture, and school material like books, uniforms, pens and pencils are also causes of school dropout. Furthermore, poor cooperation from the community in the provision of educational material can result to school dropouts and Boko Haram crisis where children from such areas are afraid to go to school in order not to be kidnapped or rapped. Thus, causes of school dropout ranges from poor parental background, indiscipline, peer group influence, socio – economic factors like industrial actions and being an illegitimate child, the children do not have full access to their needs from the parents. Meanwhile, Saceed, Dickson and Asare (2016), ascertain that death and sicknesses of parents, child labour, poverty, corporal punishment and distance to school are some causes of school dropout.

Statistics of School Drop Outs in Nigeria

Yusuf (2021) gave a special report through Premium Times on out of school children in some states in Nigeria. In summary, he said, with the total of 10.2 million out of school children these states recorded 5.2 million which was the data published in 2018 and 2020 as the basic education statistics from the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on women and men respectively. Although the figure had dropped to 6.9 million, it was recorded that 40.8 million school age children between the ages of 6 and 11 years did not attend primary school.

The table below shows the states among 40.8 million school aged children between ages 6-11 who did not attend primary school in the highest ranking order.

<i>S/N</i>	<i>STATES</i>	<i>NUMBER OF SCHOOL DROPOUT</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>	<i>SCHOOL AGED (6-11)</i>
1	KANO	989,234		
2	AKWA- IBOM	581, 800		
3	KATSINA	536,122		
4	KADUNA	524,670		
5	TARABA	499,923	42%	
6	SOKOTO	436,570	37%	1,170,040
		427,230	43%	983,469
7	YOBE	422,214	41%	
8	ZAMFARA	354,373		
9	BAUCHI	275,890	17%	
10	IMO	254,654	19%	
11	LAGOS	52,972	14%	
12	FCT ABUJA	50,945	17%	
13	EKITI			

Source: Yusuf, A. (2021). Special Report: Kano, Akwa Ibom, Eight other states housed most of Nigeria's Out of School Children. Premiumtimesng.com.

Among other states, Sokoto recorded 1,170,040 as school age children while Yobe had 983,469 school age children. (Yusuf, 2021).

States that had the lowest number of school dropout according to the ranking order

<i>S/ N</i>	<i>STATES</i>	<i>NUMBER OF CHILDREN NOT IN SCHOOL</i>
1	CROSS RIVER	97,919
2	ABIA	91,548
3	KWARA	84,247
4	ENUGU	82,051
5	BAYELSA	53,079
6	FCT	52,972
7	EKITI	50,945

Source: Yusuf, A. (2021). Special Report: Kano, Akwa Ibom, Eight other states housed most of Nigeria's Out of School Children. Premiumtimesng.com.

The highest number of male children that are out of school in five states

S/N	STATES	NUMBER OF MALE CHILDREN THAT ARE OUT OF SCHOOL
1	KANO	748,468
2	YOBE	334,556
3	ONDO	309,000
4	PLATEAU	297,342
5	AKWA – IBOM	283,639

Source: Yusuf, A. (2021). Special Report: Kano, Akwa Ibom, Eight other states housed most of Nigeria's Out of School Children. Premiumtimesng.com.

The largest out of school female children in five states in 2018

S/n	States	Number of female children that are out of school
1	Akwa – ibom	289,161
2	Sokoto	270,586
3	Katsina	276,132
4	Niger	257,165
5	Taraba	246,123

Source: Yusuf, A. (2021). Special Report: Kano, Akwa Ibom, Eight other states housed most of Nigeria's Out of School Children. Premiumtimesng.com.

For the gender proportion and population more boys were recorded out of school than the girls. In 2018, according to Yusuf (2021), though not stated in the table above, Rivers State was one of the five states that had the highest percentage of school age children and out of the oil-rich states of 554,927 school age, 34% (188,590) have not been in school. Also, by the statistics, 13 states had more of out of school children out of 36 states. Thus, the tables above emphasized the number of school drop outs in some states of Nigeria.

Furthermore, Mojeed (2022) ascertained through UNESCO that Nigeria has about 20 million out of school children. He indicated that by the report of UNESCO, 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 worldwide are out of school. In addition, the figures in Nigeria have fallen between 10.5 million and 15 million for some years but are worse due to the insecurity of the nation.

Problems Associated with School Drop Out

The important need in education is ensuring that students stay in school until they complete their education as dropping out becomes a serious problem, which denies them their usefulness and contribution to the society (Andrew, Peter & Philip, 2018). Thus, the school dropout rate is an international and global issue which has negative impacts on both the individual and the society.

The population of a school reduces when there is inadequate provision of both academic and nonacademic competent staff, lack of school facilities for the staff and learners to use such as classroom desks, libraries, text books, writing materials, laboratories, complete buildings and toilets in good condition and when some children learn in water log environment which is not healthy for them (Andrew, 2019). Again, due to the poor financial state of parents, their children are withdrawn from school there by increasing the numbers of children roaming on the streets where they get involve in delinquent behaviors (Andrew, 2019).

In addition, irregular feeding creates poor health or malnutrition, school location (distance of the home from the school), irregular training of teachers with poor motivation has led to high rate of illiteracy in the society which reduces national development and political consciousness. The children become deformed of the skills and competencies such as attitude, values and knowledge which they would have acquired in school that are required in the society. These children cannot live successfully during adulthood because they do not contribute meaningfully to the society for national development. Record shows that some of these children get involve in crime such as arm robbery, kidnapping and rape. Meanwhile, in Kampala, Uganda, the National Planning Authorities (NPA) expressed that over 30% (4.5 million) out of the 15 million learners who were in school before the covid-19 pandemic may not return to school because families are affected as a result of the pandemic which can result to child labour, teenage pregnancy, poverty and sexual exploitation (The Independence, 2021).

Implications of school drop outs on the society

This has to do with the result of a decision that have been taken or the involvement of somebody into something as it relates to crime. This paper is specifically to expose the effect of school dropouts in the nation. Andrew (2019) viewed some social problems in the community as a result of school dropouts. He said it is sad to see that not all children who begin their primary, secondary and higher institution complete them due to one reason or the other. Therefore, it reduces the skilled work force which can affect the economic, political and social structure of the nation while the students get involved in criminal acts. Also, children between the ages of 15 and 18 years roam the streets engaging in drug abuse, drunkenness, robbery, smoking, associating with peers or relations who are dropouts, having peers with low educational background and other social vices that are detrimental to their lives.

The decision of young people leaving the school does not only result to these social vices but reduces the economic and political fortunes of the nation because of the low level of education. Half-baked graduates who assume leadership positions cannot lead effectively as they may not be competent to take decisions for the good of the people. As a matter of fact, it results to embezzlements, self-centeredness, increases crime and poverty leading to unemployment and death. School dropouts also results to health issues, prostitution and street begging.

When students drop out of school, it becomes difficult for them to earn substantial salaries with healthful lives and open doors for opportunities in life because education determines the future employment and prospects of youth. Thus, it is of importance for young people to begin and end their education successful.

The Role of Teachers, Parents and School Administrators in the Reduction of School Drop Out (Guidelines to reduce school dropouts)

Learners can be prevented from dropping out of school through the following guide lines which could be done by parents, teachers, school administrators and learners-(Natasa and Ksenija (2017), Andrew, Peter and Philip, (2018), Andrew (2019) & Samphina, (2021):

- a. Learners are encouraged to always stay in touch with the school, constantly doing their assignments and application of what is taught.
- b. Learners should not be pressured to do more than what is expected because they may lose focus and get distracted.
- c. Both the parents and teachers should be involved in all that they do in order to support the good they do and counsel them to put away the wrong.
- d. Evening lesson and extra curriculum activities such as sports, school debate and quiz should be done regularly in the schools with workshops, seminars and lectures to improve the health status of the students and pupils (Natasa & Ksenija, 2017). They give the learners an extended time for their studies, opportunity to exhibit their hobbies and create areas of interest in career. Other activities include field trips to places like radio stations, zoo and areas of interest.
- e. Career and Technical Education (CTE) can be studied in school because it can establish the learners in skills for them to be productive and skilled citizen. With these skills they can be excited when entering adulthood with wisdom to excel for their future.

Similarly, Emechebe and Okwai (2020) posited some factors that reduce school dropouts such as the physical, social and academic condition of the school. This includes the contribution of school administrators through the government. It refers to the cleanliness and safety of the physical facilities such as the buildings and its location, equipment, playground and lightening. They enable the learners to learn comfortably.

The social environment includes adequate provision of these school facilities that encourage the interaction between the teachers and learners, learners and learners, teachers and teachers, teachers and school management for effective teaching and learning to take place. Thus, it means how the school environment influences or supports these interactions.

The academic environment is the teaching and learning processes in the classroom where the teacher and learner interact, the learner interacting with the instructional aids, the usage and delivery of these materials by the teachers to the learners. This supporting atmosphere creates an avenue for higher levels of interest in school work because teachers have the willingness to teach while the learners are eager to learn. Furthermore, Provision of social amenities that can improve or increase the population of schools are school bus, hostel for students' accommodation, free uniform, school feeding and books. There should also be quality curriculum for staff to use in teaching and public enlightenment programme both in schools and the society by the government to encourage and enlighten the communities. Training and recruiting more teachers for vocational and technical subjects at the basic education level is necessary so that the learners can be self-employed, prevailing over joblessness but giving rise to profitable development in the nation.

National Development

Since development is the procedure that leads to growth, increase and positive change, the capability of any nation to lift the standard of living of the people by providing the needed requirements such as good road, clean water, health services, housing, increase in income and education results to national development. Therefore, everyone should be educated for the acquisition of skills so that the resources of the country must be properly utilized for the development of the nation. Furthermore, some areas that can be developed are:

(a) The human capital where the people are established in education and technical skills for self-reliance. (b) Infrastructure development such as the provision of means of transport, electricity, building of schools, roads and markets by the government. etc. It increases the social and economic aspect of the country. (c) Creating job opportunity for people to have income earning assets help to raise the standard of living. Thus, all these contribute to the political, social and economic development of the nation when there is reduction of school dropouts.

Conclusion

When children drop out of school, it becomes difficult for them to earn considerable salaries with wholesome lives and open door of prospects in life because education determines the future employment of youths. Therefore, it is very important for young people to end their education effectively since school dropout has been a danger in the society as it results to high rate of illiteracy and cultism which reduces national development. These children are deformed of the skills and competencies such as attitude, values, skills and knowledge that are required in the society and by this; they are not informed, which constitute a serious menace (problem) in the society. Hence, children should be given complete education so that they can contribute to the development of the nation.

Recommendations

- a. If every child begins at the early childhood, it will be difficult for that child to drop out of school, therefore there should be provision of early childhood education with early 21st century skills both at home and school to encourage the learner to have zeal and interest for learning from early childhood.
- b. Educational Technology is a tool that engages students making teaching and learning easier which encourages wise and deeper thinking and more complex reasoning. Therefore, the learners should be engaged with technology, assignments, quizzes and project work for effective learning.
- c. Families should be united together by keeping their children in school as they provide the basic requirements to reduced school dropout.
- d. Everyone in the community must embrace the quality of education in that community where all agencies such as school, home, place of worship like church and mosques, media, museums,

- businesses and libraries work together to establish a quality and sound education. Thus, these agencies should support education for the improvement of individual and family awareness.
- e. Communities should be involved in the provision of infrastructure and to discipline the children to be interested in academics.
 - f. Effective communication should be done between the teachers and the learners counseling and encouraging them about the usefulness and realities of their careers, the correct usage of instructional materials and methods for them to be useful to themselves, their families and the nation.
 - g. Every school should engage in active learning to occupy the learners.

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