

Economic Implications of School Dropouts in Nigeria

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Abstract

The menace of school dropouts is becoming a global issue that needs to be kept in check so as to improve on educational attainment. This work centred on school dropouts and implications on the economy. The area of study was the entire Cross River State of Nigeria where twelve schools were randomly sampled, four each from the three senatorial zones. Both secondary and primary data were employed for the research, the secondary data was obtained from the various school admission registers and entry schedules while the primary data was generated through the use of the questionnaire. The results show a progressive increase in the total number of dropouts especially in the Girls secondary school. Schools located in the border town and in the community ravaged by inter-tribal war also experienced surges in the number of dropouts. It was recommended among other things that all stakeholders involved in the education industry must play their role. Parents who are the first stakeholders in this industry as well as the first teacher and role models to the children should show more concern in their children/ward's interest in education and finance their education.

Keywords: Dropouts, Economy, Students, Education

Introduction

Education is a key to developing the economic, social, scientific and political institutions of any nation, therefore access to education should be at the centre of the development agenda of most developing countries. Each year, a significant number of Nigerian students terminate their studies without sitting for the examination for which they had been preparing or enrolled for (Oyinloye 2015). These are the dropouts, students who fail to complete a school or secondary school course. But despite the very abundant evidence on the benefits of economic and social value of educational attainment, many students still drop out of school for one reason or the other.

In a competitive economy; requirements of knowledge which includes human capital, skills, innovation and technology cannot be over emphasized. Formal education is a key to success because people with high degrees of literacy, numeracy skills, ability to analyse and adapt have more prospects of getting employment and succeed professionally. This is why Arowolo, Arowolo & Adaja, (2016) emphasized that education is the foundation of a nation's economic well-being and the prerequisite to sustaining the quality of life, so dropping out of school therefore should not be encouraged because it simply does not pay. This work centers on secondary school dropouts in Nigeria with specific interest on the remote causes and the economic

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implications. It should be noted that it takes six years (all other things being equal) to round up secondary school education in Nigeria resulting to awards of certificates either from West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO), the two bodies officially recognized to conduct examinations for secondary school leavers. Despite the fact that WAEC and NECO certificates may not necessarily be enough to gain meaningful employment in diverse areas of the economy, it is a prerequisite for admissions into tertiary institutions and also accepted as a minimum requirement to get nonprofessional jobs and placements in the lower cadres of the military and para military establishments.

The primary objective of this work is to investigate the economic implications of school dropouts in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to find out:

1. The causes of school dropouts in Cross River State
2. Impact of school dropouts on the economy

The following research questions shall guide the research:

1. What are the causes of school dropouts?
2. What are the impacts of school dropouts on the economy?

Literature Review

Concept of school dropouts: School dropout according to Aja – Okorie (2017) means leaving education without obtaining a minimal credential, most often a higher secondary education.

In the words of Kamla-Raj (2007), a drop out is any student, who for one reason or the other leaves school prematurely before graduation, without transferring to another school. This is most seen in rural areas where there is dismal poverty, ignorance and children form a distinguishable part of the family labour force. De Cos (2005) also stated that dropout is the ultimate withdrawal from school as students who withdraw from senior secondary school prematurely end up not obtaining any certificate of graduation. The term “dropout” qualifies those students who could not complete their education programme at any level of education due to one reason or the other, as advanced by Ayodele and Bada (2007) who emphasized dropping out from school occurs after children have previously achieved access to school.

Empirical Review

The empirical review would focus on the causes of school dropouts in Nigeria in view of the fact that Oyinloye (2015) noted that Nigeria holds the World record of having the highest number of her young people out of school with approximately 10.5 million kids out of school. Similarly, while comparing Nigeria’s educational attainment to that of Britain and USA in their study, Egwunyenga and Nwadiani (2004) observed that Britain had 98%, United State of America 89% while Nigeria had 59% respectively as reported by Nakpodia (2005) on development indicators. It is therefore imperative for the Nigerian government to live up to expectations in their responsibilities to ensure that the issue of school dropouts is kept under check.

In his study, Ajaja (2012) identified the causes of students drop out globally and classified them into four clusters. These include school related, job related, family related, and community related. De Cos (2005),

Bridgeland, Dulilio and Morrison (2006) identified five major reasons why students drop out of school in U.S. These include; uninteresting classes, inability to cope with school after much absence, friendship with unserious elements, absolute freedom to do anything and failure in school.

Different studies carried out in Nigeria about the causes of dropouts in secondary schools reveals different multifaceted results. For instance, a study conducted in Ondo State, South west of Nigeria by Oyinloye (2015) posited that lack of interest in school work, poor academic performance, poverty and failure are some of the causes of student dropout from school. The findings were also in consonance with the work of Alika and Egbochuku (2019).

Lekwa and Anyaogu (2016) carried out a study about the causes of the decline in final year examinations enrolment in the five south eastern states of Nigeria comprising of Abia, Anambra Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. They observed that the abnormality cannot be attributed to transfer to private schools and vice versa. However, both the private and the public secondary school teachers expressed the opinion that poverty is responsible for the students' dropout of schools, hence, going to hawk on the streets. The teachers went ahead to explain that they see their students hawking and that parents who before this time did not allow their children to go and hawk now seem to encourage the trend. More so, the teachers totally agreed that economic downturn is responsible for the increase in the number of students who dropout of school and get involved in street hawking.

Yusuf (2008), studied the causes of dropouts in Zamfara state located in the north-western part of Nigeria and found out that the situation is not any better, if not worse. He noted the high poverty rate among parents which may be attributed to economic factors which may have a relationship with their inability to meet the financial demands for their children's schooling. Cost of transportation to and from school on a daily basis, school fees, PTA fees, uniform fees and other items, provision of other daily monetary demands to the children, cost of textbooks and other school materials are found to be a burden for some of the parents which negatively affects the secondary education of their children. As a result Kainuwa, (2014) summed it up in his study that parents choose to take their children out of school and involve them in activities that produce income such as working on the farm, and many times these activities are illegal, immoral, and extremely detrimental to the lives of the children.

The implications are that as the pool of dropouts continues to grow, employment opportunities for them are more limited, because today's economy requires increased literacy, more education, enhanced technological skills, and lifelong learning.

Likewise, the rate of engagement in high-risk behaviours such as premature sexual activity, early pregnancy, delinquency, crime, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide has been found to be significantly higher among dropouts. Dropouts are more likely than other citizens to draw on welfare and other social programs throughout their lives.

Ajaja (2012), investigated the incidence of dropouts in the south zone of Nigeria and found out that the high level of youths' restiveness is constituted by individuals who dropped out of senior secondary schools programme. He established that in the south for instance, members of various militant groups are made up of youths between ages fifteen to twenty who dropped out of senior secondary school programmes. They are used by politicians to advocate for resource control in the oil-rich Niger-delta. In the north, there are the "Almanjeris" who are used by politicians to protest political issues, policies, ethnicity and religious bigotry.

Methodology

The area of study is the entire Cross River State which is divided into three senatorial zones. Total number of public secondary schools is 487. Twelve schools were sampled from the total number, four each from a senatorial zone. The respondents make up the principals and vice principals of the twelve sampled secondary schools, making a total of twenty-four respondents. The questionnaire was employed to generate data which was analysed by simple percentages

The breakdown of the secondary schools is shown below:

Sampled Secondary Schools from Cross River North Senatorial Zone

1. Girls Secondary School, Obudu
2. Army Day Secondary School, Igoli
3. Government Technical secondary School, Bendi
4. Mbube West Secondary School, Ekumtak

Sampled Secondary Schools from Cross River Central Senatorial Zone

1. Agbo Comprehensive Secondary School, Egboronyi
2. Community Secondary School, Ugep
3. Mbembe Community Secondary School, Obubra
4. Government Secondary School Ikom

Sampled Secondary Schools from Cross River South Senatorial Zone

1. Government Secondary School, Akamkpa
2. Government Secondary School, Uwanse
3. Community Secondary School, Abanwan
4. Government Comprehensive Secondary School, Odukpani

Table 1		Admission Enrolment (Crs North)			
S/no	Names of Schools	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Girls Secondary School, Obudu	750	801	828	845
2	Army Day Secondary School, Igoli	780	850	872	885
3	Government Technical Secondary School, Bendi	605	598	601	615
4	Mbube West Secondary School, Ekumtak	802	845	848	902

Source: Admission registers of the schools

Table 2 Admission Enrolment (CRS Central)

S/no	Names of schools	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Agbo Comprehensive Secondary School, Egboronyi	452	457	502	524
2	Community Secondary School, Ugep	922	975	980	995
3	Mbembe Community Secondary School, Obubra	858	878	896	905
4	Government Secondary School, Ikom	902	943	954	978

Source: Admission registers of the schools

Table 3 Admission Enrolment (CRS South)

S/no	Names of Schools	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Government Secondary School, Akamkpa	898	902	912	931
2	Government Secondary School, Uwanse	950	985	962	978
3	Community Secondary School, Abanwan	343	329	351	354
4	Government Comprehensive secondary School, Odukpani	412	432	438	445

Source: Admission registers of the schools

Table 4 Final Examinations registration (CRS North)

S/no	Names of Schools	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Girls Secondary School, Obudu	653	671	689	701
2	Army Day Secondary School, Igoli	750	812	838	849
3	Government Technical Secondary School, Bendi	570	567	559	567
4	Mbube West Secondary School, Ekumtak	770	795	799	801

Source: entry schedules of the various schools

Table 5 Final Examinations Registration (CRS Central)

S/no	Names of schools	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Agbo Comprehensive Secondary School, Egboronyi	421	432	461	469
2	Community Secondary School, Ugep	891	929	945	949
3	Mbembe Community Secondary School, Obubra	821	830	839	842
4	Government Secondary School, Ikom	801	812	819	823

Source: Entry schedules of various schools

Table 6 Final Examinations Registration (CRS South)

S/no	Names of Schools	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Government Secondary School, Akamkpa	850	855	857	861
2	Government Secondary School, Uwanse	801	812	810	815
3	Community Secondary School, Abanwan	302	292	303	310
4	Government Comprehensive secondary School, Odukpani	199	201	195	215

Source: Entry schedules of various schools

Research question 1: What are the causes of school dropouts?

Table 7 Respondents on the causes of school dropouts (N = 24)					
S/no	Items	Yes	No	% Yes	% No
1	Parents pay emphasis on the girl child	6	18	25	75
2	School fees are paid early and regularly	8	16	33	67
3	Environment is conducive for learning	9	15	37.5	62.5

Source: Author's computation

Findings:

The results in Tables 4, 5, and 6 show clearly a progressive increase in the number of students' dropout. In the Northern senatorial zone Girls secondary school Obudu with a total of three thousand, two hundred and twenty-four intakes had the highest number of dropouts of five hundred and ten. This could be as a result of the lack of interest shown by parents towards the girl child education.

In the central senatorial zone, the highest dropouts occurred in Government Secondary School Ikom with a figure of five hundred and twenty-two from a total intake of three thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven students. This occurrence may not be unconnected with the fact that the town is a border town with a thriving trans-border trade that seemed more attractive to the young men instead of pursuing their education.

Taking a look at the southern senatorial zone, Government Comprehensive secondary school Akamkpa had the highest number of dropouts of nine hundred and seventeen students from a total intake of one thousand seven hundred and twenty-seven students. This high occurrence could be as a result of the inter-tribal war that took place in the community as of the time of this research.

Results from table 7 shows that 75% of respondents do not agree that parents pay emphasis on the girl child education. In the same vein 67% of the respondents do not agree that school fees of students are paid early and regularly too. Similarly, 62.5% of the respondents do not agree that the school environment is conducive enough for learning

Conclusion and Recommendations

The work discussed the causes and economic impact of students' dropouts in secondary schools in Nigeria. The paper identified, poverty, poor state of the economy and parents' preference to boy education as the causes of dropouts. For a robust economy students' dropouts issue should be tackled seriously so that education attainment can be improved.

From the foregoing, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should provide a package of services within each community, work with families, churches and other community organizations to develop a collaborative program for dropout prevention.
2. The government should provide a broad range of instructional programs to accommodate students with different needs.

3. All stakeholders involved in the education industry must play their role. Parents who are the first stakeholder in this industry as well as the first teacher and role model to the children should show more concern in their children/wards' interest in education and finance their education.
4. Government should encourage and support programs that motivate parents to participate at all levels of their children's education.
5. The government should select and train teachers who are interested in working with at-risk students
6. The government should develop and implement a collection system for data on dropouts, and use it to identify groups at risk, set policy and fund programs at the national level.

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