UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

CAUSES OF SCHOOL DROPOUT IN BASIC SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY

OF SEKYERE SOUTH DISTRICT

BY

PETER OFORI ATAKORAH

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PETER OFORI ATAKORAH

2010

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:..   *Date.............................*

Name: Ofori, Peter Atakorah

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis and dissertation laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature..   *Date...........................*

Name: Dr. G. K. T. Oduro

ABSTRACT

The study sought to find out the causes of school dropout in the Sekyere South District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The researcher used descriptive survey as the research design and questionnaires were used as the data collection instrument. A total number of two hundred and forty (240) respondents were sampled for the study: One hundred (100) pupils, ninety (90) parents, thirty (30) dropouts and twenty (20) teachers. Parents and dropouts were selected on snowballing sampling technique; teachers were sampled through purposive sampling method; and the simple random sampling method was used to select the pupils. The methods adopted for analyzing the results of the study were simple frequency and percentage tables. It was found from the study that pupils in the Sekyere South District perceive the school or learning environment in which they learn as not being conducive or friendly and thereby discourage them from attending school. The findings also revealed that many factors influence school dropout in the Sekyere South District prominent among them are: parents not being able to provide pupils' educational needs, teasing or stigmatization resulting from poor performance, pregnancy on the part of pupils, hunger, and too much punishment by teachers. It was also found from this study that parents and teachers do not play any active roles in ensuring the retention of pupils in school. The findings of this study show that majority of pupils would be influenced to drop out of school due to the teasing or stigma they suffer as a result of disease (HIV/AIDS) of their parents. The study recommended among others that there should be seminars and workshops to educate the pupils, parents and the entire community about the dropout menace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To my wife Naomi Donkor and my children

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Education has contributed immensely towards the development of the world of which Ghana is no exception. Due to the general aims and objectives as well as the purposes that education is serving globally, parents and guardians are leaving no stone unturned to send their children and wards to school.

According to the West African Journal (2000), UNESCO Director-General acknowledged that even though the broad vision of education for all remains intact and that it is yielding fruitful results, he indicated nevertheless that, there had been some unforeseeable factors and circumstances that have adversely affected the general good of education. Among these are students' unrest, crime, immoral behaviours and school dropout.

In recent times there has been a nationwide outcry that a good number of children of school going age loiter around public places when they are supposed to be in school learning. Many are also found in towns and cities begging, hawking, pulling trucks and most pathetically serving as head potters. Some of these jobs are far beyond the capabilities of the children. Quite a number of children live in the streets and others return home late in the night. Such children

are exposed to adult exploitation such as defilement. Most of these children were once in school but due to some reasons, they have stopped schooling prematurely. They are therefore referred to as dropouts (Macionis, 2004). Macionis, (2004:378) outlined the following as the causes of school dropout; the problem of English Language, pregnancy, poverty and illiteracy of parents.

It is now generally accepted that it is human resources of a nation that ultimately determine the pace and character of its economic and social development. The educational system constitutes the principal mechanism for the development of the necessary human knowledge and skills (Forojalla, 1993). According to Harbison (1973) as cited in Forojalla (1993), 'Human resources constitute the ultimate basis of the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organization and carry forward national development.' Clearly, a country which is unable to develop the knowledge and skills of its people and utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else (Forojalla, 1993:108).

Since independence, many Governments of Ghana have formulated and implemented policies on education with the aim of improving and making education accessible to all children of school going age as enshrined in the United Nations' Charter, 1945. These policies include the Education Act of 1961, The Education Commission Report of 1986 on Basic Education, Free Compulsory

Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), The 1987 Educational Reforms and recently the Review of the 1987 Reforms which took effect from 2007.

Even though the implementation of the policies have increased gross enrolment or admission rate in Basic Schools, the dropout also increases as the children progress through the academic ladder. According to a survey conducted by the Concerned Citizens of Education from 2003- 2008 in the Sekyere South district of Ashanti Region, it was noted that out of 413,222 pupils who were supposed to be in school, only 285,152 representing 70% were in school. A total of 128.070 representing 30% had dropped out of school. The details of the survey are shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Distribution of school dropouts in the Sekyere South district of the Ashanti Region

Year	No. of pupils admitted	No. of pupils dropped out	Percentage dropped out
2003	63741	15203	23.8
2004	64902	18442	28.4
2005	65097	19726	30.3
2006	68835	21964	31.9
2007	73216	24561	33.5
2008	77431	28174	36.3
Total	413222	128070	184 (30%)

Source: Concerned Citizens of Education, Sekyere South District

It is worthy to note that the number of pupils who dropped out within the period under review (2003-2008) [i.e.128070 representing 30%] was quite significant, and this is only within the study area. Indeed, school dropout is posing a threat to Ghana's educational aims and aspirations. It is the consequence of this that much attention has been given to the problem not only by the Government, but also non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and researchers. It is against this backdrop that the researcher considers it necessary to undertake this scientific study.

Statement of the Problem

School dropout has become a canker in Ghana. It is an affront to the realization of the policy objective of the country to provide basic education to all children of school going age by the year 2015. It is important to note that the child needs education to survive in this rapidly changing world. Agyemang (1993), points out that education has become a powerful tool for the spreading of the forces of change. He reiterated that formal education prepares the children to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to be able to enter and fit well in the society. The labour force of every society is prepared by school education. High dropout rate is, therefore, a liability to the Society.

In addition, dropping out of school is a waste of budget allocation to schools. Materials and resources that will keep the child at school are budgeted for at the expense of other economic activities which should have yielded income to the nation. Husein and Postlethwaite (1985), point out that when a child drops out, the number of children in the class reduces while the salaries of teachers remain

unchanged. Teaching materials and other resources become under-utilized, causing high average cost of education per child. If dropout in the basic schools are not prevented or controlled there would be future expenditure on adult functional literacy programmes for those dropping out now.

The points raised indicate that the children who drop out cause great harm to themselves, their parents, the society and the nation as a whole. Even though some quasi-studies have been carried out in the district by the Concerned Citizens of Education, one might wonder whether conclusions would be the same if a different approach was employed in investigating the same issue. It is in this context that necessitated the study into the causes of dropout in basic schools within the Sekyere South District.

The purpose of the Study

The general objective of this research is to identify the causes of school dropout in basic schools in Sekyere South District. Specifically, the study focused on the problems parents face in sending their wards to school, the interest parents have in their wards' education including their attitude towards their children's education, the learning environment in basic schools, the influence of peer pressure on school dropout, and attempt to find solution to curb or reduce school dropout in Sekyere South District.

Research Questions

This research attempts to answer the following questions;

1. How do pupils perceive the learning environment in schools within Sekyere South District?

2. What factors influence school dropout?

3. What role do parents and teachers play in encouraging pupil retention in school?

4. What should be done to minimise dropout rate in the district?

Significance of the Study

The researcher has purposely chosen this topic so as to find the causes of school dropout. The findings would assist policy makers to make policies that would bring about high retention rate of children in the schools. It would also help Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in various schools to put up strategies to keep children in school. The study is expected to offer parents the opportunity to monitor the progress of their wards' educational performances as well as support their educational needs. The study would help children attach importance to their education.

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Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to the causes of school dropout in basic schools and collected information from teachers, students, dropouts and parents. It did not include Senior High Schools. The study is also limited to Sekyere South District.

Limitations

Like other empirical studies, this study is not without its limitations. The total sample which consisted of parents, teachers, pupils and school dropouts of just one district out of twenty-seven districts in the Ashanti region of Ghana, may limit the generalization of the results. The data for the study was gathered using a questionnaire. Research based on questionnaires depends on voluntary cooperation of the participants (Gay, 1992). This implies that the results could have been more accurate if respondents were mainly interviewed since the researcher would have had the opportunity to ask further questions for clarification of responses. Further, the instruments had mainly close-ended items. Only one open- ended question was included. This means that respondents were forced to take decisions on the items without allowing them room for their own responses. This also could have affected the results of the study.

The study could however be strengthened by increasing the sample size as the data analysis results and findings may vary substantially when the sample size is increased to include many respondents. As only one district may not represent the whole districts in Ghana, more districts and regions' involvement would create a more diffused results and findings. Also, the interview method could also be adopted in future studies in the field of school dropout.

Definition of Terms

Drop-out: In the context of this dissertation, drop-out refers to a pupil's persistent absence from school for a period exceeding two weeks.

Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one which is the introduction comprises the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation and limitation of the study. It further deals with the organization of the study. Chapter two deals with review of the literature on the following sub topics; the concept of school dropout, financial constraints, peer pressure, the tone of the school or school factor, parental attitude or interest, socio-economic factors, learning environment, diseases and social amenities.

Chapter three outlines the research method adopted: research design, population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instrument, data collection procedure and procedure for the data analysis. Chapter four composes of a presentation, analysis and interpretation of available data. The last chapter, which is the fifth chapter, summarizes the findings, draws conclusions and makes suggestions and recommendations.

Summary

Chapter one considered the general overview of the study. This included the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and research questions. Similarly, the significance of the study, delimitation and limitation of the study and the organization of the study were dealt with. The next chapter looks at the review of the related literature of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Concept of School Dropout

Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995) defines school dropout as a person who leaves school, college, university before finishing a course or a person who leaves in an unusual way. Farrant (1980) defines school dropout as pupils who despite having the ability to complete an educational course fail to do so. Colough and Hallmark (1975) also defined dropout as those that leave the school at any time other than established exit points at the end of primary, lower secondary, senior secondary or tertiary cycles. In a related development, Zeller (1966 :19- 20) maintains that "a dropout is a student who leaves school before he successfully completes twelve years of formal education and receives high school diploma. He became a dropout because he failed to succeed academically or adjusted socially". Similarly, Lecompte and Dworkin (1991) assert that "a dropout is a pupil of any age who leaves school for any reason other than death before graduation or completion of a programme of studies and without transferring into another elementary or secondary school".

According to a survey, conducted from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) 1987, a total of 682,000 American teenagers dropped out during the 1985/86 school year, an average of 3,789 dropouts a day over 180

school days (OERI, 1987). Today, nearly all students are expected to graduate from high school. Yet, hundreds of thousands of students in the United States leave school early each year without a diploma. The expectation stated in Goals 2000 of United States of America was to reach a 90% school completion rate by the year 2000. The most recent report indicates only 17 states have reached this goal. Other recent statistics indicating the percentage of eighth-grade students who graduate five years later range from a low of 55% in Florida to a high of 87% in New Jersey .

Again, a longitudinal survey conducted by the Centre for Education Statistics, US Department of Education showed that nearly thirty per cent (30%) of the American Indian Students and twenty per cent (20%) Hispanic Students who were sophomores in 1980 had dropped out by 1982 (OERI, Urban Superintendents network 1987).

While much current effort by many countries in sub-Saharan Africa is geared towards realizing universal primary education (UPE), not much is being done to ensure the retention of pupils in schools. Again, a lot had not been done to expand access to secondary education, especially by the poor who form the majority in this region. As such, secondary education remains a dream to many children in sub-Saharan Africa. Only a handful of children make it to secondary school in sub-Saharan Africa. The current secondary education system in these countries is skewed in favour of the small minority of better-off members of society. The biggest hindrance to secondary education in the region is cost, which locks out many children from poor families. As a result, only 12% of 'age cohorts

complete full secondary education in the sub-Saharan Africa region (see figure below).

Figure 1: Survival (%) of a Cohort of Students in Primary and Secondary Education in SSA, 2003
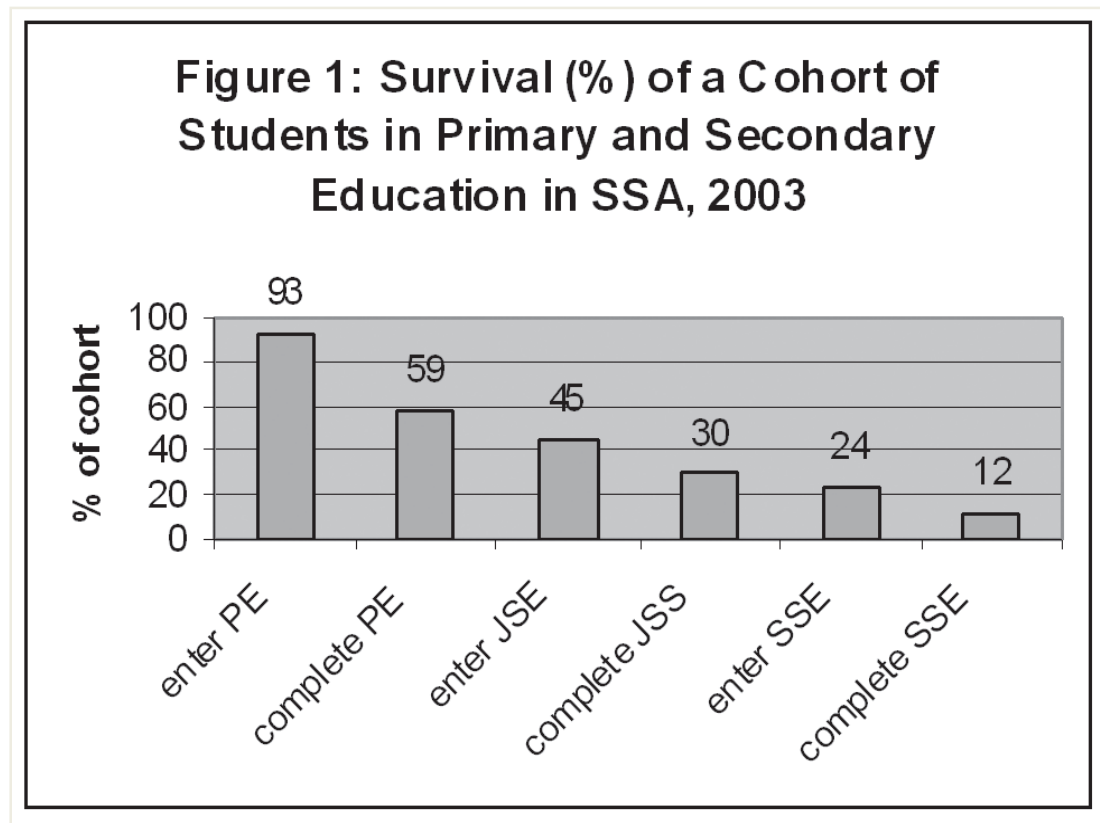
Source: Pole de Dakar in SEIA, 2007.

Unlike in the 1980s when primary education was seen to be critical in facilitating developing, today secondary education is seen as being more critical for economic development and poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, according to the World Bank access to quality secondary education is now considered the most important strategy for creating economic opportunities and social development for individuals and nations alike. It is however sad that this expectation may not be met because of high dropout rate in primary schools in sub-Saharan Africa.

In Ghana, a similar study was conducted by the Education Management Information System(a division of the Ministry of Education) and information gathered from the Public Affairs Department of West African Examinations Council (WAEC) that was published by Daily Graphic on Monday, October 12 2009, indicated serious setback in the area of school dropout in the country. The details of the analysis are shown in table 2 below:

Table 2

Distribution of enrolment and drop-outs in Ghana (1995-2001 academic years)

Academic Year Admitted	Year Completed	Number of Pupils Admitted	Number of Pupils who wrote WAEC Examination	Pupils who dropped out of school	Percentage (%) of Pupils who dropped out of school
1995/1996	2005	375,000	287,287	87,713	23.3
1996/1997	2006	415,497	308,383	107,114	25.7
1997/1998	2007	466,283	320,247	146,036	31.3
1998/1999	2008	515,420	338,460	176,960	34.3
2000/2001	2009	628,124	395,599	232,525	37.0
TOTAL		2,400,324	1,649,976	750,348	31.2

Source: Ghana Education Service and the Public Affairs Department of the West African Examinations Council.

It is important to note that out of 2,400,324 pupils who were supposed to have completed school during the period under review (1995-2009), only 1,649,976 pupils' completed school or wrote the WAEC examination. A total of 750,348 representing 31.2% had dropped out of school. Indeed school drop-out is a threat to educational aims and aspirations.

In another development, a survey conducted by the Concerned Citizens of Education from 2003- 2008 in the Sekyere South district of Ashanti Region, noted that out of 413.222 pupils who were supposed to be in school, only 285.152 representing 70% were in school. A total of 128.070 representing 30% had dropped out of school. The details of the survey are shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3

A survey conducted by concerned Citizens of education on school dropout in the Sekyere South district of the Ashanti Region.

Year	No. of pupils admitted	No. of pupils dropped out	Percentage dropped out
2003	63741	15203	23.8
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Total	413222	128070	184(30%)

It is worthy of note that the number of pupils who dropped out within the period under review (2003-2008)   [i.e.128070 representing 30%] was quite significant in the Sekyere South district of the Ashanti Region.

It must be mentioned that the alarming rate of students dropping out from school have moved Government, non-governmental organizations and researchers to analyze the situation, identify effective prevention strategies and implement innovative programmes to reverse this social canker in the country. It is in this respect that the causes of school dropout have been of great interest to all stakeholders of education.

Factors that contribute to school Dropout

A number of factors have been identified to contribute to school dropout. Chiefly among them include financial constraints, parental attitude/interest, learning environment, peer group influence/pressure, the tone of the school/school factors, socio-economic status of parents, diseases (HIV/AIDS), and social amenities/school resources.

Financial Constraints

Commenting on financial constraints, Lise and Stergeard (1992), point out that external pressure like the introduction of school fees have resulted in families opting to keep sons rather than daughters in school. Few that are sent to school are not well catered for, resulting in them dropping out of school.

In a related development, Farrant (1980) emphasizes that dropout may also occur because parents are unable to pay the fees charged by schools (p.287). This

means that certain family circumstances are associated with higher risk of dropping out .Children in impoverished homes, whose families are mobile, and experience trauma (e.g. divorce, abuse, illness, unemployment) or have a family history of dropout have higher risk of dropping out from school. An Innocenti Digest (2002) survey in Calkata revealed that children are withdrawn from schools to contribute to household income. The survey further revealed that in Calkata, eighty-four per cent (84%) of school going children were not attending school and forty-nine per cent (49%) were working outside the home as rag pickers, domestic helpers, leather workers or battery breakers for money to complement the household income. The survey discovered that financial constraints have made families engage in economic activities at the expense of education.

Similarly, Mailaine and Verspoor (1991) noted that the most obvious way to increase enrolment is to reduce the direct cost of sending children to school. The cost according to them is often significant in developing countries. Since education is costly, poor families find it difficult to educate their children because of poverty.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in Ghana Annual Report (2001) stated that as a result of UNICEF supported programmes to help children workers to return to school, three hundred and eighty-four (384) children working in stone quarries were placed in a formal school. It further explained that it was poverty that made them drop from school and were working in stone quarry industries. It appears that financial constraints

really drive a lot of pupils from the classrooms to the streets and many other places.

A survey conducted in Indonesia by Indonesian Statistical Agency revealed that during the period of financial crises, people who were able to keep their children in school were the rich or better–off people. The poor could not, leading to high rate of dropout. This is evidence that financial constraints influence children's education.

On this same issue, Davis (1996) notes that because of poverty, most parents make their children engage in economic activities after school, making them tired the next day. They either do not go to school or are inactive at school, leading to poor academic performance. He emphasized that as a result of poor academic performance, students are likely to dropout from school.

Neequaye (1996), commenting on financial constraints in relation to school dropout, points out that the inability of some parents to supply the needs of their children have caused several girls to lead promiscuous lives for financial gains. This sometimes leads to school dropout. He however, emphasized that promiscuous lives by girls are not solely caused by poverty, but notes that there are some better-off parents who have their children taking to such behaviour and finally dropout from school.

In another study conducted in Paskistan, Curle (1973) also revealed that majority of students who dropped out of school before the end of junior secondary school were those from the families that were not economically sound. Most of

these children forgo school either to help their parents in the farm or to look after themselves when they are asked to do so.

Similarly, Fontiman (1997) noted in a study he conducted on factors influencing school enrolment that, the eldest of a family had to drop out of school to help the parents in the house to engage in selling so that they could make ends meet.

It has been established from the above studies and researches that students are dropped out of school because of difficulties in paying school fees. The researches further revealed that financial constraints have made families engaging their children in economic activity at the expense of education. It is significant to note that poor families find it difficult to educate their children because of poverty. This study seeks to find out whether the data in the selected area will confirm the previous studies or not.

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Parental attitude/Interest

Parental attitude has been found to be a cause of school dropout. Commenting on this issue, Innocenti Digest (2002) asserted that many children are denied the right to education in order to undertake household or domestic chores or care for their younger siblings. In the same way, Lise and Stergeard (1992) point out that in central Nigeria, children assist parents in their farms and carry out much of their responsibilities in early childhood care, relieving the adult women for other works.

In another development, Daily Graphic (1995), reports that one hundred and twenty-eight students of Nkoransa Senior High Technical School in Brong-

Ahafo region of Ghana have been neglected by their parents just because their parents do not have interest in their education. This simply indicates that the interest of parents in their wards' education is a very important determining factor in school dropout.

On parental attitude, Mailaine and Verspoor (1991), point out that parents are not having interest in educating their children beyond the lower primary grades, perhaps because they perceive few benefits of education and if they do not support academic learning at home, children will perform poorly in school and eventually dropout.

Farrant (1980) states that "unless parents see the value of schooling, they tend to give their children work in the home or on the farm that prevent them from attending school.'' (p.287). He notes that parents' attitudes are clearly related to students' engagement in learning. He emphasized that if the parents have negative or positive attitude toward education, it is likely to affect their children either positively or negatively.

On their part, Wolf (1963) and Hess (1969) strongly note that the behaviour and attitude of parents influence the achievement of the child in school. They argue that parents' action and inaction contribute positively or negatively toward the child's education. In a related development, Dedjoe (1987) postulates that some parents deliberately fail to provide the basic needs of their children, such as school uniform, textbooks, stationeries, footwear among others and this invariably demoralizes the child to stop going to school (p.11).

Abugri (1997) points out that most parents particularly women who through no fault of theirs lose their husbands, are forced by prevailing economic conditions to cause dropout among their young school going children. He argues that most of such women take their husbands as breadwinners and financiers of their children's education. He notes that the death of their husbands shifts the financial responsibilities to the women. These women are sometimes financially weak to withstand the economic pressures resulting to school dropout.

It has been unveiled from the researches carried out by the above scholars that the attitude of parents towards education could either contribute positively or negatively towards the child's education. This research work is to examine the above claims and see if they could be applied to the students of Sekyere South district.

Learning Environment

The learning environment is no mean a factor affecting school dropout. According to Farrant (1980), lack of class control and discipline may also lead to dropout. He argues that "it is important that teachers should be able to control the class firmly, because uncontrolled class can be like a runaway lorry which may cause havoc and misery" (p.197). This means that if a teacher is not able to control or monitor the class in terms of attendance and punctuality, students can dropout easily. The nature of the teacher-student relationship emerged as a salient factor in the decision to drop out. He said dropouts perceived teachers as not caring about them and not providing them sufficient assistance in their work. He also reported that school administrators should demonstrate more care,

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understanding and encouraging students in their studies to avoid being dropped out from school.

Similarly, Ingalls (1973) points out that learning environment plays an important role in teaching and learning process. He notes that environment should be relaxed if it is going to encourage effective learning. He maintained that the crucial supportive automatic learning process will not be switched on if there is tension. He emphasized that the teacher has to make special efforts to create a relaxed learning environment that will suit everybody. The best way to do this is to spend time developing the group as a special unit and deepening their own relationship with the students. He noted that teacher-student relationship will become relaxed if the school structure within which the learning takes place is flexible. The teacher should mediate between the students and the school in such a way as to reduce any barriers. It is also important that the teacher is an authority in the learning process but not an authority over the students.

Learning environment plays very crucial role in teaching and learning situation. Class control and discipline can help to reduce school dropout. It is significant to note that a learning environment that is conducive promotes effective teaching and learning while a bad learning environment encourages school dropout. This research work is to examine the above claims and see if they could be applied to the students of Sekyere South district.

Peer group influence/Pressure

On peer group influence, Coladarci, (1982) in a study established that the desire to be with other dropout was a salient factor in their decision to drop out. Moore (1921) also found that in matters pertaining to speech and morality, college students more frequently change their own opinions to conform to those of majority.

He contends that people are influenced greatly by both majority and expert opinion on social and political issues, and that the influence of the majority seems to be more marked than that of the expert.

Giving his views about peer group influence, Macionis (2004) notes that peer groups allow children to escape the direct supervision of adults. Among their peers, children learn how to form relationships on their own. Peer groups also offer the chance to discuss interests that adults may not share or tolerate. He emphasized that in rapidly changing society, peer groups have great influence, and the attitudes of young and old may be separated by a generation gap. He maintained that students may conform to the attitudes and behaviour of their peers even when such conformity means expressing intolerance towards others.

In another development, Adu-Yeboah and Obiri-Yeboah (2008) contends that peer group put pressure on its members to behave in a specific way which may not always be of beneficial influence to themselves or others. They noted that the group can be negative and its effects can be seen in petty crime and failure at school. Others exhibit bad habits such as, rape, stealing, smoking, and prostitution among others. At school, playing truant, being destructive in class and destroying

school property, may replace the values of studying and success in examination. Consequently, most of them are influenced by their peers to drop out from school.

Reasoning along a similar line, Ohlsen (1974) thinks that children can be influenced by the peer group to drop out of school because the children can fall a natural prey to a delinquent gang leader who may control and use them. He notes that if the peer group leader is a dropout, members in the group also drop out of school in conformity to peer advice.

From a different angle, Gilchrist (1989) explains that as formal organizations have presidents, secretaries and the like, so do informal organizations like peer groups have similar roles. He believes that as members in an organization obey rules for fear of losing their membership so do peers have to obey the rules in the group notwithstanding the consequences. Berns (1993) also emphasizes that children's attitudes toward learning are influenced by the peer group to which they belong. He states that the peer group can help or hinder the school's role in socialization.

Writing about peer group influence, Eldersen (1978) says that pupils who are dependents on their peers for approval are less likely to endorse school and family values of academic success. He notes that peer group influences are often the causes of delinquent, aggressive and violent pupil behaviour resulting in school dropout, especially among adolescents.

McKinney (1982) also notes that pupils' lack of social skills require to establish and maintain friendship in the school setting. He indicates that pupils

who feel adequate in even one area are more likely to remain in school than those who see themselves as social and academic misfits.

From a line of reasoning similar to that of many writers on peer group influence, Ahiaku (1979) observes that peer group could influence a child to leave school prematurely, especially, where the peer group has low aspiration for education. Quite emphatically, Sekyere (2009) points out that peer pressure could be positive or negative. He notes that a positive peer group pressure can promote learning and discipline. He maintains that a peer group whose dominant characters are serious with their academic work are likely to impact positively on its members who are less serious to work, by always pulling them to the classroom or library to do their class or home work instead of idling or breaking bounds to engage in anti-social activities. On the other hand, he observes that peer group can be negative and affect learning and discipline where dominant characters in the group are deviants. He emphasized that the deviants are likely to pull the weaker members away from their academic work and instead get them involved in anti-social activities such as breaking bounds, truancy, syndicate stealing, taking to hard drugs, armed robbery and eventually drop out from school.

Having identified peer influence as a facilitator of school dropout, Zakaria (1999) cautions that Parents and guardians must concern themselves with peer group activities of their wards in schools and other peer-gatherings. He notes that most pupils come under the influence and directions of their groups and eventually drop out from school.

From a similar line of reasoning, Damoah (1988) points out that social demand of peer group exerts an increasing influence upon the behaviour of the group. This, he noted, could lead to school dropout. Testifying to his own experience about peer group influence, Cervantes (1966) noted that "all my friends wanted to quit school so I went along with them". On a more serious note, Brembeck (1966) advocates that if the child's peer group values higher level of education, the child's desire for education would be reinforced. On the other hand, if the peer group desire is less for education, the child would drop out of school.

In a related development, Rice (1984) noted that in the United States of America, peer group influence is a major factor that determines whether pupil will go to school or not. He further observed that most adolescents like to do what their friends have been doing. Thus if friends have been dropping out to get work to do which earns them good income, their peers will be persuaded to do likewise. He maintained that a negative peer group influence can affect pupils' school attendance and academic performance greatly.

From the foregoing discussions, it has become abundantly clear that peer group influence is one of the factors that can lead to school dropout. This study is intended to confirm or disprove the above studies and researches as it relates with the selected area of study.

The tone of the school/school Factors

The tone of the school has been noted to be a factor affecting school dropout. Russel (2000) noted that schools in which students have limited opportunities for academic success appear to have higher dropout rate. It also emphasizes that students who fail or get low grades in subjects are more likely to leave school prior to graduation. It further states that students experiencing difficulty in meeting the academic demands of the school tend to leave school rather than continuing in the face of frustration to achieve good grades.

Writing about the school factor, Russell (2000) found out that schools in the rural areas, schools with large population and negative student-teacher relationship have been cited as key elements to school dropout. From a similar development, Nettiel (2000) pointed out that poor organizational structure of the school has effects on the school dropout. He again revealed that a student attending a lower quality school is more likely to drop out from school. He reported that bringing the quality of all schools to the level of the best reduces the dropout rate.

Commenting on the school factor, Davis (1996) pointed out that teachers' attitude in the class drive children out of school. In a similar manner, Ebony (2002) reported that a head-teacher of Edwenease Rehabilitation Training Centre in Kumasi was arrested for sexually abusing a sixteen year old girl. Such conditions in a school drive or put fear in the girls. They therefore see it as a threat and decide to escape the danger by dropping out from school.

Giving his views about the school factor, Neequeye (1996) points out that in mixed schools, boys in senior classes sometimes use their seniority to harass girls in junior classes to yield to their sexual demands. He notes that the girls see it as a threat to their lives and as a result stop schooling in order to escape the danger.

Trump (1977), in his study concerning teachers' attitude towards their students, has this to say:

"No wonder that in many schools large number of students are neither known nor monitored systemically by any one. A student has to be very good or bad to receive attention. Obviously that system has to change. Accountability for pupil programme in school means much more than keeping track of subjects completed, grades earned, scores on standardized test of achievement and ability, and the maintenance of cumulative records. School needs systemic arrangement so that every student is known by someone who does not have to consult a file before talking to him or her. Teachers know children who are academically good in their classrooms. The schools among other things need to be a place where every human being is known, systematically cared for, and valued by at least one another. Every child should get an advisor so long as he or she remains a student" (P.33-38).

This means that if the student is not recognized in school, he/she could become a dropout. Okantey (1995) emphasized that a child who is physically abused in school through severe beatings resulting in bruises is likely to dropout from school.

Salia (2009) reported that the proprietor of the Great Lamptey Mills Institute admitted impregnating one of his former students and subsequently forcing her into marriage. The girl dropped out because of the attitude and behaviour of the school proprietor.

The tone of the school or school factor could influence teaching and learning and the moral training of the pupil. A good tone promotes effective teaching and learning while a bad tone militates against effective teaching and learning and can lead to school dropout. This research work is to examine the above claims and see if they could be applied to the students of Sekyere South district.

Socio-economic Status of Parents

The next factor facilitating school dropout is the socio-economic status of parents. Research has shown that socio-economic status of parents has influence on educational attainment and completion. Havemann (1991) studied the effects of family and economic circumstances experienced during childhood as an indicator of success in young adulthood and high school competition. He used a sample size of 1300 children, aged between 19 and 27 years. He found out that parental income had an important effect on children's education. He noted that parents who work and contribute to family income have significant association with high school completion especially when the child is a teenager.

In a similar vein, Kalmijn (1994) studied the influence of mother's occupational status on children's educational attainment. He questions: "if mothers are employed, do their occupational statuses have a significant effect on their children's educational attainment?" He pointed out that mother's

occupational status has a positive and significant effect on children's educational attainment.

Writing about the socio-economic status of parents and its influence on school dropout, Shavit (1991) found out that the effects of parents' education for Askenazi are positive and significant. He noted that the educational level of parents become a challenge to both parents and children. He stated that children tend to strive harder to achieve what their parents have achieved and even go beyond. Parents on the other hand, know the importance of education and so devote their time, money and other resources to educate their children.

Reasoning along a similar line, Astone (1991) also noted that high educational aspirations of parents are associated with high aspirations of their children. He emphasized that parents transmit their aspirations to their children, counsel and supervise them in their studies.

It is worth recognizing however, that other writers have a different view regarding the socio-economic status of parents and its effect on education of the child. In this respect, Singelman (1993) indicated that socio-economic factors have little effect on vocational training in Germany. This is due to the fact that in Germany, vocational training after high school is more expensive than college and university education.

Notwithstanding the view of Singleman (1993), the fact still remains, from the above researches, that socio-economic status of parents have significant effect on the education of their children. This research work seeks to confirm or

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invalidate the above conclusions from the data that will be gathered in the chosen area of study.

Diseases (HIV/AIDS)

Disease (HIV/AIDS) has become a matter of importance to governments, organizations and individuals. Its effects on education cannot be overemphasized. As published in Daily Graphic October 8, 2002, Badu stated that:

> "Education sector in many countries has recorded a major negative consequence as many teachers are dying from AIDS every year. Ghana Education Service foresees a decline in school enrolment, the withdrawal of children from school to care for their sick parents and relatives are some of the effects the disease will have on the nation" (p. 23).

Agu, Katabaro, Amani, Ndaugoba, Mboya (2002) noted that a key objective of an international strategy must be to realize the enormous potential that the education system offers as a vehicle to help reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS and to alleviate its impacts on society. But the World Education Forum (2000) final report recalls UNAIDS Executive Director, Peter Piot's statement at the opening ceremony that "AIDS constitutes one of the biggest threats to the global education agenda. The World Bank now terms HIV/AIDS a "development crisis" and the impact of the epidemic can be identified in several sectors of society (World Bank 1999, p.6). What HIV/AIDS does to the human body, it also does to institutions. It undermines those institutions that protect us" (UNESCO, 2000, p.22).

Commenting on diseases (HIV/AIDS) as a factor influencing school dropout, Agu et al (2002) noted that the social demand for school places is reduced in society where AIDS is omnipresent because fewer children will be born and many will die before reaching school age. He emphasized that many orphaned by the disease will not enrol in school or may have to leave school due to lack of adequate support and an inability to pay school fees. Girls are more affected since they are usually the first to be withdrawn from school to take care of sick parents and siblings.

In a similar view, research carried out by Coombe (2000) in South Africa and Swaziland concluded that factors influencing drop-out are poverty related, exacerbated by HIV/AIDS. In the sample schools, most head teachers acknowledged that HIV/AIDS was a serious issue, particularly in terms of growing numbers of orphans, as well as children with sick parents. The time when a parent is sick or dying may be the most difficult time for a child. The study found that usually children whose parents are sick or dying from AIDS will not attend school for some time. Quite often, however, they will return to school three or four weeks after their parent's death.

It can be concluded from the above discussions that the effects of diseases (HIV/AIDS) cannot be over emphasized. In many countries, diseases (HIV/AIDS) are killing a lot of teachers and school children are being withdrawn from school to cater for their sick parents and relatives. This research is intended to establish whether diseases are one of the factors of school dropout in the Sekyere South District.

Social Amenities/School Resources

One factor worth recognizing, in respect of factors influencing school dropout, is social amenities/school resources. Adedji and Owoeye (2002) found a significant relationship between recommended textbooks, quality of teachers and academic performance. Many scholars (Bajah, 1981, Akinwumiji 1986) are in agreement that availability of physical and material resources are very important for the success of any worthwhile educational endeavour .These researchers have pointed out that the availability of adequate school buildings, number of classrooms, chairs, desks and other instructional facilities are imperative for the attainment of any educational objectives.

Writing about social amenities/school resources and its influence on school dropout, Hallak (1977) identified facilities as a major factor contributing to academic achievement in the school system. This, according to him, includes the school buildings, classroom accommodation, furniture, libraries, laboratories recreational equipment and other instructional materials while the availability, relevance and adequacy of these resource items contribute to academic achievement; the scholar did not fail to point out that unattractive school buildings, crowded classroom and surroundings devoid of aesthetic appearance can contribute to the school dropout and poor academic attainment.

Reasoning along a similar line, Bajah (1981) also found a significant relationship between teacher, facilities and school academic performance. Similarly, Eshitet (1987) found adequate provision of instructional materials to be one important method that science teachers can use in promoting skill acquisition

in consonance with the objectives of developing manipulative skills in students as spelt out in the junior secondary education science curriculum.

Obemeata (1995) and Owoeye (2000) provide excellent evidence to back up the claim that physical structure is significantly related to school academic performance. The researchers maintained that efforts should be made to renovate the dilapidated school buildings in the country. While some educationists have argued that where a child is taught and where he learns do not matter as against what is taught, some others contend that unless school conditions are attractive, pupils will not be motivated to learn.

There would seem to be no conclusive evidence to support one or the other of these two positions. However, experience has shown that Basic schools that produce the best results in Basic school certificate Examination (B.E.C.E) results and whose products have been judged to be good, are certainly not the ones with dilapidated buildings and overcrowded classrooms, but the ones that have good and attractive buildings. In the face of these observations, the study therefore attempts to find out whether there is any relationship between the quality of resources and the school dropout.

Summary

The literature review has brought into open certain relevant matters in relation to school dropout. They are financial constraints, peer group pressure/influence, the tone of the school or the school factor, parental

attitude/interest, learning environment, socio-economic status of parents, diseases and social amenities.

It is worth emphasizing that the above factors accounting for the causes of school dropout were gotten from researches carried out by various scholars at different places. The population, sample size and sample procedures used differed in one way or the other, yet they arrived at or had the above discussed factors common to their researches.

This research, in the same vein, seeks to compare and confirm or differ with the above discussed factors and see whether they can be applied to the students of Sekyere South District in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The descriptive survey design was employed for the study. According to Ekuri (1997), descriptive survey involves the collection of data to accurately and objectively describe the current status of an existing phenomenon. Gay (1992), states that descriptive research involves the collection of data in order to test hypotheses, or answer research questions concerning the current status of the participants of the study.

The descriptive survey design has an advantage of producing a good amount of responses from a wide range of people. It involves asking the same set of questions to a large number of individuals either by mail, by telephone or in person. It also provides a more accurate picture of events and seeks to explain people's perception and behaviour on the basis of data gathered at a point in time. Fraenkel and Wallen (1990) noted that descriptive survey design has the potential to provide a lot of information from quite large sample of individuals.

There is the difficulty however of ensuring that the questions to be answered using descriptive survey design are clear and not misleading because survey results can vary significantly depending on the wording of questions. It may also produce untrustworthy results when questions delve into private matters

that people may not be completely truthful about. In addition is the difficulty in getting a sufficient number of the questionnaire completed and returned so that meaningful analysis can be made (Seifert & Hoffnung, 1994). Despite these shortcomings, the descriptive survey design was considered the most appropriate for this study, since it could lead the researcher to draw meaningful conclusion from the data obtained.

Population of the Study

The target population of this research constitutes teachers, parents, pupils and dropouts in Sekyere South District. The accessible population comprises selected teachers, pupils, parents and dropouts in four selected towns in the district.

Sample Size

A total number of two hundred and forty (240) respondents were sampled from the population of nine hundred and forty (940) people. The sample constitutes barely 25% of the population. One hundred (100) pupils, ninety (90) parents, thirty (30) dropouts and twenty (20) teachers were sampled. This constitutes 41.7%, 37.5% 12.5% and 8.3% of the sample size respectively.

Sampling Procedure

Snowball, purposive and simple random sampling methods were used in the sampling process. Parents were selected on snowballing sampling technique until the required number was contacted. This method was used to select the parents because they were not easily accessible especially parents of school

dropouts and the target population was not known. Parents who offered to talk to the researcher also linked him to other parents of the dropouts. Purposive sampling method was used for teachers who have taught in the schools for seven years and above. This is because these teachers have stayed with the pupils for a long period and thus have adequate and in depth knowledge of the problem. The simple random sampling method was used to select the pupils. This type of sampling gives all units of the target population an equal chance of being selected. This method was used because it was possible to construct a sampling frame for these pupils. One school in each community was randomly selected and sampling frame was designed for each school (from B6-JHS). From the various sampling frames, 25 pupils were selected for the study. The school dropouts were also selected using the snowball approach because they were not easily located.

Research Instrument

Data collection is a fundamental process in research. Interpretation of results from a research work is often based on the amount of data collected. In order to enable one collect data, he/she needs various types of instrument specifically designed for various purposes. The researcher used four set of questionnaires which were made up of both close ended and open ended items. Best and Khan (1993) explain that the questionnaire may serve as a most appropriate and useful data gathering device in a research project if properly constructed and administered because it has a wider coverage. In this research, respondents had to provide their own responses to the open ended items as the questions demanded and at the same time, they were required to answer the close

ended items by selecting from the list of possible answers provided. The questionnaires were made up of four sets which were each grouped into sections. The questionnaire for students and school dropouts consisted of four sections from section A to section D each of them found different information. The questionnaires for parents and teachers also had three sections each from section A to section C. The first sections in each of the questionnaires captured the personal data of the respondents whilst the last sections asked the respondents to make suggestions as to how school dropout rate in the district could be prevented or minimized.

The use of questionnaires in a descriptive survey is less expensive than the other methods, it also promises a wider coverage since researchers can approach respondents more easily than the other methods.

The researcher developed the questionnaire himself. And to ensure that the items were valid, the instruments were given to the supervisor to examine whether the items were related to the research questions; how understandable the items were; whether the items will elicit the appropriate responses; whether the items were properly arranged; whether any of the items were ambiguous or misleading; and if the instructions were clear enough. The supervisor made some corrections and these were incorporated into the final set of questionnaires. The close-ended questionnaires were tested to ascertain the validity and reliability of the items.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in their various schools and homes. The researcher and his assistants initially introduced themselves, sought consent and explained the purpose of the study to the respondents.

Though the introduction of the questionnaires captured such areas as confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents and how the information would be used, the researcher and his assistants still assured the respondents that any information that they might give would be treated confidential and as anonymous as possible. The respondents were also informed about their right to decline their participation. After the respondents had given their consent to participate in the study, the researcher and his assistants helped the respondents complete the items in the questionnaire. This allowed the respondents the chance to ask any question that was not clear to them concerning any item.

A period of one day was allowed to enable the respondents complete the questionnaire. The respondents were guided to respond to the items by the researcher, with the help of his research assistants. The questionnaires were collected the next day to avoid them being misplaced since the respondents were mainly pupils and parents. As a result of the above approach, the researcher had a hundred percent (100%) turnout of the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

The data collected in research becomes meaningful only when it is organized, summarized and explained. The descriptive statistics was used by the researcher to analyze the data after the responses had been edited, coded and scored.

For the purpose of analysis, Strongly Agree and Agree in the questionnaire were merged to be Agree and Strongly Disagree and Disagree merged to be Disagree. The analysis was done in line with the research questions posed. The tallying method was used in drawing frequency and percentage tables showing the extent that the respondents agree with issues that were raised. The researcher adhered to frequency and percentage tables to enhance an overall view of the findings, identify the trends and to display the relationship between parts of the findings.

Summary

This chapter looked at the methodology that was used to collect the data used for this research. As part of the methodology, the chapter focused on research design, population of the study, sample size, sampling procedure, research instrument, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

The next chapter will be an analysis and interpretation of the data gathered.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Background Information of Respondents

(1) Teachers

A total of 20 teachers participated in the study. Table 4, 5, and 6 show the distributions of teachers by their gender, age group, and academic qualifications.

Table 4

Gender of Respondents (teachers)

Gender	N	%
Male	11	55
Female	9	45
Total	20	100

Source: Field work, 2010.

Table 5

Age group of Respondents (teachers)

Age	N	%
20-25	10	50
26-35	9	45
36-45	0	0
46-55	1	5
55+	0	0
Total	20	100

Source: Field work, 2010.

Table 6

Academic Qualification of Respondents (teachers)

Academic Qualification	N	%
SSSCE	4	20
Cert A	2	10
Diploma	13	65
Degree	1	5
Total	20	100

Source: Field work, 2010.

It could be observed from Table 4 that majority of the respondents (55%) were males whereas 45% were females. This therefore supposes that male respondents (teachers) outnumbered their female counterpart in the study. It could also be noticed from Table 5 that half of the respondents were between the ages of 20-25; teachers who are aged 26-35 years has a frequency of 9 representing 45% of the respondents (teachers); 1 respondent was within the age range of 46-55 years whilst the age brackets of 36-45 years and 55+ had no frequency. It could also be observed from Table 6 that 13 respondents representing 65% of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire have Diploma as their academic qualification; 2 teachers making 10% had teachers Cert 'A'; as many as 4 teachers representing 20% of the teachers had only the SSSCE as their academic qualification; and only one teacher indicating 5% of the respondents has the academic qualification to be Degree.

(2) Parents

A total of 90 parents participated in the study. Tables 7, 8, and 9 show the respondents' (parents) gender, age and occupation.

Table 7

Gender of Respondents (parents)

Gender	N	%
Male	40	44.4
Female	50	55.6
Total	90	100

Source: Field work, 2010.

Table 8

Age group of Respondents (parents)

Age	N	%
20-25	8	8.9
26-35	21	23.3
36-45	23	25.6
45+	38	42.2
Total	90	100

Source: Field work, 2010.

Table 9

Occupation of Respondents (parents)

Occupation	N	%
Farming	34	37.8
Teaching	29	32.2
Trading	20	22.2
Others	7	7.8
Total	90	100

Source: Field work, 2010.

From Table 7 above, majority of the parents (50) were females whilst frequency of 40 representing 40% of the parents was males. It could also be noticed from Table 8 that 38 of the respondents were above 45 years; and 21 of the respondents were between the ages of 26-35 years. Moreover, 23 respondents fell within the age range of 36-45 years. The age range with the least frequency was 20-25 years which had a frequency of 8. With regard to the parents' occupation as represented in Table 9, farming had the highest frequency of 34 followed by teaching with a frequency of 29. 20 parents were traders whilst 7 of the parents were also either unemployed or in jobs that were not within those suggested by the researcher and were therefore indicated as others in the table 5 above. Such occupations included driving, security, and banking.

(3) School dropouts

A total number of 30 school dropouts participated in the study. Table 10, 11, and 12 show the distribution of number of respondents (school dropouts) by their gender, age and family structure respectively.

Table 10

Gender of Respondents (school dropouts)

Gender	N	%
Male	12	40
Female	18	60
Total	30	100

Source: Field work, 2010.

Table 11

Age group of Respondents (school dropouts)

Age	N	%
6-10	3	10
11-15	9	30
16-20	16	53.3
20+	2	6.7
Total	30	100

Source: Field work, 2010.

Table 12

Family structure of Respondents (school dropouts)

Family structure	N	%
Single parent	21	70
Both parents	9	30
Total	30	100

Source: Field work, 2010

It can be noticed from Table 10 above, that majority of the respondents with a frequency of 18 and percentage of 60% were females whereas 40% representing a frequency of 12 dropouts were males. This therefore supposes that male dropouts are outnumbered by their female counterpart in the study.

It could also be observed from Table 11 that 16 of the respondents (53.3%) were between the ages of 16-20 years; 30% of the dropouts showing frequency of 9 were in the age range of 11-15 years. This gives the impression that most school dropouts in the Sekyere South District are adolescents. Respondents who were aged between 6-10 years had a frequency of 3 representing 10% of the respondents (dropouts); 2 respondents were within the age range of 20+ years indicating 6.7%. It could also be observed from Table 12 above, that 21 respondents representing 70% of the dropouts who responded to the questionnaire have/stayed with single parents whilst 9 respondents also making 30% of the dropouts either have/stayed with both parents. This is an indication that family structure may be one of the factors that account for dropout rate in the Sekyere South District.

(4) Pupils

A sample of 100 pupils took part in this research. Table 13, 14, and 15 below give pictorial presentations of the respondents with regard to their gender, age and family structure.

Table 13

Gender of Respondents (pupils)

Gender	N	%
Male	53	53
Female	47	47
Total	100	100

Source: Field work, 2010.

Table 14

Age group of Respondents (pupils)

Age	N	%
6-10	11	11
11-15	74	74
16-20	15	15
20+	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: Field work, 2010.

Table 15

Family structure of respondents (pupils)

Family structure	N	%
Single parent	38	38
Both parents	62	62
Total	100	100

Source: Field work, 2010.

From Table 13 above, majority of the pupils (53) were males whilst frequency of 47 was females. It could also be noticed from Table 14 that 74 of the respondents were in the age range of 11-15 years; 15 pupils were aged between 16-20 years old; frequency of 11 pupils were in the ages of 6-10 years; and none of the respondents were aged above 20 years. With regard to family structure, it is represented in table 14 that 38 respondents indicated that they have/ live with single parents while as many as 62 pupils reported that they have/live with both parents. This gives an impression that the kind of family that pupils stay with or the family structure could determine their retention in school.

Research Question One

How do pupils perceive the learning environment in schools within Sekyere South District?

The researcher was interested in having some information as to whether the learning environment and school amenities influence pupils to drop out of

school. Items 16 to 24 of the questionnaires for pupils and school dropouts were used in this analysis. To find answer to this research question, two groups of the respondents namely, pupils and dropouts comprising 130 respondents were asked to respond to these items in their questionnaire to find out how they perceive (or perceived) the school environment. For the purpose of analysis, Strongly Agree and Agree in the questionnaire was merged to be Agree and Strongly Disagree and Disagree merged to be Disagree. The responses are shown in Table 16 below. The Table is presented in the next page to avoid spill over.

Table 16

Pupils' perception of their school Environment

	Agree		Disagree	
Perception	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
16. The school is boring.	97	74.6	33	25.4
17. There is too much punishment in my school.	112	86.2	18	13.8
18. The teacher-pupil relationship in my school is cordial.	30	23.1	100	76.9
19. The school facilities such as classrooms, tables and chairs are not adequate.	103	79.2	27	20.8
20. Teachers do not pay particular attention to pupils' problems.	99	76.2	31	23.8
21. There is no guidance and counselling facility in my school to give advice and direction to pupils.	124	95.4	6	4.6
22. Inadequate teaching and learning facilities such as books, chalk, etc.	56	43.1	74	56.9
23. There are no co-curricular facilities like cultural groups, and games in my school.	84	64.6	46	35.4
24. My class size is too large	101	77.7	29	22.3

Source: Field Data, 2010.

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Reasoning from the above, it could be noticed that most of the respondents (pupils and dropouts) perceive the school within which they learn as boring.

The second item in the table sought to find out if the respondents think there is too much punishment in their school. It was found from their responses that a frequency of 112 representing 86.2% are of the view that the punishment in their school is too much; however, only 18 respondents making up 13.8% did not agree that punishment is too much in their school. This finding also gives the idea as to how the pupils think they are being punished too much in the school.

The third item on the table which is also item 18 on the pupils and dropouts' questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the perception that the teacher-pupils relationship in their schools is cordial. The result as presented in table 8 above shows 100 of the respondents disagree with the item as against 30 respondents who said they agree with the item. The finding therefore indicates that the teacher-pupil relationship in the schools is not cordial.

Item 19 of the questionnaire was also to find out from the respondents whether they perceive facilities in the school such as classrooms, tables and chairs as inadequate and poor and therefore contribute to drop out in the district. The result showed that 103 of the respondents agreed while 27 disagreed. This indicates that pupils see the facilities in the school as poor and as a result they lead to drop outs. This finding supports the findings of Obemeata (1995) and Owoeye (2000) who maintained that physical structure is significantly related to school dropout and academic performance.

The next item in the table also sought to find out whether the respondents

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agree or disagree with the perception that teachers do not pay particular attention to their problems. The result was that most of the pupils and drop outs with a frequency of 99 and percentage of 76.2 said they agree that teachers do not pay particular attention to pupils problems in the school; the remaining 31 respondents representing 23.8% also said teachers pay particular attention to their problems by taking 'disagree' for the item. This further show that pupils and dropouts perceive their teachers in the learning environment as not the type that show concern for their worries or problems.

From the Table 16, item number 21 asked respondents if there is no guidance and counselling facility in school to give advice and direction to pupils. A total of 124 respondents representing 95.4% agreed with the statement while 6 respondents also representing 4.6% disagreed with the item. This point out that majority of the schools in the district has no guidance and counselling facility to give advice and direction to the pupils.

Item number 22 of the pupils and dropouts' questionnaire as shown in table 8 above was to find out if pupils see the teaching and learning facilities such a books, chalk, etc as adequate or inadequate. The response showed that 56 respondents agreed to the item while majority of the respondents making a frequency of 74 and 56.9% also disagreed with the item. This shows that most of the pupils and dropouts perceive the teaching and learning facilities in their schools as adequate.

Moreover, item 23 of the questionnaire was to find the perception of pupils and school dropouts with regard to whether there are no co-curricular facilities like cultural groups, and games in their schools. The finding was that 84 respondents

making 64.6% agreed with the item whilst the remaining 46 respondents also making 35.4% disagreed with the item. The findings indicate that many of the pupils perceive the learning environment as one that do not allow them to exhibit their talents and interests because according to the pupils and dropouts, their schools do not have co-curricular facilities like cultural groups, school field, and other games.

The final item in Table 16 above asked the respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree that they perceive their class size to be too large. The results revealed majority of the respondents (frequency of 101 and percentage of 77.7) indicating they agree that their classes are too large. 29 respondents representing 22.3% also said they disagree with the item.

The above findings show therefore that pupils in the Sekyere South District perceive the school or learning environment in which they learn as not being conducive or friendly and thereby discourage them from attending school. These findings are highly supported by Hallak (1977) who identified school facilities such as school buildings, classroom accommodation, furniture, libraries, laboratories recreational equipment and other instructional materials as major factors contributing to school dropout in the school system. Hallak (1977) also pointed out that unattractive school buildings, crowded classroom and surroundings devoid of aesthetic appearance can contribute to school dropout and poor academic attainment. Reasoning along a similar line, Bajah (1981) also found a significant relationship between teacher, facilities and school dropout rate. Similarly, Eshitet (1987) found that inadequate provision of instructional materials leads to school dropout.

These findings also support the view of Ingalls (1973) who points out that

learning environment should be relaxed if it is going to encourage effective learning. He maintained that the crucial supportive automatic learning process will not be switched on if there is tension. He emphasized that the teacher has to make special efforts to create a relaxed learning environment that will suit everybody. The best way to do this is to spend time developing the group as a special unit and deepening their own relationship with the students. Learning environment plays an important role in teaching and learning process. Teacher-student relationship especially will become relaxed if the school structure within which the learning takes place is flexible. The teacher should mediate between the students and the school in such a way as to reduce any barriers. It is also important that the teacher is an authority in the learning process but not an authority over the students.

Good learning environment promotes effective teaching and learning and thereby serving as motivation for pupils to stay on in school. The first item in Table 8 above found out from the respondents whether they perceive or perceived their school to be boring. The response shows 97 respondents indicating that the school is boring; 33 pupils and dropouts indicated that they disagree with the perception that the school is boring.

The nature of the learning environment is a salient factor in the decision to drop out. If pupils perceive the environment within which they learn as not being conducive, they lose the interest in schooling. It must be emphasized that poor attitude of teachers, lack of recreational facilities, inadequate teaching and learning materials and facilities, large class sizes and too much punishment by teachers are factors that sum up to make the learning environment unfriendly for

pupils in the district. If pupils perceive teachers in the school environment as not caring about them and not providing them sufficient assistance in their work, they do not feel happy to attend school. It is in this vain that Farrant (1980), reported that school administrators should demonstrate more care, understanding and encouraging students in their studies to avoid being dropped out from school.

Research Question Two

What factors influence school Dropout?

This research question was to find out the major causes of school drop out in the District. To respond to this questionnaire, pupils who are still in school and those that have dropped out responded to close-ended and open-ended items that allowed them the opportunity to bring out what they think are the factors that influence dropouts. All items in section B of the pupils and dropouts' questionnaire with the exception of items 8 and 9 were used for this analysis. In all a sample of 130 respondents (100 pupils and 30 school dropouts) provided the answer to this research question. Their responses to the open-ended items have not been presented in the table. However, the close-ended items are grouped in percentages in Table 17 below.

Table 17

 Factors that influence school Dropout

	Agree		Disagree	
Factor	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. Poor teacher-pupil relationship	97	74.6	33	25.4
2. Pregnancy	122	93.8	8	6.2
3. Bad influence from peers	103	79.2	27	20.8
4. Parents not able to provide pupil(s) educational needs	127	97.7	3	2.3
5. Parents not able to pay school fees (classes fees)	118	90.8	12	9.2
6. Teasing or stigmatization resulting from poor performance	128	98.5	2	1.5
7. Too much punishment by teachers	126	96.9	4	3.1
8. Sickness of pupils	89	68.5	41	31.5
9. Truancy, lateness or absenteeism	74	56.9	56	43.1
10. Loss of interest in schooling	69	53.1	61	46.9
11. Hunger	126	96.9	4	3.1
12. Parents demand for pupils to help on the farm or market	129	99.2	1	0.8
13. Bullying	100	76.9	30	23.1

Source: Field Data, 2010.

Every child needs education to survive in this rapidly changing world. Education has become a powerful tool for the spreading of the forces of change. Formal education prepares children to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to be able to enter and fit well in society (Agyemang (1993). It is for this reason that the above research question seeks to find out the causes of pupils dropping out of schools in the Sekyere South District. The first item in Table 17 above

found out from the respondents whether they see poor teacher-pupil relationship as a factor that leads pupils to drop out from school. The response shows 97 respondents representing 74.6% indicating that they agree that the kind of relationship between teachers and pupils in school is not cordial; 33 pupils and dropouts indicated that they disagree with the item because they do not see teacher-pupil relation as a cause of school dropout. Deducing from this, it could be noticed that most of the respondents (pupils and dropouts) are of the view that the way teachers relate with pupils in school influences dropouts.

The second item in the table sought to find out if the respondents think pregnancy causes school dropout. It was found from their responses that a frequency of 122 representing 93.8% are of the view that the pregnancy of pupils leads to school dropouts; however, only 8 respondents making up 6.2% did not agree that pregnancy of pupils leads to school dropouts. This result is supported by Neequaye (1996), who pointed out that the inability of some parents to supply the needs of their children have caused several girls to lead promiscuous lives for financial gains. This sometimes leads to school dropout resulting from pregnancy. He however, emphasized that promiscuous lives by girls are not solely caused by poverty, but notes that there are some better-off parents who have their children taking to such behaviour and finally dropout from school. This finding also gives the idea as to how teenage pregnancy is of worry to the pupils in the district.

Item 3 on the pupils and dropouts' questionnaire which is also the third item in Table 17 above, asked the respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the idea that bad influence from friends causes school dropouts. The

result as presented above shows 103 of the respondents making 79.2% agree with the item as against frequency of 27 respondents representing 20.8% who said they disagree with the idea that bad friends cause school dropout. The finding therefore indicates that most of the pupils who drop out from school are influenced by their dropout friends to do so. Berns (1993) emphasizes that children's attitudes toward learning are influenced by the peer group to which they belong. The findings from this study are also in consonance with Coladarci, (1982) who found out in a study that the desire to be with other dropouts is a salient factor in pupils' decision to drop out. Reasoning along a similar line, Ohlsen (1974) thinks that children can be influenced by the peer group to drop out of school because the children can fall a natural prey to a delinquent gang leader who may control and use them. He notes that if the peer group leader is a dropout, members in the group also drop out of school in conformity to peer advice.

Item 4 of the questionnaire was also to find out from the respondents whether they think their parents' inability to provide their educational needs can cause school dropout. The result showed that 127 of the respondents agreed while only 3 respondents disagreed. In a related development, respondents were to indicate if they agree that parents not being able to pay pupils' school fees (classes fees) influences school dropout. The result was that as many as 118 respondents agreed while 12 of them disagreed. These findings indicate that the financial situation of parents influence pupils to drop out of school. These findings support the view of Farrant (1980) which emphasized that dropout may occur because parents are unable to pay the fees charged by schools. This means

that certain family circumstances are associated with higher risk of pupils dropping out of school

The next item in the table also sought to find out whether the respondents agree or disagree with the assertion that teasing or stigmatization of pupils as a result of poor performance influences school dropout. The result was that most of the pupils and drop outs with a frequency of 128 and percentage of 98.5 said they agree that they dropped out of school or would drop out from school as a result of stigmatization from poor performance. Just 2 respondents indicated that teasing or stigmatization of pupils as a result of poor performance does not cause school dropout. This is in agreement with McKinney (1982). He indicates that pupils who feel adequate in even one area are more likely to remain in school than those who see themselves as social and academic misfits. Also, Davis (1996) emphasized in a study that as a result of poor academic performance, students are likely to dropout from school. It must therefore be emphasized that if pupils are teased for poor academics, they tend to lose confidence and as a result they lose interest in schooling and drop out subsequently.

From Table 17 above, item 7 was to find from respondents if they think too much punishment by teachers is a factor that influences pupils to drop out of school. The answer was positive with a frequency of 126 respondents agreeing as against 4 respondents who did not believe that too much punishment in school causes dropout. This implies that punishment must be reduced in schools if children are to remain in school.

Factor 10 on the questionnaire sought to find out from respondents if sickness on the part of pupils influences them to drop out from school. 89 of the respondents representing 68.5% agreed to the item whilst the remaining 41 respondents also representing 31.5% did not agree with the item.

The factor eleven on the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree that truancy, lateness, or absenteeism influences school dropout. The response showed 74 respondents (56.9%) agree while 56 respondents indicating 43.1% failed to agree. This result supports the view of Coladarci (1982) who stated that at school pressure or bad influence from friends leads pupils to play truant, be destructive in class and destroy school property. Farrant (1980) also supports this study by stating that if a teacher is not able to control or monitor the class in terms of attendance and punctuality, students can dropout easily.

Factor number 12 in Table 17 above sought to know whether loss of interest in schooling causes dropouts. The result was that 69 respondents (53.1%) agreed whilst a frequency of 61 representing 46.9% disagreed. The implication is that if pupils lose interest in schooling they may easily dropout of school.

From the Table 17, item number 13 asked respondents whether they think hunger influences school dropouts. A total of 126 respondents representing 96.9% agreed with the statement while only 4 respondents also representing 3.1% disagreed with the item. This point out that majority of the pupils would decide to drop out from school if they experience constant hunger in school.

Factor 14 of the pupils and dropouts' questionnaire as shown in Table 17 above was to find out from pupils whether parents demand for pupils to help on the farm or market influence school dropout. The result was positive with as many as 129 out of the 130 total respondents representing 99.2% agreed to the item whilst only 1 respondent (0.8%) this result is supported by a study conducted in Paskistan by Curle (1973) which revealed that majority of students who dropped out of school before the end of junior secondary school were those from the families that were not economically sound. Most of these children forgo school either to help their parents in the farm or to look after themselves when they are asked to do so. Similarly, Fontiman (1997) noted in a study he conducted on factors influencing school enrolment that, the eldest of a family had to drop out of school to help the parents in the house to engage in selling so that they could make ends meet. On this same issue, Davis (1996) notes that because of poverty, most parents make their children engage in economic activities after school, making them tired the next day. They either do not go to school or are inactive at school, leading to poor academic performance. Also supporting the findings is an Innocenti Digest (2002) survey in Calkata which revealed that children are withdrawn from schools to contribute to household income. The survey further revealed that in Calkata, eighty-four per cent (84%) of school going children were not attending school and forty-nine per cent (49%) were working outside the home as rag pickers, domestic helpers, leather workers or battery breakers for money to complement the household income. The survey discovered that

financial constraints have made families engage in economic activities at the expense of education.

The final item in Table 17 asked respondents to indicate whether bullying in school influences pupils to drop out from school. The response showed that 100 respondents (76.9%) agreed to the item while minority of the respondents making a frequency of 30 and 23.1% also disagreed with the item. This shows that most of the respondents are of the view that bullying in school influences dropouts. The learning environment is no mean a factor affecting school dropout. It is in this vain that Farrant (1980) points out that lack of class control and discipline leads to dropout. It is important that teachers control class and school environment firmly because uncontrolled school and class can be like a battle ground for pupils where the weaker ones are bullied by their stronger counterparts.

It could be made emphatic that the above factors influence school dropout in the Sekyere South District since majority of respondents showed their agreement to the factors as provided in the questionnaire. The respondents also specified other factors among others which include unavailability of electricity in the classrooms to facilitate evening studies, poor parental attitude towards education, and illiteracy on the part of parents.

Research Question Three

What roles do parents and teachers play in encouraging pupils' retention in School?

This research question was to find out whether teachers and parents have a hand in school dropout in the District. The total respondents who provided their responses were 110 (90 parents and 20 teachers). The parents responded to fifteen items in their questionnaire while the teachers' questionnaire was made up of eleven items. Some of the items in the teachers' questionnaire were used as follow-up to verify the parents' responses. For the purpose of analysis, Strongly Agree and Agree in the questionnaire was merged to be Agree and Strongly Disagree and Disagree merged to be Disagree. The responses are shown in Table 18 below.

Table 18

Parental roles in pupils' school Attendance

	Agree		Disagree	
Role	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. I advice my children against bad friends.	58	64.4	32	35.6
2. My ward goes to farm before attending school.	23	25.6	67	74.4
3. My child does household chores before going to school.	88	97.8	2	2.2
4. I always demand my ward's terminal report and homework book to see how she/he is performing.	60	66.7	30	33.3
5. I take my child to farm or market some weekday	72	80	18	20
6. I refuse to give food to my child when he refuses to go to school.	43	47.8	47	52.2

7. I beat my child if he/she doesn't go to school.	78	86.7	12	13.3
8. I do not say anything when my child fails to go to school.	60	66.7	30	33.3
9. My child will have a brighter future if he goes to school.	36	40	54	60
10. My child will not succeed only through education.	50	55.6	40	44.4

Source: Field Data, 2010.

From Table 18 above it could be noticed that a lot of parents in the Sekyere South District do not pay attention to their wards' education. This may result from the fact that most of the parents are illiterates so they are not aware of the importance of education. It could be seen from the table that 50 out of the 90 parents who responded to the questionnaire said they agree that it is not only through education that their children will succeed. When asked to respond to item 9 in Table 18 which reads "my child will have a brighter future if he goes to school", majority (60%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Again, most respondents declared that they do not say anything to their wards when they refuse to go to school. These findings are in support of the assertion of Shavita (1991) that the educational levels of parents become a challenge to both parents and children. He stated that children tend to strive harder to achieve what their parents have achieved and even go beyond. Parents on the other hand, know the importance of education and so devote their time, money and other resources to educate their children. Reasoning along a similar line, Astone (1991) also noted that high educational aspirations of parents are associated with high aspirations of their children. He emphasized that parents transmit their aspirations to their

children, counsel and supervise them in their studies. Mailaine and Verspoor (1991) also point out that parents who do not have interest in educating their children perceive few benefits of education.

The first item in the table, reads, "*I advice my children against bad friends*". The responses show that 64.4% of the respondents representing a frequency of 58 agree whilst 35.6% also making a frequency of 32 indicates disagreement with the statement. This shows that a majority of the respondents indicate that they advice their children against peer group influence because they are aware of the harm that such bad friends can cause. This result is in agreement with Ahiaku (1979) who observes that peer group could influence a child to leave school prematurely, especially, where the peer group has low aspiration for education. Also, Eldersen (1978) says that pupils who are dependents on their peers for approval are less likely to endorse school and family values of academic success.

In answering item 2 in the Table 18 above, majority of the respondents 67 (74.4%) agreed with the statement which reads "My ward goes to farm before attending school". Also, items 3 and 5 in the table 18 above demanded to know whether parents allow their wards to do a lot of work in the home that prevent them from attending school and whether they sent their wards to farm during weekdays. The responses provided showed that majority of the parents agreed to those items. These results support the assertion of Farrant (1980) that "unless parents see the value of schooling, they tend to give their children work in the home or on the farm that prevent them from attending school." (p.287). He notes that parents' attitudes are clearly related to students' engagement in learning. He

emphasized that if the parents have negative or positive attitude toward education, it is likely to affect their children either positively or negatively. This result is also supported by the commentary in the Innocenti Digest (2002) which asserted that many children are denied the right to education in order to undertake household or domestic chores or care for their younger siblings. In the same way, Lise and Stergeard (1992) point out that in central Nigeria, children assist parents in their farms and carry out much of their responsibilities in early childhood care, relieving the adult women for other works.

Table 19

Parental roles in meeting pupils' financial Needs

	Agree		Disagree	
Parental roles	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. I cannot provide my ward's educational needs due to financial difficulties.	87	96.7	3	3.3
2. I pay my ward's classes fees as soon as school reopens.	50	55.6	40	44.4
3. I give my ward 'chop money' or food when going to school.	69	76.7	21	23.3
4. I send my ward to the farm or market to sell when driven home for failing to pay extra classes fees.	80	88.9	10	11.1
5. My ward sells before going to school.	56	62.2	34	37.8

Source: Field Data, 2010.

The first item in Table 19 required the respondents (parents) to indicate whether they are unable to provide their wards' educational needs due to financial

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difficulties. The responses indicate that majority of the respondents making a frequency of 87 and percentage of 96.7% agreed while the remaining 3 respondents indicating 3.3% also disagreed with the item.

From the above analysis, it could be said that parents in the Sekyere South District cannot provide their ward's educational needs due to financial difficulties. Item two of Table 19 required respondents to indicate whether they pay their ward's classes fees as soon as school reopens. The responses given by the parents indicate that only 44.4% agreed with the statement while 55.6% making a frequency of 50 disagreed. From the analysis, it can be deduced that parents do not pay their wards' school fees (classes' fees) on time. This is supported by Farrant (1980) who emphasizes that dropout occurs because parents are unable to pay the fees charged by schools (p.287).

The third item on Table 19 also required the respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with this statement: *I give my ward 'chop money' or food when going to school.* Out of the total respondents, 21 (23.3%) agreed while the remaining 69 (76.7%) disagreed. This means that a lot of pupils either do not eat before going to school or do not eat whilst in school.

The fifth statement in Table 19 which reads "*My ward sells before going to school*" had respondents choosing any of the options. Of the respondents, 56 (62.2%) chose agree while 34 (37.8%) of the respondents indicated their disagreement. This result supports the findings of Fontiman (1997) who identified in his study conducted on factors influencing school enrolment that, the eldest of a

family had to drop out of school to help the parents in the house to engage in selling so that they could make ends meet.

The fourth item on Table 19 noted whether they send their children to the farm when they are driven home for extra classes' fees. The responses provided showed that majority of the parents agreed to the item. On this issue, Davis (1996) notes that because of poverty, most parents make their children engage in economic activities after school, making them tired the next day.

Table 20

Parents and teachers' Roles

	Agree		Disagree	
Role of parents and teachers	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. Teachers follow-up on pupils who absent themselves from school.	6	30	14	70
2. Teachers punish pupils who go wrong in the school.	18	90	2	10
3. Teachers pay particular attention to pupils with peculiar learning difficulties.	9	45	11	55
4. Parents pay unexpected visits to their wards to find out whether they are in school.	4	20	16	80
5. Parents normally report children who refuse to go to school to their teachers or school authorities to deal with them.	15	75	5	25
6. Parents show interest in their children's education.	8	40	12	60
7. When pupils refuse to come to school, their parents bring them.	10	50	10	50
8. Parents do not attend PTA meetings.	13	65	7	35
9. When pupils are punished, they do not go to school the following day.	12	60	8	40
10. When pupils are punished, their parents come to school to insult the teachers.	11	55	9	45

Source: Field Data, 2010.

The first item in Table 20 required the respondents (teachers) to indicate whether they are able to make a follow-up on pupils who absent themselves from school. The responses indicate that majority of the respondents making a frequency of 14 and percentage of 70% disagreed while the remaining 6 respondents indicating 30% also agreed with the item.

The second item in Table 20, reads, "*Teachers punish pupils who go wrong in the school*". The responses show 90% of the respondents representing a frequency of 18 agrees whilst 10% also making a frequency of 2 indicate disagreement with the statement. This shows that a majority of the respondents indicate that they punish pupils who go wrong in the school. When asked to state the kind of punishment they normally give to the pupils, majority of the teachers said they give corporal punishment in the form of caning and weeding. The item 9 in the Table 20 asked the respondents (teachers) whether pupils who are punished by the teachers come to school the next day. The response showed majority of the teachers saying they agree to the statement that when pupils are punished, they do not come to school the following day. These findings support Farrant (1980) who asserts that lack of class control and discipline lead to dropout. He argues that "it is important that teachers should be able to control the class firmly, because uncontrolled class can be like a runaway lorry which may cause havoc and misery" (p.197). This means that if a teacher is not able to control or monitor the pupils in terms of attendance and punctuality, they can dropout easily.

The last item in Table 20 reads "When pupils are punished, their parents come to the school to insult the teachers". Out of the total respondents, 11 (55%) agreed

while the remaining 9 (45%) disagreed. This implies that majority of the parents in the district do not respect the teachers in the district and because of that the teachers in turn do not show any concern for the pupils' academics. This is in contrast with the views of Ingalls (1973) who points out that learning environment plays an important role in teaching and learning process. He notes that environment should be relaxed if it is going to encourage effective learning. He maintained that the crucial supportive automatic learning process will not be switched on if there is tension. He emphasized that the teacher has to make special efforts to create a relaxed learning environment that will suit everybody. The best way to do this is to spend time developing the group as a special unit and deepening their own relationship with the students.

Item three of Table 20 required respondents to indicate whether they pay particular attention to pupils with peculiar learning difficulties. The response given by the teachers indicated that only 45% agreed with the statement while 55% making a frequency of 11 teachers disagreed. From the analysis, it can be deduced that teachers do not pay particular attention to pupils with peculiar learning difficulties. As a result, many pupils who are not academically good drop out of school because of stigmatization and teasing from classmates. Most of the teachers 60% also reported that the parents do not show any interest in their children's education. Parents do not pay unexpected visits to their wards to find out whether they are in school or not; they do not report children who refuse to go to school to their teachers or school authorities to deal with them; when pupils refuse to go to school, their parents do not insist; and finally, the parents do not attend Parent Teachers Association (PTA) meetings.

The above findings indicate that parents and teachers do not play any active roles in ensuring the retention of pupils in school. In view of this, Wolf (1963) and Hess (1969) strongly note that the behaviour and attitude of parents influence the achievement of the child in school. They argue that parents' action and inaction contribute positively or negatively toward the child's education. In a related development, Dedjoe (1987) postulates that some parents deliberately fail to provide the basic needs of their children, such as school uniform, stationeries, footwear among others and this invariably demoralizes the child to stop going to school.

As part of the research, another question was posed to enquire from parents what their roles would be when they happen to fall sick. Specifically, the research sought information as to whether they will continue to support their children's school attendance or not.

The researcher posed this question because it was in his interest to have a fair idea as to whether parents would make their wards drop out of school to attend to them when they are sick; and to also know from pupils whether they would drop from school when the request is made by their parents. Another aspect of this question is about whether pupils would drop out of school because of the stigma attached to the sickness of their parents. Items 16 of parents' questionnaire and items 8 and 9 of the pupils and school dropout questionnaires were used for this analysis to find the answer(s) to this question. Three groups of respondents namely, pupils, and dropouts comprising 130 respondents and 90 parents were asked to respond to the related items in their questionnaires to find out how disease/sickness of parent(s) influences school dropout in the district. For the

purpose of analysis, Strongly Agree and Agree in the questionnaire was merged to be Agree and Strongly Disagree and Disagree merged to be Disagree. The responses are shown in Table 21 and Table 22 below.

Table 21:

Parental Expectation from Children when they (Parents) are ill

	Agree		Disagree	
Parents' expectations	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
16. I will let my child stop school and cater for me whenever I am attacked by diseases such as HIV/AIDS.	83	92.2	7	7.8

Source: Field Data, 2010.

From Table 21 above, it could be seen that out of the 90 parents who responded to the item, a majority frequency of 83 and percentage of 92.2 agreed that they will let their children drop out of school whenever they fall sick. In contrast, just 7 parents representing 7.8% disagreed with the item by expressing that they will not let their wards drop out of school to cater for them whenever they get HIV/AIDS. The major finding therefore is that most of the parents in the district would drop their wards from school to cater for them whenever they are attacked by sickness or diseases such as HIV/AIDS. This presupposes that the academic life of these poor pupils is being predicted by nature; that is whether the parents fall sick or not. The above findings supports Badu (2002) who stated emphatically that Ghana Education Service foresees a decline in school enrolment

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due to the withdrawal of children from school to care for their sick parents and relatives who have contracted the disease (HIV/AIDS).

Similarly, to validate the responses and expectations of parents, opinion of pupils were also sought as to whether parental sickness and disease stigmatization affected their schooling in any way. The responses are shown in Table 22 below.

Table 22

Pupils' and dropouts' Response

	Agree		Disagree	
Response	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
8. Sickness or disease of parent (s) such as HIV/AIDS.	115	88.5	15	11.5
9. Teasing or stigmatization resulting from parents' diseases such as HIV/AIDS.	122	93.8	8	6.2

Source: Field Data, 2010.

The first item in Table 22 above required the respondents to indicate whether the sickness/ disease of their parents such as HIV/AIDS can influence them to drop out of school. Out of the 130 pupils and dropouts who responded to this item, 115 representing 88.5% agreed to the item whilst the remaining frequency of 15 representing 11.5% disagreed to the item. This indicates that most pupils would drop out of school if their parents contract HIV/AIDS.

The second item in the table demanded respondents to either indicate their agreement or disagreement as to the influence that teasing or stigmatization

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resulting from parents' diseases such as HIV/AIDS would influence them to drop out of school. The responses show that 122 out of the 130 respondents representing 93.8% agreed while 6.2% representing a frequency of 8 respondents disagreed with that item. The analysis shows that a majority of pupils would be influenced to drop out of school due to the teasing or stigma they suffer as a result of disease (HIV/AIDS) of their parents.

The above findings are also supported by Agu (2002) who noted that many pupils whose parents are attacked by the disease will not enrol in school or may have to leave school due to lack of adequate support and an inability to pay school fees or stigmatization from friends and the school community as a whole. He further emphasized that girls are more affected since they are usually the first to be withdrawn from school to take care of sick parents and siblings.

It could therefore be noted that if more pupils are to be retained in school HIV/AIDS education must also be intensified and the school communities and the general public sensitized about stigmatization and its effects on individuals' education and national development as a whole. It is in line with this that the World Education Forum, held in Darkar in April 2000, noted that a key objective of the international educational strategy must be to realize the enormous potential that the education system offers as a vehicle to help reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS and to alleviate its impacts on society.

Research Question Four

What should be done to minimize dropout rate in the District?

This research question sought to find out the views that respondents have about how the dropout menace in the Sekyere South District could be minimized. To answer this research question, the researcher posed an open-ended question that allowed all the 240 respondents (teachers, parents, students and dropouts) to write their suggestions. The results of their responses are summarised as follows:

1. Sex education should be encouraged in schools.

2. Extension of the feeding program.

3. Provision of free school uniforms and other learning materials.

4. Caning and other harsh punishments should be reduced so that the children would not feel threatened in school.

5. Teachers with bad attitudes should be transferred from the district.

6. Provision of ICT facilities in schools.

7. Those who impregnate school Children must be imprisoned.

8. Seminars and workshops to educate the pupils, parents and the entire community about the dropout menace.

9. Teasing and stigmatization of dull students on the part of pupils and teachers must stop.

10. Teachers and parents must encourage pupils to develop interest in schooling.

11. Provision of recreational facilities in schools.

12. Teacher-student relationship should be cordial.

13. Discourage pupils from bad friend.

Other suggestions made by respondents are: Provision of guidance and counselling units in the schools; soft loan to parents to embark on small scale business; strengthening of Parents Teachers Associations (PTA); special attention to pupils with special needs; strengthening of vocational education; attitudinal change of parents as well as teachers motivated to boost their moral for them to teach well.

It could be seen from the above that most of the suggestions made by the respondents concern the teaching/learning environment in the school such as school facilities, relationship between teachers and pupils as well as the kind of education provided. Others also included parental attitude, teachers' motivation, parents' empowerment, and community-based sensitization. This finding indicates therefore that majority if not all respondents wish school dropout be minimized in the Sekyere South District.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study aimed at finding out the causes of school dropout in the Sekyere South District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The researcher used descriptive survey research design and questionnaires were used as the research instrument. The researcher used four set of questionnaires which were made up of both close ended and open ended items. A total number of two hundred and forty (240) out of nine hundred and forty (940) respondents were sampled for the study: One hundred (100) pupils, ninety (90) parents, thirty (30) dropouts and twenty (20) teachers. Snowball, purposive and simple random sampling methods were used in the sampling process. Parents and dropouts were selected on snowballing sampling technique; teachers were sampled through purposive sampling method; and the simple random sampling method was used to select the pupils. The methods adopted for analyzing the results of the study were simple frequency and percentage tables.

Respondents provided answers to four (4) research questions which are:

1. How do pupils perceive the learning environment in schools within Sekyere South District?

2. What factors influence school dropout?

3. What role do parents and teachers play in encouraging pupil retention in school?

4. What should be done to minimise dropout rate in the district?

Major Findings

The following are the major findings revealed by the study;

1. It was found from the study that pupils in the Sekyere South District perceive the school or learning environment in which they learn as not being conducive or friendly and thereby discourage them from attending school.

2. The findings also revealed that many factors influence school dropout in the Sekyere South District prominent among them are: parents not being able to provide pupils' educational needs, teasing or stigmatization resulting from poor performance, pregnancy on the part of pupils, hunger, and too much punishment by teachers. The respondents also specified other factors among others which include unavailability of electricity in the classrooms to facilitate evening studies, poor parental attitude towards education, and illiteracy on the part of parents.

3. It was also found from this study that parents and teachers do not play any active roles in ensuring the retention of pupils in school. Parents do not pay unexpected visits to their wards to find out whether they are in school or not; they do not report children who refuse to go to school to their teachers or school authorities to deal with them; when pupils refuse to go

4. The findings of this study show that majority of pupils would be influenced to drop out of school due to the teasing or stigma they suffer as a result of disease (HIV/AIDS) of their parents.

Conclusions

Even though many Governments in Ghana have formulated and implemented policies on education such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), with the aim of improving and making education accessible to all children of school going age as enshrined in the United Nations' Charter, 1945, the dropout rate in basic schools still increases as the children progress through the academic ladder. It must be emphasized that education constitutes the principal mechanism for the development of necessary human knowledge and skills. It is against this background that Forojalla (1993) asserted that a country which is unable to develop the knowledge and skills of its people and utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else. The conclusions that can be drawn from the present study are that: School dropout is prevailing in the Sekyere South District; pupils do not like the environment within which they learn; parents and teachers have a hand in the dropout rates; and peer pressure also account for school dropout in the Sekyere South District.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study the following recommendations are made.

1. The learning environment should be made conducive to facilitate pupils' retention in school.

2. Teasing and stigmatization of dull students on the part of pupils and teachers must stop.

3. Special attention must be given to pupils with special academic needs.

4. Provision of guidance and counselling units in the schools.

5. Soft loan to parents to embark on small scale business

6. Those who impregnate school children must be imprisoned.

7. Sex education should be encouraged in schools.

8. Extension of the school feeding program.

9. Provision of free school uniforms and other learning materials

10. There must be HIV/AIDS sensitization program in the district so as to deal with the stigmatization of the children of HIV/AIDS patients.

11. Seminars and workshops to educate the pupils, parents and the entire community about the dropout menace.

Areas for further Study

Other researchable areas that emerged from this study and need further investigations to add to knowledge in the area of school dropout are: the relationship between parental occupation and dropout; the extent to which the social amenities in communities promote school dropout; the relationship between family structure and dropout; and the attitude of teachers and its influence on school dropout.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE FORE DUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

This questionnaire is intended to find out causes of school dropout in Basic Schools in Sekyere South District. It is purely an academic study and you are sure of confidentiality. May you please, answer the following as sincerely as possible. Thanks in advance. Please tick [√] against the one which applies and write briefly where necessary.

SA=Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **D**=Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

1. Sex

  Male   [   ]

  Female   [   ]

2. Age

  20-25   [   ]

  26-35   [   ]

  36-45   [   ]

  45 and above [   ]

3. Occupation:

  Farming   [   ]

  Teaching   [   ]

  Trading   [   ]

  Others (please specify) …………………………………………

SECTION B: MAIN DATA

ROLES PARENTS PLAY IN THEIR CHILDREN' EDUCATION

SA=Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **D**=Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree.

	Parents' roles	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I cannot provide my ward's educational needs due to financial difficulties				
2.	I advice my children against bad friends				
3.	I pay my ward's classes fees as soon as school reopens				
4.	I give my ward 'chop money' or food when going to school				
5.	My ward sells before going to school				
6.	My ward goes to farm before attending school				
7.	My child does household chores before going to school				
8.	I always demand my ward's terminal report and homework book to see how she/he is performing				
9.	I take my child to the farm or to the market some weekdays				
10	I send my ward to the farm or market to sell when driven home for failing to pay extra classes fees				
11	I refuse to give food to my child when he refuses to go to school				
12	I beat my child if he/she doesn't go to school				
13	I do not say anything when my child fails to go to school				
14	My child will have a brighter future if he goes to school				
15	It is not only through education that my child will succeed				
16	I will let my child stop school and cater for me whenever I am sick.				

SECTION C:

PREVENTION OF SCHOOL DROPOUT

17. What should be done to minimize dropout rate in the district?

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APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND

ADMINISTRATION

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

This questionnaire is intended to find out causes of school dropout in Basic Schools in Sekyere South District. It is purely an academic study and you are sure of confidentiality. May you please, answer the following as sincerely as possible. Thanks in advance. Please tick [√] against the one which applies and write briefly where necessary.

SA=Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **D**=Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

1. Sex

    Male   [   ]

    Female   [   ]

2. Age

    20-25   [   ]

    26-35   [   ]

    36-45   [   ]

    46-55   [   ]

    56+   [   ]

3. Academic qualification

    SSSCE   [   ]

    'O' or 'A' level   [   ]

    Cert 'A'   [   ]

Diploma   [   ]

1st degree   [   ]

Others (specify)…………………………………….

SECTION B: MAIN DATA

ROLE TEACHERS AND PARENTS PUPILS' RETENTION IN SCHOOL

SA=Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **D**=Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree.

	Teachers and Parents' roles	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Teacher-pupil relationship is cordial				
2.	Teachers follow-up on pupils who absent themselves from school				
3.	Parents pay unexpected visits to their wards to find out whether they are in school or not				
4.	Teachers pay particular attention to pupils with peculiar learning difficulties				
5.	Parents normally report children who refuse to go to school to their teachers or school authorities to deal with them				
6.	Parents show interest in their children's education				
7.	When pupils refuse to come to school, their parents bring them				
8.	Parents do not attend PTA meetings				
9.	Teachers punish pupils who go wrong in the school				
10	When pupils are punished, they do not come to school the following day				
11	When pupils are punished, their parents come to the school to insult the teachers				

12. What kinds of punishment are usually given to the pupils?

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SECTION C:
PREVENTION OF SCHOOL DROPOUT

13. What should be done to minimize dropout rate in the district?

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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

This questionnaire is intended to find out causes of school dropout in Basic Schools in Sekyere South District. It is purely an academic study and you are sure of confidentiality. May you please, answer the following as sincerely as possible. Thanks in advance. Please tick [√] against the one which applies and write briefly where necessary.

SA=Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **D**=Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

1. Sex

    Male   [ ]

    Female   [ ]

2. Age

  6-10   [ ]

  11-15   [ ]

  16-20   [ ]

3. Class

  1-3   [ ]

  4-6   [ ]

  JHS 1-JHS 3   [ ]

4. Family structure

  1. Single parent   [ ]

  2. Both parents   [ ]

CAUSES OF SCHOOL DROPOUT:

SA=Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **D**=Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree.

Causes of school dropout	SA	A	D	SD
1. Poor teacher-pupil relationship				
2. Pregnancy				
3. Bad influence from peers				
4. Parents not able to provide pupil(s) educational needs				
5. Parents not able to pay school fees				
6. Teasing or stigmatization resulting from poor performance				
7. Too much punishment by teachers				
8. Sickness or disease of parent(s) such as HIV/AIDS				
9. Teasing or stigmatization resulting from Sickness or disease of parent(s) such as HIV/AIDS				
10 Sickness of pupils				
11 Truancy, lateness or absenteeism				
12 Loss of interest in schooling				
13 Hunger				
14 Parents demand for pupils to help on the farm or market				
15 Bullying				

If there is any other cause(s) please

specify…………………………………………….......................................

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SECTION C:

PUPILS' PERCEPTION OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

SA=Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **D**=Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree.

	Pupils' perception	SA	A	D	SD
16.	The school is boring				
17.	There is too much punishment in my school				
18.	The teacher-pupil relationship in my school is cordial				
19.	The school facilities such as classrooms, tables and chairs are not adequate				
20.	Teachers do not pay particular attention to pupils' problems				
21.	There is no guidance and counseling facility in my school to give advice and direction to pupils				
22.	Inadequate teaching and learning facilities such as books, chalk, etc				
23.	There are no extra-curricular facilities like cultural groups, and games in my school				
24.	My class size is too large				

SECTION D

PREVENTION OF SCHOOL DROPOUT

25. What do you think should be done to prevent or minimize dropout rate in the district?

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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND

ADMINISTRATION

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL DROPOUTS

This questionnaire is intended to find out causes of school dropout in Basic Schools in Sekyere South District. It is purely an academic study and you are sure of confidentiality. May you please, answer the following as sincerely as possible. Thanks in advance. Please tick [√] against the one which applies and write briefly where necessary.

SA=Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **D**=Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

1. Sex

   Male   [   ]

   Female   [   ]

2. Age

   6-10   [   ]

   11-15   [   ]

   16-20   [   ]

3. Class

   1-3   [   ]

   4-6   [   ]

   JHS 1-JHS 3   [   ]

4. Family structure

   1. Single parent   [   ]

   2. Both parents   [   ]

CAUSES OF SCHOOL DROPOUT:

SA=Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **D**=Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree.

	Causes of school dropout	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Poor teacher-pupil relationship				
2.	Pregnancy				
3.	Bad influence from peers				
4.	Parents not able to provide pupil(s) educational needs				
5.	Parents not able to pay school fees				
6.	Teasing or stigmatization resulting from poor performance				
7.	Too much punishment by teachers				
8.	Sickness or disease of parent(s) such as HIV/AIDS				
9.	Teasing or stigmatization resulting from Sickness or disease of parent(s) such as HIV/AIDS				
10	Sickness of pupils				
11	Truancy, lateness or absenteeism				
12	Loss of interest in schooling				
13	Hunger				
14	Parents demand for pupils to help on the farm or market				
15	Bullying				

If there is any other cause(s) please

specify………………………………………………..

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SECTION C

PUPILS' PERCEPTION OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

SA=Strongly Agree, **A**=Agree, **D**=Disagree, **SD**=Strongly Disagree.

	Pupils' perception	SA	A	D	SD
16.	The school is boring				
17.	There is too much punishment in my school				
18.	The teacher-pupil relationship in my school is cordial				
19.	The school facilities such as classrooms, tables and chairs are not adequate				
20.	Teachers do not pay particular attention to pupils' problems				
21.	There is no guidance and counseling facility in my school to give advice and direction to pupils				
22.	Inadequate teaching and learning facilities such as books, chalk, etc				
23.	There are no extra-curricular facilities like cultural groups, and games in my school				
24.	My class size is too large				

SECTION D

PREVENTION OF SCHOOL DROPOUT

25. What do you think should be done to prevent or minimize dropout rate in the district?

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