

A REVIEW OF CAUSES OF SCHOOL DROPOUTS IN BRICS COUNTRIES: A SOUTH AFRICAN CASE

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Abstract

This paper presents a review of causes of school dropout in BRICS countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. This review is apposite considering that previous literatures have not closely dwelt on such a comparative stance, but given that this group of countries have some economic interest in common, that also translates to social development, it is thus pertinent to review similarities in their school dropout factors. Insight from the literature indicates that school dropout in BRICS countries is an amalgam of closely related factors that culminate to learners dropping out of school. These factors include inter alia, poverty, disability, family configuration, orphan-hood, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, lack of effective teaching method, poor academic performance, and child labour. The paper goes beyond the review and evaluates the relationship between school dropout, government education expenditure and poverty in South Africa. The result indicates that a combination of poverty and low government expenditure on education may aggravate school dropout. This thus suggests that government education expenditure should be formulated to effectively accommodate the rural poor communities.

Keywords: BRICS countries, South Africa, Education, Dropouts

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Introduction

This paper presents a comparative review of school dropout rates in Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS). Given that education is a key to social cohesion, social and economic development; the rate with which learners drop out of school has been described as alarming (Alexandra, 2008; UNESCO, 2013). Accordingly, effective policies for reducing the rate of school dropout requires a knowledge of the causative factors across nations that share some economic and social interests as a common agenda for development. Such interests currently exists amongst the BRICS countries, and this makes it imperative to review some common factors catalyzing school dropout in these countries since such common factors may lead to synergies in educational policies across these countries.

Thus the major aim of this paper is to explore the causes of school dropout in the BRICS countries, and to offer suggestions towards alleviating the rate of school dropouts. Whilst the literature has explored several factors leading to school dropout rates in different BRICS countries, this paper offers a brief syntheses of these researches, and in addition, looks specifically at the relationship between school dropout rate, government expenditure and poverty in South Africa. This examination of relationship appears unique from other dropout related literatures in South Africa as it offers a nuanced dimension for

analysing school dropout from the perspective that the poor needs adequate support from government educational budget, and as well, from the private sector, especially as poverty and inequality is still rife in South Africa (Finn et al, 2014), and education is a catalyst for desired skills production (Mavuso, 2014); such potential skills productivity does not only reside amongst the rich class, but budding skills also abound amongst the poor communities who need educational assistance to develop such skills. The paper thus adds a modest policy implication around education for the poor and reduction of inequality.

This paper is structured as follows: the section following the introduction presents a brief review of related literature, this is followed by an analysis of possible relationship between school dropout rate, government expenditure and poverty in South Africa. The last section presents the conclusion and recommendation.

Related Literature

In their research on the impact of poverty on school dropout in China, Brown & Park (2002) divided family unit and school study information from poor areas in six Chinese territories to look at the impacts of poverty, intra-family choice making, and school quality on learners' performance; in conclusion, Brown & Park (2002) found that poverty fundamentally influences both the ability of parents to

meet the educational needs of their children, and that learners from families that are poor are three times as prone to drop out of school more than others. Furthermore, they find that girls with poor performance at primary school are more prone to dropout than their boys' counterparts; women's empowerment towards enrolment choices reduces the likelihood of school dropout; siblings enrolled in the same school have lower propensity to drop out of school; and that the quality of schools affects the completion time of learners. These findings were corroborated by Connelly & Zheng (2003) who evaluated the "determinants of school enrolment and completion in China" Connelly & Zheng (2003, p. 379) and found amongst others that rural learners have a lower rate of enrolment and graduation; and that parents' education, enrolment of siblings in the same school and income level influences the school enrolment and completion time of learners. Another study by (Li et al, 2013) discover that peer influence is a factor that may also lure learners to drop out of school; thus according to (Li et al, 2013) there is a correlation between peers' dropout and learners dropout of school and that such effect is more pronounced in older students. Whilst looking at dropout from grandparenting perspective, Zeng & Xie (2014) found that grandparents' "sociopsychological" (p.599) standing has a direct influence on grandchildren's educational enrolment and completion outcome in china. This finding has an important lesson for many South African young women who are in the habit of keeping their school age children under the care of their grandparents.

Similar to the above studies in China, other studies conducted in Russia such as Roshchina (2010) and (García, 2013) studied the factors affecting school progression in Russia and found that education of parents and income are major determinants of learners' school progression in Russia; this finding is closely related to Konstantinovskiy, 2012) who found that inequality is a factor that limits learners access to education in Russia. Also in another related study in Kyrgyz, Eversmann (2000) found that factors that contribute to school drop incorporates marriage separation, liquor abuse in the home, or the demise of mother or father, and often, the bereaved offspring of these families are frequently exceptionally deprived. Destitution thus implies that some learners are more prone to be working whilst in school. They might not have sufficient dresses for school or be not able to pay school charges, thus encountering the disgrace and derision that goes hand in hand with these circumstances. These components therefore lead to weird learning participation and poor scholastic execution which are forerunners to dropping out of school (Eversmann, 2000).

Other researchers have looked at the causes of school dropout in Brazil with almost similar results like those conducted in China and Russia. In these researches, child labour has been linked with school

dropout; in their study, Duryea & Arends-Kuenning, 2003) found that wages for teenagers in the metropolitan areas of Brazil was seen to grow higher as neighborhood employment prospects increase, hence learners develop the penchant to drop out of school due to attractive wages. Similarly, in another Brazilian study (Cardoso & Verner, 2006) confirmed earlier studies and found amongst others, that premature marriage has a solid effect in causing teens to leave school without completion. Startling deprivation and or poverty is also discovered as a factor that limits learners' school participation, as learners who go through starvation and malnourishment eventually in their lives are less inclined to go to class.

Other studies conducted in India corroborate findings in other BRICS countries. However one finding in India that is not very common in all the BRICS countries is that teenager nuptial engagement contributes to factors causing learners' dropout in India (Kurz et al, 2013); similarly, in their research on the possible causes of female school dropout in India, (Bashir et al, 2014) found amongst others that there are three major factors that cause learners' school dropout; they opine that these include "personal, school and family factors" (p. 299). According to Bashir et al, 2014) individual elements that may cause learners' dropout includes amongst others, low family income, early marriage, apprehension of getting discipline at school, poor scholastic execution in class, and low enthusiasm toward studies. Bashir et al, (2014) also found that school factors which prompt drop out were poor school settlement, poor seating plan, segregation on the premise of sex, corporal discipline, and lack of school dresses and books. The research also found that family influences that contribute to dropout includes lateness to school, preponderance of illiterate parents and thus little curiosity of parents for education, divorce amongst parents and low family income.

Similarly, researches in South Africa has pointed closely to the same factors leading to school dropout in other BRICS countries. For instance, Grant & Hallman (2008) found some association between teenage pregnancy and school dropout in South Africa. Furthermore, as in previous studies, financial handicaps and learners being older than their grades at school have been found to associate strongly with school dropout in South Africa (Branson, et al. 2014). In the same vein, Spaul (2013) refer to poverty and inequity as factors causing school dropout in South Africa. Other research find that drug related abuse contribute significantly to school dropout in South Africa (Townsend et al. 2007).

Method and Analysis

Using the regression statistics, the analysis sought to measure the relationship between school dropout in

South Africa, government expenditure on education and poverty. Data is sourced from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) (2014) education data base. Existing literature on school dropout rate in South Africa is inundated with several factors that have also been found in BRICS countries as causing school dropout. It is needless therefore to duplicate the same analysis in this paper. Therefore to make a nuanced contribution to existing research on school dropout in South Africa, this paper chose to examine a relationship that is not common in South African school dropout literature. This paper's contribution is based on the premise that if a learner is from a poor family and does not receive enough government educational assistance, such a learner could thus be regarded as having been double-stricken with

destitution. Hence in the analysis in Figure 1, the paper looks at how primary school dropout rate is related to a combination of poverty and government expenditure for education in South Africa.

The ten years data on poverty, school dropout and government expenditure on education was collected from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics data base on global education. The analysis used the regression statistics to examine possible relationship.

Variables:

X1: poverty; (poverty head count ratio at \$2 per day (PPP)[(% of population)])

X2: Government Expenditure on Education as Percentage of GDP

Y: School Dropout (out of school children of primary school age).

Table 1. Relationship Between Primary School Dropout Rate, Government Expenditure on Education and Poverty in South Africa

<i>Regression Statistics</i>								
Multiple R	0.75417746							
R Square	0.56878364							
Adjusted R Square	0.445578966							
Standard Error	39912.17656							
Observations	10							
ANOVA								
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>			
Regression	2	14708240822	7.35E+09	4.61658	0.052654234			
Residual	7	11150872866	1.59E+09					
Total	9	25859113688						
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	-998623.1101	462587.5703	-2.15878	0.06773	-2092468.9	95222.68	-2092468.9	95222.68
Ex%GDP	206427.5998	81628.70493	2.52886	0.0393	13406.38447	399448.8	13406.3845	399448.8
Poverty	6039.130824	2987.035666	2.021781	0.08291	-1024.08615	13102.35	-1024.0862	13102.35

The analysis in Table1 indicates that a combination of poverty and the level of government educational expenditure may lead to primary school dropout rate in South Africa. This may be plausible since a learner from a poor family will rely on government support to stay at school, and if the government support is not effective, there is therefore the tendency that the learner might drop out of school. It thus becomes imperative that government educational funding should be formulated to effectively reach the poor in rural communities.

Conclusion

This paper draws conclusion from the literature and from the analysis of data. Findings from the literature suggests that causes of school dropout in BRICS

countries are largely similar in nature. Literature sources from the BRICS countries confirm that school dropout is an amalgam of closely related factors that culminate to learners dropping out of school. These factors include inter alia, poverty, disability, family configuration, orphan-hood, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, lack of effective teaching method that stimulate and make learning interesting to learners, poor academic performance, child labour (Strassburg et al, 2010; Flesich et al, 2010; Dichaba, 2013), . . Findings from the analysis in Table1 shows that a combination of poverty and low government educational expenditure may lead to primary school dropout rate. This is not surprising since a learner from a poor family will depend on on government sustenance to stay in school, and if the government

funding is not effective, there is therefore the propensity that the learner might drop out of school.

Given the uniqueness of causes of school dropout, the paper recommends *inter alia*, introduction of more designated free-fee-paying schools in rural and townships areas, free textbooks in public schools, school nutrition in public schools, and the introduction of drug testing and counseling in schools, early identification of learners at-risk and effective teaching methods adapted to the needs of learners at risk. Furthermore given that many learners from less privileged families enroll in private schools due to limited spaces in public schools, these learners may not be left completely to the somewhat profit penchant of private educational entrepreneurs, but government can assist learners in private schools by providing free textbooks to these learners.. The provision of books to learners in private schools has become very important as some private schools in the country fail to supply learners with books even after paying costly school fees. Education support fund is highly needed from the private sector in South Africa to assist government educational objective; the Business Partners Limited has already launched a R150 million education fund to support private educational entrepreneurs in South Africa (Mavuso, 2014). Such educational assistance is needed from more private entities and NGOs in South Africa to provide the needed infrastructure for learners to have effective access to education.

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