Mapping the incidence of school dropouts: A case study of selected communities in Northern Ghana

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Breakdown of presentation

- Context
- Purpose of study
- Methods
- Findings
- Conclusion
- Implications
Context

- Savelugu-Nanton district:
  - 4th most deprived of the 53 deprived districts
  - 80% (143 out of 149) of population lives in rural areas
  - Main occupation is farming (about 97% of the population between ages 18 & 54)
  - Prone to child labour, non-school attendance and drop out
  - Migration, child porters and girls’ early marriage impact on enrolment and attendance.
Purpose

- To find out how children drop out of school before age 16 and why, i.e.
  - what conditions/ processes of events/interactions within the family, school and community impact on children’s school attendance and shape their exclusion from school.
Methods

■ Sample:
  – One district (Savelugu-Nanton) in the Northern Region selected
  – 4 Circuits known for drop outs, low attendance, truancy due to farming, market and other activities;
  – 6 Communities (4 semi-urban, 2 rural) within the circuits known for farming activities and market days.

■ Procedure for data collection:
  – Identified loitering children during school hours;
  – Used Snowballing to recruit others;
  – Sought parents’/guardians’ consent to interview children;
  – Interviewed 89 drop outs.
Findings:
Characteristics of Drop outs

- Average age: 12.8: over 50% between 12 & 15 years;
- Grade level:
  - majority (about 82%) dropped out before JSS. About 47% dropped out in lower primary; 35% in upper primary; 18% in JSS;
- Communities with highest tendency for dropping out:
  - Rural: 74% misses school more often than the semi-urban where 26% misses school often
Findings:
Preceding at-risk factors: children’s absenteeism from school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School-related reasons</th>
<th>Household-related reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Ineffective teaching and learning due to teacher absenteeism on Fridays for:</td>
<td>■ Market day on Thursdays;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Muslim prayers and</td>
<td>■ Run errands;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. week end travel.</td>
<td>■ Care for livestock;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ Farm:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62% boys, 37% girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>weed, plant and harvest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>during farming season</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from June to September.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings: children’s stated at-risk factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Difficulty in learning</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Corporal punishment</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Irregular weekly attendance</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Irregular monthly attendance</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Over-age/under-age</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Repetition</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Findings:
### Final critical events resulting in drop out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical events</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Child labour</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Poverty</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The death of a parent</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents’ lack of interest in education</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fosterage</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Poor performance</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Blame on teachers</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sickness</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Pregnancy</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings:
Relationship between at-risk contributory factors and final critical events

Case story 1: Joseph

- At-risk contributory factors:
  - Irregular attendance and long absence from school
  - Household labour needs: helping his father on the farm weeding, planting and harvesting groundnuts between June and August
  - Running errands on Fridays for his father

- Final critical events resulting in drop out in P.3:
  - Cancellation of his name from the register
  - Child labour
Findings:
Relationship between at-risk contributory factors and final critical events contd.

Case story 2: Rose

- **At-risk contributory factors:**
  - Difficulty learning English/poor performance
  - Corporal punishment
  - Irregular attendance
  - One grade repetition

- **Final critical event resulting in drop out:**
  - Death of a parent

**NB:** Unrelated at-risk factors and final critical events
Conclusion

- Single known factors contributing to school drop out, found in other studies are evident:
  - Child labour
  - Poverty
  - Teacher absenteeism
  - Irregular school attendance
  - Poor academic performance
  - Grade repetition
  - Corporal punishment
  - Family shock (e.g. death of a parent)

- Drop out is a process, not an event;

- A combination of at-risk preceding factors make drop out easy;

- At-risk factors may not necessarily lead to drop out;

- Critical events culminate into dropping out when the at-risk preceding factors are not addressed.
Implications

- Local education authorities and school governance bodies should promote policies and practices that would identify advance indications of drop out and minimise its occurrence.

- Schools should operate more flexibly to accommodate farming seasons when there is a strong need for children’s labour. E.g increase contact hours on days when children are in school.

- Local education authorities and school governance bodies should enforce effective supervision and monitoring of schools.

- Educate parents and community on practices that harm children’s attendance and progress in school and also contribute to drop out.