



## DROPPING THE DROPOUT RATE : CHALLENGES AND REMEDIES

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### ABSTRACT

*There have been rapid advancement and effectual changes which have shown far reaching effects on every branch of human learning in the past few decades. Among the negative assailant of the field of education has been the dropout rate of the students from Higher Education Institutes. Counselling services, mentoring programs, tutoring, attendance monitoring or other such policies and devices have failed to bring down the dropout rate which is posing serious challenges to colleges and universities. Increase in truancy and low attendance levels leads to students indulging in anti-social activities. The present paper aims not just aims to understand the challenges and remedies of bringing down the dropout rate, but also tries to analyse the causes in detail so as to seek an effective and lasting solution to the problem.*

**Keywords :** *Challenges in higher education, Increasing dropout rate, Causes, Challenges, Remedies.*

### INTRODUCTIUON

Education actuates the amplitude of progress of an individual. It is a dynamic process which needs to be dstrategically planned and restructured for providing fruition and satisfaction to its pursuers. Scrutinising and reframing the bureaucratic regulations according to the need of the hour is the key for the proper advancement in the filed of education. Educators, administrators, and policymakers at all levels have to intervene and come forward in order to meet the challenges confronting the filed of education.

The US President Barrack Obama has also expressed his concern over the increasing dropout rate and said, "This is a problem we can't afford to accept or ignore," President Obama said, "The stakes are too high- for our children, for our economy, for uor country. It's time for all

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of use to come together – parents and students, principals and teachers, business leaders and elected officials – to end America’s dropout crisis.” (Obama :2010) Let’s analysis the causes of high dropout rate in higher education.

### **Causes :**

Researches on dropout have shown their figures on nthe basis of two broad variables – Fixes Variables and Alterable Variable. The following are some of the major Fixed Variables which cause high Dropout rates in Higher Education Institutions:

### **Fixed Variables :**

- ☛ Socio – Economic Condition
- ☛ Intellecjtual Incapability
- ☛ Family Structure

### **Alterable Variables :**

- ☛ House Mobility
- ☛ Motivational Scarcity
- ☛ Support Services of Institutions

### **Fixed Variable :**

#### **Socio – Economic Condition:**

Dropouts are more likely to come from low-income families. Due to the poor economic conditions the student stops studying and starts working to earn. Besides family structure, parental employment, unfavourable social surroundings etc. lead to increased dropout rate.

#### **Intellecjtual Incapability :**

Some Students opt for courses for which they are intellectually incapable. Their mental capacities restrain them from scoring well. Due to repeated failures these students choose to quit studies.

#### **Family Structure :**

Students who come from single-parent families are at grater risk of dropout/ Moreover children from very large families do not get much care and attention and may dropout from studies. Research consistently finds that family engagement has a direct, positive effect on children’s achievement and is one of the most accurate predictors of a student’s success.

*“Other researchers have reported that specific family involvement practices such as parental monitoring, parent-child discussion, parent participation at the school and PTA membership are linked to student attendance” (Epstein & Sheldon: 309)*

### **Alterable Variables :**

#### **House Mobility:**

The change of household may bring in adjustment problems of the student to the new region, climate, surroundings, language etc. Urban settings are more challenging for children as compared to suburban or non- metropolitan areas.

#### **Motivational Scarcity :**

Children who do not have educated parents or who do not get sufficient guidance lack the motivational factor to move ahead. Besides, there may be teachers who may not be able to give adequate guidance to these students with low motivational levels.

*“Students report that having a person at school who is cheking up on them, gives tha sense that someone cares and motivates tham to come to school”*

*(Gonzales, Richards, & Seeley : 12)*

#### **Support Services of Institutions:**

*“Alterable School policies associated with dropout include raising academic standars without providing supports, tracking, and frequent use of suspension.” (Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio & Thompsom :12)*

Several Sstudents leave colleges because they are not satisfied with the facilities provided by their parent institution. Other that that, drastic policy changes such as changes in admission procedures, changed cut-off parameters, etc. lead to increases dropout.

### **Challenges :**

#### **Personal :**

Organising discussions designed to enhance motivation, self-esteem, confidence etc. Conducting Group Discussions on regular basis, listening sessions, interpersonal interactive sessions scheduled classroom- based discussion and individual counseling, for students who have personal problems.

*“Indeed, research strongly suggests that schoolds which have created smaller and/ or personalizes learning environments have higher attendance and lower dropout rates”*

*(Railsback : 12)*

#### **Academic :**



Providing special academic courses, like Career Oriented Programs, individualized methods of instruction and tutoring, making the learning process experiential, etc. Special training to slow as well as advanced learners should be given.

#### **Family Outreach :**

Constant feedback from parents regarding the child's performance should be done at regular intervals. Parents should be urged to not to exert the "Pull" away from career for any familial causes.

#### **Institutional :**

Implementation of improved policies in institutions such as Earn-while-you-learn schemes, improved placement services, enhanced employability training, access to latest developments through workshops and symposiums etc. can be done.

#### **Remedies:**

Some factors play vital role in prompting the student to dropout from colleges. Though the factors vary on individual front, yet several indicators of distraction and dilution of motivational factor are sometime common. Decisions of dropping out are influenced by contextual factors across the home, school, and peers. A focus on facilitators of this decision would show the power and role of effective interventions from the above mentioned groups. There is also a suggestion for engagement, which will reduce the levels of distraction to a great extent. Christenson defines engagement as a multi-dimensional construct that involves four types of engagement and associated indicators.

**Academic Engagement** refers to time on task, academic engaged time, or credit accrual.

**Behavioural Engagement** includes attendance suspension, and class participation.

**Cognitive Engagement** refers to internal indicators including processing academic information or becoming a self-regulated learner.

**Psychological Engagement** includes identification with school and sense of belonging" (Christenson :2002)

**The remedial measures can broadly grouped under the following categories :**

- 1) Personal/Families Factors
- 2) Institutional Factors
- 3) Teaching Services
- 4) Motivational Factors
- 5) Financial Factors

**1) Personal/Families Factors :**

The atmosphere at home should be congenial for learning. Parents should be learned and understand the value of regular attendance in colleges. Parent-Teacher interaction is also necessary. Supportive and nurturing family and home environment is essential. Monitoring the studies, attendance, regularity as well as the studies and behaviour of the child is important.

## **2) Institutional Factors:**

The institution has to not just provide infrastructure, learning resources, support services and regular teaching facilities, but has to scrutinize the policies and reframe them frequently to meet the challenges of changing times.

*“Policies and practices in several areas need to be examined to determine their effectiveness and whether they have unintended consequences. These areas include discipline and attendance policies, implementation of high standards and grading, retention in grade, special education and remediation, transitions between school levels, course content and instruction, school climate and relationships, and evaluation of alternative programs and practices. After examining these policies and practices, steps need to be taken to improve or change ineffective policies, practices and programs or create new ones.” (Shannon :6)*

## **3) Teaching Services :**

“Low-achieving students increased their achievement level by as much as 53% when taught by a highly effective teacher” (Haycock, 1998). Hence a good mentor can prove to be very beneficial for the truant. Incorporating personalization by creating meaningful personal bonds between students and teachers and among students has to be done. Besides provision of individual assistance at academic, personal and behavioural level can actually help the student in focusing on being regular.

*“Systemic solutions to attendance problems will originate from a system that is made up of teachers and administrators who understand the connectedness of a supporting climate, significant relationships, engaging and challenging content and instruction, rules, policies and procedures”*

*(Wagstaff, Combs & Jarvis : 29)*

## **4) Motivational Factors :**

Counselling at both academic and personal level is a component that incorporates attention to all issues along with life-skills instructions. Exploring diverse learning styles and trying to analyse students with different learning capacities can be followed by extra attention to the weaker ones with learning disabilities. Developing problem solving skills in them and building a strong interpersonal relationship so that they get a sense of belongingness for the institution.

### 5) Financial Factors :

Majority of the student populations who have disproportionately high rates of dropout include those from low socio-economic circumstances or unemployed parents. The institute should be flexible enough to regulate the normal procedures of fee payment for such students and give instalment facility to them. They can also introduce earn-while-you-learn schemes or provide vocational training side-by-side so that the good students do not dropout because of financial problems.

Hence we see that early interventions, modified institutional practices and Institute-Community Collaboration are the factors that can bring about changes in the rising dropout rates all over the world. Providing opportunities for students to apply their learning in relevant, real world situations and help them to see better prospects their own futures, so that they do not think about quitting studies. Identifying students with problems at initial stages would help. No student would dropout immediately in a day, hence it is duty of the parents, teachers and school authorities to maintain a close watch on the students attendance, class performance and other behavioural patterns so that they are counseled early and prevented from dropping out.

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