

A SURVEY OF LITERATURE ON SCHOOL DROPCUTS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the consensus concerning the school dropout topic with an effort to reduce the vast amount of literature to a concise, comprehensive, overview.

To conduct this research, a review of related literature was made with an attempt to analyze the literature to get a clear picture of the breadth and scope of the dropout situation.

Some of the important conclusions of this study are as follows:
(1) The school dropout situation does present a problem national in scope and breadth; (2) A majority of the educational researchers and authors favor some kind of dropout prevention program; (3) Critics of dropout propaganda are in opposition to faulty statistics and misleading interpretations and projections primarily and are not specifically against attempts at dropout retention; (4) The majority of dropouts come from the lower socioeconomic groups; (5) Not enough attention is given to preventative measures of dropout control in the primary grades; (6) Curriculum is primarily college-preparatory oriented in most of our high schools today which makes it difficult for non-academically oriented students to compete; (7) Problems of unemployment of school dropouts are of paramount importance to our nation's economy; (8) Statistics concerning dropout rates are variable depending upon the method of computation and the organization presenting the figures; (9) No evidence has been published to show that dropout prevention programs actually curtail the dropout rate; (10) The more strikes against a student, or the closer he fits the dropout profile, the greater his chances are of becoming a dropout; (11) Preventative dropout measures should replace temporary corrective dropout programs; (12) The majority of dropouts do not become delinquents; (13) The combination of the population explosion and automation which have caused unemployment are the reason for the intensified concern about dropouts and not just larger numbers of dropouts; (14) Half of all dropouts are girls; (15) Parental attitudes significantly influence school attendance; (16) Poor reading ability is the greatest single cause of school failure, although multiple causes are usually necessary and evident in most cases.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The educators of America, in order to form a more enlightened and effective society, have been vested with the responsibility for providing education for the masses. In the opinion of many they have met with great success in their undertaking. Yet critics have been quick to point out that this success is merely a delusion, since for a certain segment of the populace, the dropouts, this does not seem to be true.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

As an educator with a marked interest, this researcher endeavored to explore recent literature for the purpose of determining the realities of conditions relative to dropouts. Contrary to popular opinion, it was anticipated that a thorough review of literature would reveal little or no variation in the views with respect to the magnitude and urgency of dropout conditions nationwide.

HYPOTHESIS

It was hypothesized, consequently, that the research would indicate no variance among the findings of previous research and among the positions held by current authors of dropout literature.

METHOD

A review of related literature available at Montana State University Library was used as a basis for obtaining information needed for this survey. The material from selected professional journals in the fields

of education, counseling, psychology and sociology was then subjected to a biblioanalysis by the author.

LIMITATIONS

Seventy-one research reports, hardbound publications and professional opinions comprised the bibliography for this review. These sources were available in the Library of Montana State University. In an effort to restrict the survey to relatively current publications, only materials copyrighted within the past decade were included.

Hardbound publications were excluded intentionally, except for the most recent selections authored by recognized authorities in the field of education.

This study is concerned only with students who fail to complete twelve years of formal education and does not include college dropouts.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Dropout - A dropout is a pupil who leaves school, for any reason except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies and without transferring to another school.

The term dropout is used most often to designate those elementary and secondary school pupils who have been in membership during the regular school term and who withdrew from membership before graduating from secondary school (grade twelve), or before completing their program of studies. Such an individual is considered a dropout whether his dropping out occurs during or between regular school terms, whether his dropping out occurs before or after he has passed the compulsory school attendance age, and, where applicable, whether or not he has completed a minimum required amount of school work.

2. Biblioanalysis - A term coined to more aptly describe the process of abstracting information from a given piece of literature. It goes beyond the simple process of annotation.
3. Progressive retrogression - Pupils who complete each school year further and further behind the rest of the class.

CHAPTER II

REASONS FOR CONCERN

. . . We have a Declaration of Independence which says that all men are born free and equal. We are born free and, I hope, will remain free. But we are not born equal. We are born very unequal, with unequal abilities and potentials. Every employer knows it, every Army commander, teacher, parent. But we also have the notion that there ought to be equal access to equal opportunities, so that every youngster gets the chance to develop his abilities to the full. Democracy means only that each shall have an equal chance at a chance. This is the essence of American civilization ..
Max Lerner

The escape of many of our early school leavers points out the fact that while all children do go to school, they may not all be receiving equal opportunities in the school. Children have been dropping out of school for a long time and the concern of educators to resolve the problem is not new. Almost 100 years ago in 1872, a paper entitled "The Early Withdrawal of Pupils from School: Its Causes and Its Remedies" was presented to the annual convention of the National Education Association (55:5).

In recent years, the problem of the school dropout has received national attention. Upon reviewing the problem historically, this intense concern can be a bit puzzling. It is evident that more students complete high school today than have ever done so in the past. For every 1,000 children in the fifth grade in 1959-60, there were an estimated 721 high school graduates in 1967 compared with 455 graduates in 1940 (33:33). It is also true that America presently has a greater number

and a higher percentage of high school graduates than any other nation in the world (32:81). What reasons then, have caused such a hue and cry about school dropouts at the present time?

Sheer numbers of dropouts may show some reasons. Shreiber (56:3) reports that in the decade of 1960 to 1970, twenty-six million young people will pass through high school. Of these students, some seven and a half million will quit school before completing the twelfth grade according to national figures that set the dropout ratio at approximately one third (49:525). It must be pointed out that accurate and current figures are difficult to obtain. The Bureau of Labor report of 1966, (68:17) appears to be the latest published statistics that most authors quote which state that 600,000 persons age 14 to 24 dropped out of elementary and high school in 1966. The dropouts were evenly divided between boys and girls. Even if exact figures are not known, the close approximations are enough to make us realize that there may be some complications as a result of such a large number of school dropouts.

The dropout problem has become more pressing today because of a multiplicity of factors which are largely extrinsic to the school and peculiar to our time. Schreiber lists several (55:6):

1. The high rate of youth unemployment.
2. The continuous rise in delinquency and crime among youth.
3. Large scale migration from rural and farm areas to urban centers.
4. The population explosion.
5. The increase in the number of welfare families.

6. The elimination of unskilled jobs through automation, resulting in unemployment.
7. The racial riots in the cities in which the participants are overwhelmingly the unemployed, out-of-school youths of the area.

The recent national concern about school dropouts seems to be mainly an overwhelming response to the wide-scale unemployment of our young Americans, both high school graduates and dropouts. The unemployment rate for white graduates in 1966 was 14.2 percent, and for the white dropouts 17.4 percent; compared to only 2.9 percent for the total white civilization (68;18). Unemployment rates for both non-white adults and school dropouts were roughly double those of the white rates. Unemployment rates are consistently higher for dropouts than graduates, in part because the dropouts tend to be younger, and in part because of the diploma requirement for many jobs. The lack of a marketable skill on the part of the dropouts tends to limit them to unskilled jobs which are quite often of short duration.

The phenomenon known as automation refers to machines which are figuratively chained together to replace the human brain as well as the human hand (50:391). The mere mention of the word "automation", if fully understood, should be enough to strike fear in the stoutest of the unskilled and uneducated. The tremendous strides that have been achieved in the technological fields have revolutionized our world of work. No longer is there the large demand for unskilled labor of thirty years ago. Sofokidis (60:xiv) prophesizes the ever diminishing available opportunities among unskilled jobs will comprise only five percent of all employment opportunities by 1970, as compared to 29 percent in 1950.

The most obvious loss the dropout has to look forward to is financial. A high school graduate can expect to earn an average of \$30,000 more over a lifetime than a high school dropout. The person who drops out at the end of the eighth grade will earn \$50,000 less than the high school graduate (4:11).

Conant (14:102) has stated that the existence of thousands of out-of-work youths amount to "social dynamite". Fherich (29:534) has called quitting school before high school graduation "America's great educational cancer". Presidents of the United States, Congress, Governors, special commissions, labor and business officials, educators, social workers, juvenile court judges - all have expressed their concern publicly and frequently. When we consider one item - that of taxable income from potential wages earned by virtue of a marketable skill by seven-and-a-half million workers - there would appear to be some justification for an all out effort to develop our youth to maximum potential. Translating the statistics into human terms, the dropout is a threat to himself and a burden to society, by virtue of the fact that he has limited himself economically as well as socially. In addition to his restricted job potential, he will be unable to adjust adequately to the adult world, and his contributions to society will be negligible. To paraphrase one author (35:99), the dropout has alienated himself from the mainstream of society by not merely abdicating a large social responsibility, but by also committing a certain kind of suicide.

Automation in itself may not have caused as many problems as it has if it were not coupled with the increased birth rates of the 1940's

and early 1950's which are now being reflected in greater numbers of teenagers and young adults in our population. Approximately 3.8 million youth will reach age 16 throughout the 1960-70 decade which is about one million more per year than the preceeding decade (32:81).

It has long been felt that juvenile delinquency is ten times more frequent among dropouts than among high school dropouts (49:524) but the Maryland dropout survey (60:xix) has provided information to the contrary. Seventy-nine percent of the dropout group studied had not been considered serious behavior problems by their counselors or principals and 76 percent had never been suspended from school. Kleek (32:84) states that the chances for delinquency to occur decrease with every added year of education. There seems to be more emotionalism connecting early school leavers with juvenile delinquency than there is statistics to back up the feelings.

The rural to urban migration, largely by those with less educational background and usually minority groups, is prompted by farm mechanization which is proceeding at such a pace that by 1970 only 5 percent of the labor force will be able to feed the entire nation (56:5). Needless-to-say, these migrants are at a great disadvantage since the only jobs which they are capable of filling in the cities are rapidly disappearing. Projected percent changes in the structure of the labor force from 1960-70 are reported by Morman (46:85), who states that except for no change at the unskilled level and a reduction of 17 percent for farmers and farm workers, all other occupational levels should increase.

Another area affected by the dropout is the security of the nation. States having a high rate of dropouts also are among the states with the highest number of selective service registrants failing the mental test (66:238). Educationally and mentally unqualified draftees are rejected for military service at the rate of 300,000 annually, which is a sad commentary on American education and physical fitness (46:87). A special report on draft rejections revealed that four out of every five draft rejects were school dropouts (50:393). Even in the military we now need more electronic specialists than cannon fodder.

When we think of dropouts, we ordinarily think of boys, but the fact is that half of the dropouts are girls (68:17) who, for the most part, are capable of doing school work. Studies reveal that girl dropouts read better, fail subjects less often, repeat grades less frequently, and have higher I Q's than many boys who stay in school (47:14). Unfortunately, the girl dropout problem has been ignored or underplayed by most authors. Commendable efforts are made to keep boys in school. But despite our belief in women's rights, we still consider education less important for girls than for boys. We know that each year about 175,000 girls leave school to marry (58:52). We also know that one half of all teenage marriages end up in divorce within the first five years. Even if the female dropout stays married she is likely to have to work to help support the family. Today one-third of the labor market is comprised of female workers (47:15) and the unemployment rate is twice as high for women as for men. Girls should be encouraged to remain in school, for a girl's need for an education in today's world is just as important as a boy's.

The public's ire is raised quickly in cases of flagrant civil disobedience. On March 1, 1968, the President's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders stated: "The most dramatic evidence of the relationship between educational practices and civil disorders lies in the high incidence of riot participation by ghetto youth who have not completed high school" (55:6).

In the large cities, there does appear to be a correlation between low socioeconomic groups and school dropouts. In his message to Congress on education in 1965, President Johnson said: "In our 15 largest cities 60 percent of tenth-grade students from poverty neighborhoods drop out before finishing high school and another 10 percent never reach the tenth grade" (55:6). It has been stated above that the unemployment rate for non-white dropouts is roughly double that of the already high rate for white dropouts. Lack of education and employment opportunities tend to perpetuate slum conditions for low socioeconomic groups and swell the cities welfare rolls. The projected welfare budget for New York City for the 1969 fiscal year is ONE BILLION DOLLARS (55:6)! It is difficult to predict how long the taxpayers can or will afford to support such an ever increasing drain on the city's coffer.

In view of the many reasons for concern presented, the most prominent being automation and a growing population, poor job opportunities for the undereducated, and wasted manpower for our country, a very black picture is painted for the future. Not all authors agree that these facts are presented accurately.

OPPOSING VIEWS

In the research for this study, nine out of seventy-one authors presented opposing views to the generally held opinion that the school escapees amounted to a serious educational problem of national importance. These nine authors did not collectively agree that no problem exists, but each in his own way cast shadows of doubt on the validity of past studies.

In spite of all that has been written about the dropout, there seems to be no standard definition of the term "dropout". A study done by Williams (70:277) points out that there seems to be as many definitions of dropouts as there are research studies and reports. He cites vague and unscientific examples of definitions ranging from Massachusetts' catchall, . . . "a pupil who leaves school for any reason except death", to Utah's, . . . "any student who leaves for any reason other than graduation". Williams also believes a distinction should be made between "drop outs" who leave of their own volition and do not attend any other school, "lock outs" who are expelled and cannot return even if they wish to do so, and "kick outs" who are suspended for a limited time. Wilstach (32:91) shows how the school dropout rates vary according to the definition of dropout:

1. The United States Office of Education (USOE) quoted the dropout rate (1961) in the nation at 40 percent, utilizing the definition that a dropout is a student who failed to graduate from high school with his class with a base year of fifth grade.
2. The U.S. Bureau of Census quoted the dropout rate at the same time as 17.1 percent. This rate was determined by subtracting the number of pupils in some kind of school from the number of school age children.

3. At the same time the U.S. Department of Labor reported that the national school dropout rate was $33 \frac{1}{3}$ percent - with a school dropout being defined as one who did not complete high school.
4. In a study done for Los Angeles County, the dropout rate was given as from 20 to 30 percent, defining the school dropout as one who did not graduate with his class from high school.

It appears that there is a great need for a central agency that will collect the data and compute the figures utilizing a common definition and method. It would also be beneficial if the dropout figures could be catagorized as to ethnic groups, sex, age, and grades, at all levels of public schools. There seems to be a need also for State Boards of Education and local school districts to do follow-up studies on dropouts. Without correct statistics, a great deal of time and money may be wasted on ineffective programs.

Burke (12:46) also attacks faulty statistics as coloring the picture of the true dropout and feels that the actual incidence of dropouts is much less than the press or public opinion would have us believe. He has done follow up studies on published figures of dropouts in certain schools and found them to be innacurate or even erroneous. Burke found in one school that 56 of 77 students classified as dropouts were definitely not dropouts but had merely transferred their schooling to another attendance area. Many were students who were transfered abruptly to other schools and left no forwarding address, some were dropped after being absent for ten days, and others were in reform school. It is debatable whether students in reform school should be classified as dropouts, but transfer students and victims of extended illness should be exempt from the statistics. Undoubtedly, Mr. Burke is generalizing when he compares

his small studies to the total statistics but if these errors were magnified by other school systems due to a lack of proper identification, the picture could be construed considerably.

DuFresne (23:22) states candidly that the schools should recognize that there is a large and growing group that should not be found in the average classroom or in the average school for that matter. He charges education to get rid of the "misfits" and reminds educators that the school is not a playground for amateur psychotherapy but a place for learning. He submits that the able majority are being done a disservice by teachers attempting to cope with people who don't want to be helped. The teachers' function often times becomes less a matter of instructing and more a matter of keeping order. He suggests that many teachers leave the profession rather than put up with the person who simply will not learn. Goodman (32:82) concurs and points out that in this decade a "graduation for all" drive has evolved, which he feels is unrealistic and of universal damage. Certainly even a dull youngster who behaves and tries to learn should stay in school as long as he desires - though it's a cruel practice to give him a high school diploma and fool him into thinking he has accomplished the same as the rest of the class.

Reynolds (48:302) is against programs that spend several hundred thousand dollars to attract dropouts back into the classroom. He writes about a New York City program that failed when the students dropped out for the second time because of lack of ability or interest in the academic subjects. Because of compulsory attendance laws, many non-academic oriented students are forced into failure because they simply

cannot compete on an intellectual level so they either drop out or stay in and become discipline problems. Reynolds believes we should identify these students before they become failures and either put them into a manual training program or encourage them to leave school, always keeping the doors open if they should want to return. He believes the classroom should be free of troublemakers so that there is more room for those who believe academic education is something of importance.

A separation of dropouts and potential dropouts into ranking priorities for school responsibility is suggested by Rovello (51:402). Of prime importance would be the average child of average intelligence who has missed some of the fundamentals of learning early in the grades and the average child who has low aspirations but is capable with help. A second group that should be given limited help are the mentally and physically handicapped if they can make a satisfactory adjustment. Rovello fails to see the logic in spending a great deal of time and money on youngsters who will make the least contribution to society. He feels the normal youngsters are being cheated when they are crowded into classrooms of forty pupils while the law restricts the educable class to fifteen. Rovello's third group is the defiant, disobedient delinquent whom he feels the school should have no responsibility for. He calls the disadvantaged child the neglected child and does not believe the schools should accept responsibilities such as teaching respect, manners, and other parental duties.

Personal motivation, not external compulsion, should be what keeps students in school submits Meckley (71:10) who advocates placing high

school on a voluntary basis. If students are forced to attend schools in which they are bored by studies unsuited to their needs or abilities, they put little effort into their school work and may contaminate the classroom with their attitude. Meckly believes that under compulsory school attendance laws, the school is forced to waste time on students who refuse education. An example is given of the sixteen-year-old truant in New York, who, upon being forced to return to school, said to his teacher, "Well, I'm back. Now you entertain me" (48:302).

Although the views presented in opposition to the assistance and benefit of the early school leaver are in the minority, they do bring out some salient factors which are worth bearing in mind in consideration of the dropout situation.

CAUSES OF DROPOUTS

Most studies of dropouts seek to identify the reasons why students abdicate their educational inheritance and they have found that these reasons are multiple and complex. Practically all studies agree that early school leavers more often come from lower class groups (14:104) and are slightly below average intelligence but dropouts also come from higher class groups and/or with higher intelligence. If educators could pinpoint the sources and the causes it would be much easier to effect some sort of cure, but they are finding ^{that} the going most difficult. The blame is quickly passed around from teacher, to parent, to school, to society, and of course to the dropout himself, depending on who is doing the blaming. The real cause or causes may go undetected while the buckpassing is going on. The easiest way to find the causes, it seems, would be to ask the dropouts themselves. This has been done and the answer is they don't ^{the usual}

^{Statement -}
 really know or they don't like school. 'Many dropouts feel dissatisfied in their social relationships with other students; others feel poorly treated by their teachers.' Liddle (43:276) believes dropouts usually leave because they fail to find personal acceptance, what they regard as meaningful instruction, and a chance to be successful. Davis (21:799) goes along with this point of view and lists lack of self-esteem and a feeling of not being wanted are causes for leaving. He reports studies of dropouts that seem to establish the fact that the basic guidance need of this group is the feeling that someone in the school really cares about them as people and genuinely wants to help them. A warm personal relationship is an important factor in keeping these children in school!

The curriculum is attacked by many who say that the school program does not seem to meet the dropouts needs (5:28). 'Some dropouts feel that their schooling was impractical in that it did not prepare them for a vocation' (43:276). Bennett (46:87) suggests that the dropout problem is a consequence of education's failure to meet its obligations and Davis (21:799) concludes that most reasons for dropout are school centered. 'Along with the school, individual teachers are accused of unfairness, holding things against students, picking favorites, making fun of students, and making it rough on students' (44:44). Hackney (34:39) charges poor instruction as the real cause of dropouts and urges teachers to up date their methods to modern day approaches. He claims teachers lack empathy with less able students, do not know their students or their subject matter well enough, and are not willing to change.

' Parents of dropouts have been studied and parental attitudes toward

education are said to significantly influence school attendance' (43:277).

Lower class mothers teach their children that life is a long series of trying situations to be avoided if possible or they are indifferent to their child's schooling. Many undercut the schools by saying the junk they teach in schools won't help you and you don't have to let the teachers treat you badly. Other parents encourage their children to drop and help the family out financially. Financial need and dislike of school are given as major reasons for dropouts by Scales (54:340). Financial need is easy enough to verify but "dislike of school" needs further probing to determine the real cause. ^

There is not unanimity of opinion of the relationship between low scholastic aptitude and high school dropouts (53:340). It appears that the median scholastic aptitude of the drop outs is about 90 IQ, with the range for the great majority varying from about 50 IQ to about 130 IQ.

Studies of high mental ability dropouts indicate that strong forces to conform at school contrast sharply with permissive parents and teachers on different intellectual and emotional levels (28:164). Activities which help develop social skills seem to be needed by the more intelligent dropouts.

Millard (45:343) analyzed the causes for dropouts psychologically and found students drop out of school for the feeling of self preservation, hostility and self-pity, inability to draw realistic inferences from what is happening to them, fantastic notions of self-marketability and ideas of being exceptional, and illusory and illogical self confidence. He also stressed the relation of mental health to basic causes for early

school withdrawal. He said:

"Students are unwilling to master feelings of defeat; therefore, they overcompensate for feelings of inadequacy or failure by withdrawal of self from educational environment."

Poor reading ability was reported to be the greatest single cause in all studies. There are three times as many poor reading dropouts as there are good reading dropouts (14:104). The average dropout is retarded two or more years in reading. In cases of poor readers the phenomenon of progressive retrogression begins and eventually they lag so far behind that they might as well quit school.

The case histories of dropouts often show a long record of poor health (10:207). Many have dental trouble and a surprising number with some degree of deafness. Correct vision does not seem to be any more of a problem than is normally encountered in school children. Prolonged poor health tends to lower scholastic achievement, because of prolonged periods of absence or irregular attendance and below par health while in school. Irregular attendance may also be caused by frequent movings of the family which is especially true of low socioeconomic groups who move to avoid paying rent and high socioeconomic groups who move for occupational reasons (44:41).

The peer group also affects the adolescent's attitude toward education (43:272). Dropouts tend to influence others to drop out. Friends who have dropped out are living examples of the fact that there is little or no immediate consequence to outweigh the pleasure they find in escaping an unhappy school situation. Boredom is prevalent with most dropouts.

" Pregnancy and/or marriage is the girl dropout's primary excuse for leaving school, although the reason for the pregnancy or marriage would be more important especially if the girl is looking for the warm personal relationship she did not find in school or at home. Many pregnancies result when high school girls go steady with older out-of-school boys (44:40).

| Those who drop school after disputes over dress or length of hair have common characteristics of other dropouts, and this dispute is not the prime reason for dropping; even though it is named by the dropout or his parents as the prime reason.

For some students, a car and a job may tend to cause them to drop out of school. For others, a car and a job may keep them in school.

Newcomers to city schools often have difficult problems of adjustment (44:41). A sense of belongingness and a feeling of acceptance may not be easy to develop in a strange environment the student feels lost in. Personal problems and lack of identity may tend to be overlooked by the larger school systems, especially if they are overcrowded. /

Hughes (37:26) makes the logical assumption that the dropout problem may well have its roots in the elementary school program. He cites common practices that tend to impede the healthy, normal growth of children such as rigid grade standards, paper and pencil measuring devices exclusively, our extrinsic reward system, and our timetable reading program. He charges all students should not have to learn the same thing at the same time in the same order and reminds us that failure breeds failure.

The student retention dilemma has plagued administrators for many years. Blanket policies of promotion have fostered an attitude of irresponsibility among many students; research has demonstrated the folly of retention as a way of improving academic achievement or improving the attitude of those retained toward school (26:84). The conflicting consequences of retention and non-retention policies has left the administrator with no recourse but to accept one policy or the other and then to try to compromise its shortcomings, or to decide each case individually. Whether there is a cause and effect relationship between retention and dropouts has not been adequately determined. Success of retention seems to depend on what changes have been made in the students' program in school and in his attitude towards school.

A myriad of causes are common among dropouts. Most students are faced with one or more of these at some time in their school life. The dropout has become dissatisfied and discouraged in his futile attempt to cope with his problems and rebels by leaving school. The schools and parents are both responsible to some degree that a youngster reaches this point. Though the dropout is of no single type, research of a wide variety concurs in indicating certain reoccurring characteristics which tend to categorize him and shed some light on his predicament.

PROFILE OF DROPOUTS

Schreiber (57:45) has developed a comprehensive portrait of an "average" dropout from his national study on dropouts:

"He is just past his 16th birthday, has average or slightly below average intelligence, and is more

likely to be a boy than a girl. He is functioning below his potential; he is below grade level in reading; and academically he is in the lowest quartile. He is slightly over age for his grade, having been held back once in the elementary or junior high school grades. He has not been in trouble with the law, although he does take up an inordinate amount of the school administrator's time because of truancy and discipline. He seldom participates in extracurricular activities; he feels rejected by the school and, in turn, rejects the school. His parents were school dropouts, as were his older brother and sister. He says that he is leaving school because of lack of interest but that he will get a high school diploma in some way or other, because without it he cannot get a good job. He knows the reception that awaits him in the outside world, yet he believes that it cannot be worse than remaining in school."

Schreiber also points out that students taking general courses or non-college preparatory courses made up the largest proportion of dropouts.

A highly similar description compiled by another researcher (36:516) from unrelated studies shows a correlation between the stereotypes:

"He is more likely to be a boy than a girl, to be below average in intellectual ability and even lower, relatively speaking, in academic achievement. He will not have participated in many school extracurricular activities and will have his closest friends outside of the school population. He comes from a relatively large town and is attending a relatively large high school. In this community, he will see some opportunity for employment. His parents are likely to be from a lower social stratum and his father employed in a lower-class occupation. Neither his parents nor any of his brothers or sisters are apt to have distinguished themselves in terms of educational attainments. While he may or may not express an active dislike for school, he is apt to be absent rather frequently, and in other ways, to demonstrate his attitude that he really doesn't belong in the school setting."

General descriptions such as these can be useful to the school counselor in providing a number of clues for spotting the potential dropout. A review of the literature regarding the identifying characteristics of dropouts produced a long list of factors that many different students of the problem have shown to be useful in distinguishing students who drop out of school from those who do not. From a similar list Lacy (40:36) developed a scale for the purpose of identifying dropouts before they dropped out. He felt that a combination of factors would be a better indicator of potential withdrawal than any single factor. The greater the number of factors working to a student's disadvantage the greater his chances of dropping out of school. Factors selected for his scale included sex, attendance, school marks, scholastic aptitude, reading ability, overage for grade, and course of study. All factors are weighted according to degree. The findings of his study strongly indicate that there is practical use for a scale that uses readily accessible information from school records to identify school dropouts. Studies tend to show that those identified as prospective dropouts often, with proper help and guidance, can be helped to stay in school. Lacy used his scale in the junior high and early high school years but there are indications that potential dropouts can be identified in the elementary and even primary grades. A longitudinal study by Frerichs (29:534), utilizing school records, teachers ratings and home environment information, suggests that schools can predict with a high degree of accuracy those lower elementary school children who will terminate their education before high school graduation. That the attack against early school leaving needs the full support of the lower elementary school instructors is becoming more

commonly accepted. No longer should we view dropouts as a secondary problem only.

An examination of cumulative records from kindergarten by Shea (59:26) has provided a pattern common to future dropouts and also questions our teaching methods:

"In the primary grades, the future "drop-out" frequently shows weakness in self-expression, in the ability to form abstract concepts, and sensing the picture or idea behind the symbol, in muscle coordination and in auditory discrimination. He also is frequently cross dominant in both hands and eyes. Since these are basic elements in the reading and learning process, the "drop-out" soon regards himself as "dumb" and his teachers say he is a "slow learner". His ability in arithmetic is too often passed by and its significance discounted, when actually it is important in determining the method of teaching this child. The slow learner is said to have a short attention span, yet he will watch an anthill for an hour; endlessly he will practice pitching or batting; and he will take an old alarm clock apart and put it together again, working continuously to the end of the task."

Shea further characterizes the potential dropouts as overactive and disinterested in academic type study but starved for digestible learning experience.

Researchers agree that no single characteristic or pattern of characteristics will describe all dropouts or identify all potential dropouts. However, varying combinations of a number of identifiable characteristics do appear to be related to dropping out of school.

SOLUTIONS ?

The two types of approaches to reducing the dropout rate are by

taking either preventative or corrective measures to keep students in school. At this time corrective measures prevail. Prime examples of the influence of the corrective philosophy are The Federal Job Corps, The Neighborhood Youth Corps, The Manpower Development and Training Act, and over \$3 billion worth of dropout programs funded by the U.S. Office of Education (3:30). Among these programs are Boston's Center for Opportunity Progress in Education (COPE), Washington, D.C.'s School to Aid Youth (STAY) program, New York's Project Re-entry, and many other programs too numerous to mention designed to entice the dropout back into the classroom (53:14). Federal funds are also available through Title I and III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The large scale pumping of federal funds into corrective dropout programs was prompted by President Kennedy's national summer dropout campaign of 1963 (5:27), which in turn was prompted by the rising dropout rate. Two immediate implementations of the campaign were to (1) mount a nationwide publicity campaign and (2) use counselors to work with dropouts to get them to return to school to finish their education. Fifty percent of the dropouts contacted that year returned and of that number ninety percent were still in school in November. The number of returning dropouts that eventually graduated was conspicuously absent from the statistics but the publicity caused most school personnel to take a fresh look at a need for some revision in the school programs. In 1963, Francis Keppel, then U.S. Commissioner of Education stated (55:7):

"The fundamental goal is not merely to keep children in school but to educate them. The test of success, therefore, is not merely the reduction of the dropout rate but the improvement of the educational product."

All of the programs to combat the dropout rate have some good in

them. At the very least, they demonstrate the Nation's concern and effort to resolve serious economic and social problems, but essentially they are rear-guard actions. They are not getting at the roots of the problem which is to educate all children for a meaningful, participating, successful life in a democratic society. If these children are not motivated and successful in school, then staying in school becomes an end in itself rather than a means to an end.

Fortunately, many schools are beginning to work toward preventative measures for improving school holding power. Federal programs initiated are the Higher Horizons Program in New York City and the nationwide project Head Start (29:533). Identification of potential dropouts and improvement in counseling services show that some progress is being made in the preventative method. At the elementary level so far, the approaches made to the prevention of dropouts are few, but should be many because of the importance of early education (14:107).

Curriculum revision has received much attention in connection with the dropout. If the dropouts leave because the school does not fit their needs, then adjustments are necessary to make the schools more interesting and meaningful to the students (10:210). Russell (52:13) states:

"It would appear from the record now at hand that the solution to the dropout problem lies in schools developing effective new approaches to the wide range of student needs. Attempts to coax and persuade potential dropouts to stay in school when the school continues to foil them," he said, "accomplish absolutely nothing."

Suggestions for curriculum revisions include (46:89):

1. Work-Study programs to allow poor students to work half-time for regular wages and, to study half-time for credit toward a diploma.
2. Cooperative Education programs which involve two students holding down one job and each student studies a half day and works a half day.
3. Custom Made Curricula entails waiving ordinary academic requirements and allowing students to pursue any course they may desire instead of a pre-packaged plan.
4. Rusticating Plans which allow students to leave to look for a job and then return without any black marks.
5. Increased remedial help so that students will be able to succeed.
6. Nongraded High School which attempts to remove stigma of failing.
7. Increased Counseling services, including group counseling and counselors in the elementary school.
8. Eliminate compulsory high school and provide a curriculum that would encourage students to stay in school.
9. Remove "hidden" costs of educations such as activity tickets, dance tickets, yearbooks, class rings and the like to make schools truly free.
10. Allow below average students to participate in extra curricular activities and sports. This may be their only reason for coming to school.
11. Provide more vocational education. All students are not academically inclined and should not be forced to take college prep courses or to suffer through "general" courses.
12. Encourage Industry-Education cooperative programs whenever and wherever possible. Industry has the money, the personnel, and the interest to cooperate with the schools in providing a better education program.
13. Identify potential dropouts in the elementary grades and provide special help for those students before it is too late.

About the country many new approaches have been brought to bear on the dropout situation. Some of the projects are not transferrable to

other communities, but the very variety of the programs should indicate that there is no over-all standardized solution. Educators are slowly beginning to realize that treating the symptoms never removes the cause (66:239). Therefore a concrete preventative approach is definitely needed if the dropout is ever going to become extinct. The potential dropout must be identified at an early age, the cause determined, and the cure applied.

How much good the national dropout prevention programs have done is not known because follow-up studies have not been made. Statistics are confusing, misleading, and variable depending on who is presenting them. Historically, the national rate of dropouts is decreasing, from fifty percent thirty years ago, to thirty-five percent today according to Schreiber (56:15), and the number of high school graduates has increased to its all time high of 721 per thousand in 1967. Paradoxically because of the increased population, the increased rate of automation, and the increased unemployment rate, the 600,000 or 700,000 annual dropouts we now have present a greater problem to our country and to themselves than ever before. Therefore, the importance of the dropout situation lies not only in the large numbers of dropouts, but in the ability of the country to assimilate these people into its work force. And this is becoming increasingly difficult in the face of the reduction of need for unskilled labor in our technological age.

ANALYSIS

It appears to this author that the dropout concern reached a peak in about 1963-64 because of the coupled forces of automation and the

population boom which caused an increasingly high unemployment rate among the unskilled dropouts. At the same time that these larger numbers of youths were idle, the delinquency rate began to rise. In the ghettos of the large cities, the dropout rate, unemployment rate, and the delinquency rate were double. Even though no cause and effect relationship could be established, headlines were made, and the lean towards sensationalism was prevalent.

The country was alarmed and hastily pumped many federal dollars into anti-dropout and reclaiming the dropout programs. No follow-up programs have been made and at best, only temporary corrective relief has been accomplished.

Educators were moved by the national concern, however, and are now taking a second look at their curriculums. No dramatic solution for or reduction of the dropout rate has come about as of yet, but with the added federal funds and an increasing awareness that they must get to the roots of the problem, schools are turning toward preventative measures for reducing the dropout rate.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY

This study has been concerned with a survey of literature related to school dropouts. It was undertaken with the belief that if more is known about why youths leave school before graduating from high school, then the next generation may be helped to graduate. An attempt was made to learn about the current status of dropouts, how widespread and to what extent it is or is not a problem, the general opinions of educators associated with dropout studies, and the results of research conducted in efforts to discover the causes of and solutions to school dropouts. The literature was analyzed by the author in an effort to obtain a clear, concise picture of the overall situation.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the research conducted regarding school dropouts the following conclusions can be made:

1. The school dropout situation does present a problem national in scope and breadth.
2. A majority of the educational researchers and authors favor some kind of dropout prevention program.
3. Critics of dropout propaganda are in opposition to faulty statistics and misleading interpretations and projections primarily, and are not specifically against attempts at dropout retention.
4. The majority of dropouts come from the lower socioeconomic groups.
5. Not enough attention is given to preventative measures of dropout control in the primary grades.

6. Curriculum is primarily college-preparatory oriented in most of our high schools today which makes it difficult for non-academically oriented students to compete.
7. Problems of unemployment of school dropouts are of paramount importance to our nation's economy.
8. Statistics concerning dropout rates are variable depending upon the method of computation and the organization presenting the figures.
9. No evidence has been published to show that dropout prevention programs actually curtail the dropout rate.
10. The more strikes against a student, or the closer he fits the dropout profile, the greater his chances are of becoming a dropout.
11. Preventative dropout measures should replace temporary corrective dropout programs.
12. The majority of dropouts do not become delinquents.
13. The combination of the population explosion and automation which have caused unemployment are the reason for the intensified concern about dropouts and not just larger numbers of dropouts.
14. Half of all dropouts are girls.
15. Parental attitudes significantly influence school attendance.
16. Poor reading ability is the greatest single cause of school failure, although multiple causes are usually necessary and evident in most cases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made as a result of this study:

1. Follow-up studies should be made to determine the value of dropout programs.
2. One central agency should be responsible for collecting national statistics concerning dropout rates using a commonly held definition of dropouts.

3. Counselors should be hired in the elementary schools so that preventative counseling can be done with identifiable potential dropouts.

4. Teachers should discipline their own ranks to rid the profession of undesirable members who are driving children away from the classroom.

5. Federal money should be redirected toward preventative instead of corrective dropout programs.

6. More vocational education should be presented in the schools for the non-academically oriented.

7. School curriculum should be revised to meet the needs of all ability levels. School should be fun, not boring.

8. All students should be allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities and athletics regardless of their grade point averages.

9. Female potential dropouts should be given equal consideration in solving their problems. An equal effort should be made to keep females from dropping out.

10. An effort should be made to involve the total community in an active campaign in preventing school dropouts.

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