Prevalent Dropout: A Challenge on the Roles of School Management Teams to Enhance Students Retention in Botswana Junior Secondary Schools

Luke Moloko Mphale
Department of Primary Education
Faculty of Education, Private Bag 00702
University of Botswana
Gaborone

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate how prevalent dropout affects roles played by school management teams to enhance students' retention in Botswana junior secondary schools. This was triggered by growing concerns about the increasing students' dropout due to various reasons. Data was collected through a questionnaire administered to two hundred and seven in-service student teachers in the University of Botswana. The reliability level was 0.8 using Cronbach Alpha Statistic. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants. Data was analysed using frequency tables and percentages. The research has indicated that there is an increase of dropout cases due to amily background, student behaviour and school experiences. The increase in students dropping out of school nullifies some of the roles played by the school leadership to retain students. Basing on the research findings the study recommends that parents, community and teachers should work together to enhance students retention.

Keywords: Drop out, truancy, absenteeism, retention, achievement

1.0 Introduction

School dropout causes a concern to both developing and developed countries. It is a very serious problem because it affects the dropouts, their parents, government and the society. The school dropouts face problems of unemployment and other social ills, their families get frustrated seeing how the children's potential has been wasted and for the government which invest heavily in educating the students is a loss of taxpayers' revenue and increased medical expenses (Levin & Belfield, 2007). According to Flisher and Chalton (1995) dropouts in South Africa are unable to meet the cost of balanced food and medication. Flisher and Chalton (1995) continue to say the societies lose their tax revenue because the dropouts do not have an input in the country's economy. On average in South Africa the overall school dropout rate was 4% in the 2011 school year (Department of Basic Education, 2011). According to Zais (2012) South Carolina dropout rate increased by 2.8% for 2010/2011school year. Botswana Education Statistics (2012) shows junior secondary school dropout increase of 2.5% as compared to previous years.

As a result of school dropouts a significant number of dropouts leave school without having learned the basic life skills. As alluded to, the consequences of school dropout is not only felt by the children alone; but it is also a drain to the inadequate resources that most countries have. In Botswana 7.8% of Gross Domestic Products (GDP) is spent in public education. Education is a priority and for a number of years it was allocated a larger share of the country's budget than most other ministries. For instance, for the 2014/15 the Ministry of Education and Skills Development is allocated 27.8% of the re-current budget which is a bigger share of the national budget than other ministries. A dropout rate of 2.5% means a loss of government revenue and an increase in unemployment, establishment of behaviour rehabilitation programmes and an increase in medical expenses if they happen to have contracted HIV virus, AIDS related diseases and other terminal diseases. Despite the harsh consequences of school dropout, plans to improve students' retention have received little attention from both the government and schools in Botswana. Although Botswana is said to show a remarkable improvement in providing access to basic education, retention problem are not vigorously addressed. Lekoko and Maruatona (2005) affirm this by saying "the education system opens doors to the majority of Batswana to enrol but then fails to retain them (p.7).

Researchers believe that schools can make a difference in reducing the school dropout rate (Berger, 2001; Hansen, 2002). Rumberger & Lim (2008) observed that students are less likely to drop out if they attend schools with a stronger academic climate. The school administration is charged with the responsibility to provide students safety, improve students' mental agility, inculcate good morals and values. The community looks at the school administration as the source of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are required by the society, hence teachers are held in awe and are being given a nickname'*teachers no mistake'*. Therefore, schools are expected to come up with interventions and services to prevent students dropping out of school.

1.1 Problem Statement

Schools in Botswana have being charged with the responsibility to provide education for all irrespective of ethnicity, social background, gender, ability and colour. But education for all is hampered by an escalating school dropout in junior secondary schools due to various factors such as socio-economic status, lack of parental support, students' behaviour, poor achievement, the school learning environment, and pregnancy. In spite of schools effort to introduce interventions and services such as Pastoral Care programmes, Back to School, Circle of Support and Child-Friendly School, a significant number of students still dropout of school without having achieved their academic and social goals. This questions the credibility of the school managers' role in enhancing students' retention. If the situation persists taxpayers' revenue which was invested in the students will be lost, unemployment rate will be increased and students are likely to be engaged in social vices. It is against this background that an investigation on how prevalent school dropout affects the roles of senior management teams in enhancing students' retention was conducted.

1.2 Significance of the Study

School dropout is a challenge worldwide. A large number of the dropouts often receive lower income, they have limited opportunity for better jobs and in most cases remain unemployed. This causes a burden for the society and the government as programmes will have to be established to take the dropouts out of the streets. There is a need for programmes in schools to improve retention. Although numerous studies have been conducted internationally about school dropout and ways of preventing dropout, there are few of such researches in Botswana. The study will therefore provide a basis for understanding of dropout and guide educators, policy–makers and decision makers in Botswana on ways to improve students' retention. The study will also provide relevant information on programmes that could be suitable for parents and teachers to implement for high retention rate.

1.3 Research Questions

(a) How does prevalent school dropout affect the school management teams' roles in enhancing students' retention and success?
(b) What factors cause school dropout?
(c) How can the school management teams enhance students' retention?

2. Literature Review

There is a current debate with regard to meaning of school dropout. Some authors describe school dropout as students leaving school without completing studies without intention of returning(Ramirez & Carpenter, 2008), while others describe it as the withdrawal of students before completing a course of instruction or a grade in a given school year (Seidman, 2005; Department of Basic Education, 2011).Botswana Education Statistics report (2012) refers to school dropouts as students who dropout during January to December of the previous. The impression given by the above definitions is that the students who leave school for a year and then re-enters cease to be called dropouts. So the definition of school dropout differs from one context to the other. This is affirmed by Molosiwa and Moswela (2012) who attest that the definition of school dropout is determined by who reports the learner's missing from school. School dropout as used in this article refers to students who leave schooling without intention of returning before completing whatever grade they were enrolled for.

Hunt (2008) sees dropout as a process rather than an event and is caused by more than one proximate. Literature reviewed shows that there are three main factors which influence school dropout. These factors may be associated with family background, students' behaviour and those related to individual experience in schools (Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Sabates et al, 2010). Amongst factors related to the family include poverty, single-parent families, parents' educational attainment, parental support, parents' attitudes to schooling, marriage and family mobility.

The individual experience relates to factors such as poor academic achievement, level of resources, size of the school, uncaring teachers, academic a motivation and disciplinary problems (Ramirez & Carpenter, 2008; Ramsdal et al, 2013). Those related to student behaviour include truancy, absenteeism, desertion, alcohol and substance abuse, bullying and low level of academic a motivation.

2.1 Causes of School Dropout

Poverty as one of the family factors is seen by Hunt (2008) as a multifaceted concept which encompasses social, economic and political elements. It is a condition which can lower the individual self-esteem and makes him/her vulnerable. Adverse poverty can impact negatively on the students' wiliness to continue or drop out of school. Children from low-income families especially vulnerable and marginalised, are likely to drop out of school than those from families with more resources (Hunt, 2008; Rumberger & Lim, 2008). These students are unable to pay cost of school activities such as school uniform, development levy and educational trips. This increases pressure on the students to look for a job and earn income for the school activities and for their families. The alternative solution is to leave schooling. In some African societies the girlsare forced into early marriage to boost the family's income. In such marriages it is a custom that the bridegroom pays a certain amount of money or beasts as *lobola*. *Lobola* is a certain number of cattle or amount of money paid to the bride's family by the prospective husband. This in a way alleviates families from poverty. Molosiwa and Moswela (2012) affirm that "girls from economically disadvantaged families willingly or unwillingly get into relationships expecting monetary benefit" (p.270). This goes hand in hand with parents' attitude towards education. Once the parents do not see the value of education, they then treat education as a waste of time. This normally happens in families who have not gone to school and do not have any educational qualification. The support given to students will be minimal and students will be encouraged to drop out of school. Therefore students without adequate resources in terms of parental education are likely to drop out as opposed to those with adequate resources.

The individual experiences in school have been proven to be another cause of students drop out. One of the individual experiences factors is academic performance. Poor performance that results in students having to repeat a grade and mix with students of mixed abilities creates a gateway for the repeaters. Normally teachers will concentrate on the high achievers and care less for the low achievers. In some cases the low achievers are ridiculed and given funny names. Under such hostile environment students have little choice but decide to leave school. Another factor is academic a motivation. Students' lack of motivation in academic affairs can have a positive impact on dropout. No matter how much effort teachers put on the students to improve their learning and if such students are not motivated it just hitting on a hard rock. Ramsdal et al, (2013) posit that academic a motivation seems to be a prominent problem for numerous high school students. Furger (2008) affirms that dropout is sometimes students being bored and seeing no connection between academic life and real life. Another factor is school policies and practices. Students will continue with school if the school policies and practices are child-friendly, caring, provide safety and encourage both academic and social engagement. An unruly school atmosphere make students feel unsafe and are likely not to be committed to school activities. The safest place will be home, hence the decision to dropout of school.

2.2 Policies to Prevent School Dropout

Countries around the world have policies and intervention aimed to prevent dropout and retain students in schools. For examples, the United States of America introduced programmes such as Dropout Prevention Demonstration Programme and Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. Ghana introduced Capitation a fee-free policy which provides free education to all school going students. Tanzania established a Child-Friendly School initiative. These interventions are geared towards increasing students' retention. Retention like dropout has varying interpretations from both researchers and institutions. Department of Education (2011) defined learner retention as "the continued participation of a learner in the formal school system until the completion of the compulsory school phase. It is an indicator of the efficiency or quality of the school education system" (p.2). While Seidman (2005) describes retention as the "ability of an institution to retain a student from admission through graduation" (p.14). But it can be assumed that retention is the opposite of dropout; where there is a high rate of dropout the retention rate is low.

Retention like dropout is one of the most widely researched topics in the educational arena. Many theoretical models about students' retention have been published and tested. But what seems not well understoodare the events that lead to students remaining in school until they complete their studies.

Some scholars believe that the ability of students to remain is connected to their past communities, family, church or tribe is essential to the persistence (Tinto, 2007). On the other hand Berger (2001) feels schools shape student retention.

Botswana philosophy on education is that education is a fundamental human right. The aim of the education system is that students who will complete junior secondary course should be able to assess their own achievements and capabilities in pursuit of appropriate employment and / or further education (Republic of Botswana, 1994).The purpose of schools is to prepare students for useful, productive life in the real world. In the last two decades there has been an increase in students' enrolment in Botswana junior secondary schools. This was partly to fulfil its mandate to provide education for all and its effort to increase the retention rate. Some of the policies implemented are universal access to basic education, automatic promotion, expanded institution capacity in secondary schools and the reduced walking distance to school to an average of 10km for secondary schools. Recently the Ministry of Education and Skills Development introduced interventions and services such as interventions and services such as Pastoral Care programmes, Back to School, Circle of Support and Child-Friendly School to retain students in schools. In spite of all these programmes in place at school there is evidence of prevalence dropout and low retention rate.

The Revised National Policy on Education (1994) recommends that the education system must "develop moral and social values, cultural identity and self-esteem, good citizenship and desirable work ethics" (p.5).How are these morals and values developed when students have dropped out of school? The Botswana Education Statistics are produced in arrears and normally it is difficult to get the current data because of it not having been published. At the time of the study the current statistics appear in the 2008 edition and in Secondary Education Statistics Brief of 2012. The Botswana Education Statistics from 2000 to 2008 and 2012 shows prevalence in school dropout in junior secondary schools both girls and boys alike due to number of reasons. The reasons for dropout include school fees, expulsion, illness, death, marriage, pregnancy, desertion, bullying, truancy, substance abuse, poor performance(see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Junior Secondary School Dropout Rate by Reason (in Percentage)

Year	Total	Fees	Expulsion	Illness	Death	Marriage	Pregnancy	Desertion	Other
2000	4118	5.5	1.0	3.4	1.7	0.4	40.5	41.6	6.0
2001	3932	2.4	1.0	4.3	1.8	0.2	38.0	45.2	7.1
2002	3569	4.0	1.2	4.1	2.0	0.4	32.4	50.0	3.9
2003	3930	5.6	1.4	4.5	2.2	0.3	38.5	45.6	3.8
2004	3597	5.4	1.4	3.4	2.0	0.4	32.6	51.1	3.6
2008	2490	5.1	0.5	3.4	2.4	0.2	20.8	65.9	1.7

Source: Botswana Education Statistics, 2000 – 2008

Table 2: Junior Secondary School Dropout rate by Reason for 2012

Reason	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	Total
Fees	8	0	20	28
Expulsion	0	2	3	5
Illness	43	30	38	111
Marriage	0	0	4	4
Pregnancy	93	143	195	431
Bullying	1	7	4	12
Truancy	519	438	365	1 322
Substance abuse	3	2	8	13
Poor performance	1	2	2	5
Abuse by parent(s)	1	0	0	1
Corporal Punishment	0	0	0	0
Abuse by teacher	0	0	0	0
Child labour	1	2	0	3
Religion	1	1	1	3
Other	58	86	52	196
Total	**729**	**713**	**692**	**2 134**

Source: Secondary Education Statistics Brief of2012.

Table 1 shows that majority (49.9%) of students drop out due to desertion, while Table 2 illustrates that one thousand three hundred and twenty-two (61.9%) dropped out due to truancy. The Revised National Policy on Education (1994) emphasised that all school age children should be enrolled in schools and be encouraged to persevere until they complete junior certificate or equivalent. This calls for the school management to work around the clock to retain students in schools. `Although there are certain factors which the schools do not have control over such as poverty, but indirectly students can be assisted to alleviate poverty. The Botswana school curriculum is now designedin such a way that all students should have an understanding of business and everyday commercial transaction. Through subjects such as Agricultural Science, Design and Technology, Commerce and Office Procedures students can use the knowledge acquired to improve their entrepreneurial skills.

2.3Challenges on the Roles of the School Management Teams

The work of school leaders nowadays is more complex than ever before. They are expected to perform managerial and instructional roles. By virtues of their positions the school managers oversee all activities taking place in a school and become accountable to activities within the school compound. The core business of school managers is the success of the school by making teaching and learning more effective. The Botswana minister for Education and Skill Development Moitoi-Venson (2014) emphasising the role of school leadership said "success of education is highly reliant on management skills of head teachers" (p.1) It is in the best interest of the school management teams to be trusted, respected and praised by the community they serve. The community expects more than anything else the school management to produce high academic achievement and reputable moral ethos. If the school fails to sustain good academic performance and moral aptitudes the school management is bound to be underrated by those the school is accountable to.

As alluded to one of the causes of students' dropout is poor academic performance. This implies that the school leaders should play the role of an instructional leader. Instructional leadership involves setting goals, managing curriculum, allocating resources and evaluating teachers regularly to promote effective teaching and learning in the classroom. According to Strauss (2013) instructional leadership behavior has shown to be the most crucial role to improve teachers' performance and students' academic achievement. Knowing what happens in the classroom makes school managers to be innovative, visionary and perseverant. Once the students become aware that the school administration is concerned about their performance they tend to remain in the school. In order for the school management teams to enhance retention they should be instructional leaders. Successful instructional leaders should possess excellent planning and observation skills as well as proficiency in research and evaluation of both teachers and students performance (Strauss, 2013). Failure to become instructional leaders may seriously affect the retention role of school managers.

The school environment is another factor which if not addressed can nullify the school management role of retention. It has been observed (Strauss, 2013) that the type of the school environment can force students to drop or remain in the school. The school managers by virtue of their position are expected to provide safety and friendly atmosphere. The school managers are loco-parentis and students should be free to approach the management whenever they have a problem. The school policies should be child-friendly. Policies which are harsh and punitive are most likely to increase school dropout. In an environment where students are cared for and engaged in school academic and non-academic activities motivates them to remain in school. The challenge here is that the school managers should play multipurpose roles. They should more often than not be parents, counsellors, arbitrators, educators, career advisors, nurses and colleagues. A change of roles by senior management teams may improve retention.

2.4 Strategies the School Management Teams may Implement to Increase Students Retention

Students retention is one of the vital roles expected to be executed by school management teams. The teams are solely responsible to come up with strategies to motivate students to complete their grades. One of the strategies the school management teams may implement is monitoring students' school attendance. Attendance problems such as truancy, absenteeism and desertion can be early signs of dropout. An emphasis on keeping daily class registers by school managers will deterun necessary students' absence from school. Daily school attendance is a reflection of students' motivation to learn and a caring learning environment.

Another strategy is involving parents in the education of their children. Parents of students who normally drop out of school are likely to be those who have negative attitudes towards schooling, place little value to school attendance and those who are not involved in the school activities.

Involving the parents in the school matters makes them feel valued and will develop a sense of ownership. According to Furger (2008) parental involvement in the activities of the school has a positive impact on students' academic achievement and the success of the school. The most crucial practice would be school leadership creating a climate that will attract parents to participate in their children's learning. Hughes et al (2013) asserts that shared leadership promotes students learning and achievement, enhance school connectedness and reduce school dropout and increase retention.

Developing programmes and activities within schools should be another strategy that school management teams should be engaged in. The school management teams should always be looking for ways to improve the student experience at school. Engaging students in school progrmmes and activities will enhance commitment to their goals and that of the school. This will ultimately enhance their social and academic integration, and therefore promote retention.Furger (2008) affirms that boredom and disengagement are two key reasons why students stop attending class and end up dropping out of school.

Being mindful of students' academic progress is another strategy. Poor academic performance may frustrate students to the extent that they develop a negative attitude towards a school. They may perceive the school setting as unsupportive and irrelevant. The school management teams may create an alternative learning atmosphere where mixed ability teaching is encouraged. The students will work in groups when they are given an assignment or topics for discussion. The intelligent students will help the low achievers to upgrade their grades and enhance their confidence.

3. Research Methodology

The study used a quantitative approach. A quantitative research unveils the truth by means observing, experimenting on and investigating a given sample. Amongst the positivist paradigms a survey design was adopted. A survey according to McMillan & Schumacher (2010) is administered to a sample of people "to describe attitudes, beliefs, opinion and other types of information" (p.21). The fact that the study solicited opinions from the respondents the survey was appropriate.

3.1 Sample and procedure

The sample consisted of two hundred and seven (207) participants selected from in-service student teachers. The student teachers comprised of teachers and school managers who had just joined the University of Botswana and those who were about to complete a bachelor's degree in educational management. The research was carried out over a period of two semesters. Consent was required from the participants and they had agreed to be involved in the study. The participants represented all cadres of the teaching force. Out of two hundred and seven participants, fourty-six were the School Heads, eleven were Deputy School Heads, thirty-four were Heads of Department, sixty-nine were Senior Teacher grade 1, fourteen were Senior Teacher grade 2 and thirty-three were ordinary teachers. One hundred and twenty-six were females and eighty-one were males. The respondents' age ranged between twenty–six years and fifty-eight years. As regard qualification all participants had a Diploma in Education. Convenience sampling was used to select the respondents. Creswell (2005) describes convenience sampling as a procedure where "the researcher selects the participants because they are willing and available to be studied" (p.149). As such convenience sampling was favoured because the participants were readily available.

3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected through the use of a questionnaire. The questions were piloted using student-teachers who were both in management positions and those who did not hold any management posts and did not participate in the main research. After the corrections were made a final copy was produced for the main research. The questionnaire was preferred because is more reliable, encourages greater honesty, it is economical in terms of money and time, and that respondents have time to give thoughtful answers (Creswell, 2005). Closed and open-ended questionnaires were used to collect data. The closed-ended items design was based on a 5 point Likert scale. The likert scale respondents had options to choose from: *Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree and Not sure*. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A was on demographic information and section B sought views of teachers on factors which enhance on basic education. The researcher administered the questionnaire.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

The importance of ascertaining worthiness of a research instrument cannot be over emphasised. It is impressing to produce a research instrument that once used over and over again yield the same result and be able to measure what is designed for. The credibility of such instruments is measured by their reliability and validity. Watling cited in Golafshani (2003) says "reliability and validity are tools of an essentially positivist epistemology" (p. 598). The fact that the study was quantitative approach the reliability and validity of the instrument were measured. A colleague from the department of primary education validated the instrument. The reliability coefficient was ascertained byusing Cronbach Alpha Statistic which ended being 0.7.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis adopted a computer package form of analysis normally used for quantitative research. The package is known as the Statistical Package for Social science (SPSS) version 19. The Likert scale analysis followed methods of working with the frequencies and percentages of the levels of agreement and disagreement of the respondents. The data analysis was descriptive and presented in the form of frequency tables and percentages. As for open – ended questions themes were used and to some, verbatim reporting was favoured to represent the views of the respondents. Different views from respondents were closely examined. This approach made the data more meaningful and understandable.

4. Findings

The research findings are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Responses of School Management Teams on Factors Causing Dropout and Enhancing Students' Retention

Statement	Participants Responses										Total
	SA (Fr)	%	A (Fr)	%	SD (Fr)	%	D (Fr)	%	NS (Fr)	%	
Causes of Dropout **(a) Family background**											
1. Students' socio-economic status can contribute to school dropout.	201	97	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	207
2. Lack of parental support is one of the factors which contribute to dropout	201	97	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	207
3. Family education qualification	199	96	4	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	207
4. Family mobility	169	82	35	17	3	1	0	0	0	0	207
5. Majority of girls dropout because of early marriage	0	0	10	5	99	48	98	47	0	0	207
(b) Students Behaviour											
6. Students absenteeism and truancy can result in high dropout	187	90	16	8	0	0	4	2	0	0	207
7. Childbearing is the major cause of dropout	207	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	207
8. Students delinquent behaviour	189	91	18	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	207
9. Drug and alcohol abuse	176	85	28	14	3	1	0	0	0	0	207
(c) Individual experience in Schools											
10. Poor performance can result in students leaving school	184	89	16	8	4	2	3	1	0	0	207
11. School policies and practices which are not student-friendly	192	93	12	6	3	1	0	0	0	0	207
12. Uncaring teachers can be the cause of students' dropout.	143	69	60	29	4	2	0	0	0	0	207
13. Students withdisciplinary problems are likely to drop out of school	167	81	21	10	19	9	0	0	0	0	207
14. Academic amotivation can one of the causes of students dropout	200	97	4	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	207
Roles of School Management Teams											
15. Senior management's core business is teaching and learning	112	54	9	4	86	42	0	0	0	0	207
16. Senior management teams are duty bound to retain students in school.	99	48	98	47	10	5	0	0	0	0	207
17. Teachers should be encouraged to assist in reducing dropout.	12	6	181	87	14	7	0	0	0	0	207
18. The school management should engage students in academic and extra-mural activities as retention measures.	65	31	142	69	0	0	0	0	0	0	207
19. Created conducive learning environment can help in motivating students to complete schooling.	203	98	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	207
Challenges on the roles of School Management Teams											
20. An increase in students' dropout renders school managers' roles ineffective.	0	0	4	2	187	90	16	8	0	0	207
21. Low retention rate shows lack of managerial and leadership skills on the part of School Management Teams.	3	1	49	24	155	75	0	0	0	0	207
22. Prevalence dropout is a sign of school management teams' lack of commitment to their duties	0	0	21	10	167	81	19	9	0	0	207
23. High retention rate signifies high quality teaching and learning.	94	45	113	55	0	0	0	0	0	0	207
24. For high retention school management teams have to changes some of their roles	101	49	95	46	11	5	0	0	0	0	207
25. To increase retention parents must be invited to participate in school activities	200	97	7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	207

Key: % = per cent; NS= not sure; Fr= frequency; SA= strongly agree; A= agree; SD= strongly disagree; D= disagree

From the research findings it is clear that there are three main factors which contribute to student dropping out and retained in school. These are related to family background, individual (students) behaviour and those related to individual experience in schools. The respondents' responses on family background indicated an average of 74.4 % strongly agreed, 6 % agreed, 10% strongly disagreed, while 19.6% disagreed and none indicated that they were not sure.

As for students' behaviour the feelings showed an average of 92% strongly agreed, 7.75% agreed, 0.25% strongly disagreed, while none showed their level of disagreement and not being sure. As regard individual experience in schools results indicated an average of 85.8 %strongly agreed, 11% agreed, 3% strongly disagreed, while 0.2% disagreed andnone showed not being sure.This is an indication that students' behaviour is dominant over other factors. Another revelation is that the School Management Teams have a duty to detect and prevent students from dropping out of schools. Creating a conducive learning environment and the senior management teams' role as instructional leaders was favoured by the respondents as they rated an average of 50% and 29% on the level of agreement respectively. While the remaining 21% was accorded to the school management teams' (SMT) responsibility to sensitise teachers on students retention and their (SMT) obligation to retain students.

Regarding the challenges the study revealed that teachers and senior management disagree with the idea that low students retention rate shows lack of commitment, lack of managerial and leadership skills and inefficiency on the part of the school management teams. For item 20, none strongly agree with the statement which says an increase in students' dropout renders school managers' roles ineffective, 2% agreed, 90% strongly disagreed, while 8% disagreed. Regarding the responses to the statement which says low retention rate shows lack of managerial and leadership skills on the part of the school management teams, 1% strongly agreed, 24% agreed with the statement, while 75% strongly disagreed. As for item 22, 10% agreed with the statement which says prevalence dropout is a sign of school management teams' lack of commitment to their duties.

On the other hand there were positive responses to questions of sustainable retention. Responses to the question which seeks level of agreement concerning high retention rate signifying high quality teaching and learning, 45% strongly agreed and 55% agreed with the statement. Regarding changing of some of the school management roles in order to have high retention, 49% strongly agreed, 46% agreed with the statement, while 5% strongly disagreed.

There were no significant differences in the responses from open-ended question from the closed-ended questions above. About 99% of the participants mentioned student behaviour, individual school experience and family background as the main causes of drop out. Only 1% mentioned natural causes such as death and illness. Responding to whether retention increase or decrease 93% indicated that retention decreases, while 7% believed that there is an improvement in the retention rate.

5. Discussion

The findings from this research and other researches have revealed that no single factor can completely account for student dropout. The researchers have identified various factors which influence students to drop out of school or complete their grade. Among the factors three main factors have been identified to influence school dropout. These factors are associated with family background, student behaviour and those related to individual experience in schools (Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Sabates et al, 2010). The study has revealed that the major cause of students' dropout in Botswana junior secondary schools is students' behaviour which accounts for 99.75% of the level of agreed. Child bearing, delinquent behaviour, absenteeism, truancy and drug and alcohol abuse have been identified as some of the students' behaviour that reduces retention. Other scholars (Molosiwa & Moswela, 2012; Rumberger & Lim, 2008) affirm that child bearing, drug or alcohol use, misbehaviour and delinquent behaviour have a serious impact on the roles of school management teams to increase student retention in schools.

The second most popular response is the individual experience in schools with an average of 96.8% of level of agreement. This clearly shows that the school environment is critical in student decision to quit school or remain in school. The students' attitude towards school is generally associated with the experience they have had in such a school. If the school set up is not supportive there is likelihood of more students dropping out of school, than when the setting is caring. The last among the three factors is family background which accounted for 80.4% of level agreement. Although literature reviewed suggests that family background is the major causes of dropout, this seems not be a major cause according to this study. There are several factors which might not be the case in Botswana. One of such is that education in Botswana is free and students who are economically disadvantagedare assisted through government programmes to have access to education.

Further the study has revealed that school management teams have critical roles in making sure that students remain in schools and achieve their academic and social goals. This corroborates the idea that schools can make a difference in student retention (Berger, 2001; Rumberger & Lim 2008).

The provision of academic standing, a supporting and caring school, the involvement of parents and students engagement are some of the strategies that schools can employ to promote retention.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Students' dropout is a concern worldwide. This is because school dropout affects the dropouts, their families and the government. The results are dire as dropouts face poverty, unemployment and social despair. Their parents get frustrated seeing how the children failing to bring income in the household and for the government each student dropout represents a life time loss of tax revenue and increased medical expenses (Levin & Belfield, 2007).Then the quest for finding a solution has emerged and strategies were formulated for student retention. Student retention has attracted a spectrum of research in the last decade among the researchers, policy makers, educationist and entrepreneurs. As Tinto (2007) says ithas gained momentum and has become a big business.

The study has identified factors which cause students to drop out of school such as childbearing, absenteeism and truancy academic amotivation, disciplinary problems, uncaring teachers, poor performance and lack of parental support. These factors result in low retention rate. Although Botswana education Statistics (2008-2012) suggest that dropout is due to fees, expulsion, illness death, marriage, pregnancy and desertion, the study has added to the list. Basing on the findings it can be concluded that student dropout is mainly caused by family background, academic performance, student behaviour and attitudes towards a school. And that, retention can be increased if the school management teams are proactive and innovative. They should develop progrmmes or initiatives that will attract students to remain in school. Parents' involvement should be one of the key strategies to enhance retention. Furger (2008) asserts that parents on-going engagement from regular communication with school staff to familiarity with their child's schedule, courses, and progress towards graduation remains central to students' success.

Basing on the research findings the study recommends that:

- Parents, community and teachers should work together to enhance students retention.
- Students must be actively engaged in both formal and informal school activities.
- Parental involvement in the education of the child should be encouraged by the school management.
- Child-Friendly environment should be order of the day in schools.
- Schools should develop initiatives to motivate students to attend school.

References

Creswell, J.W. (2005). Educational Research- Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research. 2nd Edition or the latest. Singapore: Pearson.

Department of Education (2011). Report on Dropout and Learner Retention Strategy to Portfolio Committee   on Education. South Africa: Department of Basic Education.

Flisher, A., &Chalton, D.O. (1995). High-school dropouts in a working South African Community: Selected characteristics and Risk-taking behaviour. Journal of Adolescence,   18, 105-121.

Furger, R. (2008). How to End the Dropout Crisis: Ten Strategies for Student Retention. [Online] Available:http://www.edutopia/student-dropout-retention-strategies?=3 (December 3, 2008).

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. The Qualitative Report, 8, 597-607.

Hughes, J. N., Kwok, O., &Im, M. (2013).Effect of retention in first grade on parents educational expectations and children [48]19s academic outcomes. American Educational Research Journal, 50, 1336-1359.

Hunt, F. (2008). Dropping out of School: A Cross-country review of literature. University of Sussex: CREATE Pathways to Access, 16, 25-28.

Lekoko, R., & Maruatona, T. (2005). Opportunities and Challenges of Widening Access to Education: Adult Education in Botswana. In M. Braint(Eds), Social Justice(Chapter18) Hamburg: UNESCO Institute of Education

Levin, H.M.,& Belfield, C. R. (2007). The price we pay: Economic and Social consequences of Inadequate education. Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press.

McMillan, J.H.,& Schumacher, S. (2010). Research in Education- Evidence-Based Inquiry (7th Ed.). New York: Pearson.

Moitoi-Vension, P. (2014).   Cabinet Ganging Up Against Venson: Sunday Standard Newspaper February 9-15, 2014

Molosiwa, S.,&Moswela, B. (2012). Girl-Pupil Dropout in Secondary Schools in Botswana: Influencing Factors, Prevalence and Consequences. International Journal of Business and Social Science, 3 (7) 265-271.

Ramirez, A. L.,& Carpenter, D. (2008).Solving the drop-out puzzle: strategies for success. Principal Matters. Journal for Secondary School Leaders in Australia, 76, 43-46.

Ramsdal, G.; Gioerum, R.G.,& Wynn, R. (2013).Dropout and Early Unemployment. International Journal of Educational Research, 62, 75-86.

Republic of Botswana (1994).The Revised National Policy on Education. Gaborone: Government Printer

Republic of Botswana (2012).Education Statistics. Gaborone: Government Printer

Rumberger, R. W.,& Lim, S. A. (2008). Why students drop out of school: A review of 25 years of Research. California Dropout Research Project #15. Santa Barbra: University of California.

Sabates, R., Akyeampong, K., & Hunt, F. (2010). School Dropout: Patterns, Causes, Changes and Policies.

Strauss, V. (2013).School principals and the rhetoric of 'instructional leadership'.[Online] Available: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/ (April 18, 2013).

Tinto, V. (2007). Research and Practice of Student Retention: What Next? Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory   & Practice, 8(1), 1-19.

Zais, M. (2012). Report on Dropout rate. South Carolina: Department of Education.