Academic ‘Terrorism’ and Dropout Rate in Ghanaian Schools: A Qualitative Study of Northern Ghana

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Abstract
This article interrogated the seemingly dominance of market women over their male counterparts in petty trading in two major markets (Tamale and Damongo) in northern Ghana. These market women communicate in the English language with their European and other foreign customers without difficulty. This paper set out to find out the level of education of these market women and why they dominate in the petty trading sector. Having interviewed and interacted with these market women, it was discovered that majority of the participants had some degree of formal education but had to dropout from school as a result of teacher bullying. This paper argues that academic terrorism perpetuated by teachers in various schools in northern Ghana largely explain the rate of attrition of pupils/students in the school system in the past and present.

Keywords: Attrition, Corporal punishment, Dropouts, English language, Illiteracy

Introduction
Penetration of formal education to many a people in Africa is still a major problem for policy makers. Successive African governments adopted various strategies (including huge investments in the educational sector, educational reforms, free education, school feeding programmes, free school uniform and sandals among others) that aimed at making accessibility and quality education the keystone to economic development. Accessibility to a larger extent has been achieved by most states in Africa. However, the sustainability of these students in school and the reduction of incidences of high school dropout rate in Africa is a subject of discussion in this paper. Factors such as corporal punishment and socio-cultural issues are identified as major causes of attrition in many African schools.

Pre-colonial schooling in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) was considered alien and a cultural imposition by the majority of the indigenes. Many Gold Coasters resisted the colonial schooling on the grounds of the risk involved of losing their cultural identity to the Europeans. Schooling was limited in scope and concentrated in the colony where natural resources were available for exploitation. Education and schooling was limited to the hybrid children (European and Ghanaian descent), children of wealthy indigenous merchants and some chiefs to the detriment of the rest of the Gold Coasters. Formal education was introduced into the Northern territories much later after the British conquest with the Ashanti
in the 1900s. Many of the chiefs in northern Ghana were ordered by the Europeans to make available children in their jurisdiction for schooling. In all these, the male-child was preferred to the girl-child in school enrolment. It was erroneously believed that girls were supposed to be trained informally by older women and confined to child bearing and other domestic issues. In northern Ghana for instance, women divorced and deserted their husbands for allowing their male-children to be conscripted by chiefs and enrolled in the school system. The agglomeration of these cultural factors impeded many a people (especially women) in northern Ghana from having the opportunity to access formal education.

A few privileged women who enrolled in the school system either dropped out in the first year of their school life or have it truncated mid-way. Several factors have been identified as the main causes of the impediments of women’s progress in pursuing formal education to the highest academic ladder. Some of these impediments included the desire of the African society that preferred education of the male-child to the girl-child; ignorant of parents on the relevance of formal education; ineffective and incompetent untrained teachers to motivate and manage pedagogical issues to arouse and sustain the interest of pupils in school; teacher terrorism and/or brutalities through corporate punishment and yelling at pupils; teachers using school pupils as farm labourers and impregnating of unsuspecting school girls by teachers. ‘Academic terrorism’ in this paper is narrowly construed to mean any class teacher and/or school teachers or managers whose actions or inactions whether consciously or unconsciously, results in the premature exit of pupils/students from the academic ladder. A school dropout in this paper, refer to pupils/students between the ages of 6 to 19 years who leave education without obtaining a school certificate at the senior school and/or tertiary levels. Many scholars argued that the category of students or pupils at risk of dropping out of school are the poor, marginalized or the disadvantaged in society (see Rumberger, 1983; Levin, 1987). This paper is of the view that the teacher factor plays a more influential role in school dropout menacing than just the poor and the disadvantage. Many of the school dropouts or the respondents in this study came from influential homes but yet, dropped out of the school system. Teacher bullying or violence in schools have discouraged and still discouraging many children from attending school (e.g. teacher unfriendliness to pupils and corporal punishment among others). Admittedly, negative peer influence and lack of motivation from parents constitute a second pivotal cause of high school dropout rates throughout generations. This paper explored two gang of inhibitions of pupils’ retention and completion in schools. The focus will highlight thematically the contributory role of teachers in pupils’ attrition rate in schools.

This paper sampled the views of 50 market women at Tamale and Damongo in a bid to establish or explore the cause of dropped out among the participants (market women). The paper also sought to establish how these ‘uneducated’ and ‘half-baked’ market women are able, on daily basis, communicate effectively with foreigners (Europeans and other nationals) in the English language without an interpreter or the involvement of a third party.

**Methodology**
This paper is the outcome of a 180-day survey of individual interviews and focus group discussion sessions with market women and/or traders in Tamale and Damongo markets in Northern Ghana. These two markets were selected for study because of the frequent visits by tourists who are mainly Europeans. These foreigners interact and transact business with these market women with ease in spite of the little or no formal education of the latter. Only market women were considered in the study because of their dominants in the markets understudy and also, the high illiteracy rate among women in Northern Ghana. The interviews were
conducted in English, *Dagbanli* and *Gonja*. Questions were posed in the English language to test the level of understanding of respondents. A sample size of 50 comprising 30 market women from Tamale and 20 market women from Damongo were randomly selected for the study. The interviews were mainly focus group discussions and narrative individual interviews that sought to uncover traders’ level of understanding and communication in the English language with the Europeans and/or tourists who visits the markets regularly for some stuffs. The focus discussion also sought to unravel the attrition/dropout rate of women in Ghanaian schools in the past. The questionnaire was open ended and interaction was warmth and informal. This form of information was complemented with secondary sources of data from books, journal articles, and monographs. These materials were scrutinized, analysed and synthesized to make sense of the subject matter understudy.

**Data Analysis**

The focus discussion group interviews were organized into seven groups. Each group was made up of seven women. The discussions took place mainly in the markets. Each group interview lasted for an average of 60 minutes. Eight women consented to participate in the study but requested individual interview which was granted. Five of the eight respondents had their individual interviews at home while the rest of the three had theirs in the market. The individual interviews lasted for an average of 30 minutes. Permission was granted by respondents to record the conversation in the course of the interaction. Audio recordings’ of interviews were transcribed naturally and translated into the English language for those who opted to speak the native languages (Dagbanli and Gonja). The researchers also took field notes on the observation, reactions and body language of respondents in the course of the study. The field notes complemented the transcribed information for analytical purposes. Names of respondents’ were anonymized to protect the identity of participants.

**Ethical Issues**

This study involves discussion of sensitive issues that required participants to divulge reason(s) for dropping out of school. This may rekindle painful and emotionally-laden past experiences. Accordingly, participants were pre-informed to freely choose to participate in the study or withdraw at their own free will having agreed to participate in the research. Research assistants were well equipped in the line of questioning in order not to provoke the sensibilities of respondents. I anonymized the responses’ of participants in order to further protect them against stigmatization of society.

**Theoretical Framework**

This section presents theoretical framework or model that gives a panoramic overview and understanding of the rationale for high school dropout rate of participants. Participants in this study gave variety of reasons to explain why they dropped out of school (e.g. lack of motivation from parents, peer pressure and culture among others). But the teacher factor featured prominently in the responses of participants. This section modelled the broad explanation of the factors that accounted for the mass dropped out rate of the school system among participants. A theory can be defined as a general and, more or less, comprehensive set of statements or propositions that describe different aspects of some phenomenon (Babbie, 1998; Hagan, 1993; Senese, 1997). Theory might also represent attempts to develop explanations about reality or ways to classify and organize events, describe events, or even to predict future occurrences of events (Hagan, 1993; cited in Berg, 2001:15). In a qualitative study such as this, theories are “used as broad explanation for behaviour and attitudes, and it may be complete with variables, constructs, and hypotheses” (Creswell, 2009:61).
The theoretical framework adopted in this study to undergird the high school dropout rate in Ghanaian schools is the Attribution and Social learning theories. Attribution theory explains how individuals ascribe causes to behaviour, action or inaction and events. Attribution theory emerged in post-World War II by Heider (1946). However, Weiner (2010) is credited for the bulk of the research on attribution theory. According to Weiner (2010), attribution plays an in-depth role in the academic successes or otherwise of people. In this study, market women who attempted education but have had to drop out of school for some reasons or another blamed it on a myriad of factors. They usually pause to critically examine the real causes of being a dropped out of the school system when asked. This examination might either be a motivation to individuals and groups to stage a comeback to re-engage themselves in the school system or call it quit altogether and venture into other means of acquiring knowledge or economic venture as a means for survival. Many of the participants during focus group discussion interviews and individual narrative interviews, attributed their circumstances and inability to stay on the education ladder as a result of teachers’ intolerance and brutalities as well as the hostile school environment in general. The participants in this study described the school environment in their school days as hostile and made nonsense of the local dialect as new entrants or pupils were expected to switch from the local dialect or language to the English language as the medium of instruction and communication immediately. This made the school environment unfriendly to new enrol. According to 28 of the market women (representing 56% of the total sampled size) they dropped out of the school system as a result of humiliation and punishment meted out to them by teachers for their inability to express themselves effectively in the English language barely five weeks having been enrolled into the school system. Since they could not withstand the daily and weekly embarrassment and punishment from their teachers and classmates, the ultimate price was to quit schooling altogether. Many parents were not also enthused with the constant humiliation of their wards by teachers, and therefore did not show much interest in the school system.

This theory – attribution theory - gained prominence in Social Psychology in the 1970s as a major building block of the ever-growing concern with Social Cognition. While some research findings are fairly settled (e.g. we tend to explain other people’s behaviour by internal causes but our own by circumstances), the large number of factors now identified as involved in determining attributions renders generalizable conclusions elusive’ (Bullock and Trombley, 1999:57). The practical applications of this theory have emerged in clinical or applied psychology and counselling where students’ and other clients -both on and off academic– problems’ may be related to erroneous attributions or an elusive self-fulfilment prophecies.

The second theory, social learning theory was coined and used by the American psychologist Bandura (1977). The gist of social learning theory is the supposition that people learn through direct experience and observation of others. Social learning theory recognises three key paths in which learning by direct experience and/or observation occurs: people regulate their actions on the basis of consequences they experience directly, of those they see happening to others, and of those they create for themselves (Bullock & Trombley, 1999; Bruner, 1990; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). There is a symbiotic relationship between social learning theory and this study. Some market women or participants for instance, explained their circumstances of having been denied access to the school system because their parents had observed the nature of punishment and abuses meted out to school pupils and had therefore declined to send them to school altogether. Participants identified corporal punishment, teachers using their students as farm labourers, the kneeling of students in the scorching sun,
winning sand or gravel to fill gully erosions on school compound and fornication of female students by teachers among others. For instance, a 54 year old female trader at the Tamale market recounted how she dropped out of the school system and also, narrated how she was rejected by her parents and other family members as a result of her middle form one teacher who impregnated her and bolted. She stated:

My teacher repeatedly had sex with me two or three times a week after school. He will always give me our class exercise books to send it to his room and wait for him. A situation, neither my parents nor the school authorities could decipher until I got pregnant. In fact, I didn’t know I was pregnant until it was six months when my mother discovered it and interrogated me on the physiological changes she had observed. My teacher, only known as teacher Kwame perhaps sensing danger about a possible pregnancy took a French leave of the school and town three clear months before I knew I was pregnant. I gave birth to a baby boy three months later having been sacked from the school. My son is now working in Accra … having toiled through this work (trading in various cereals and legumes to educate him to the university level). The whereabouts of the teacher is still a mystery.

She also added:
My parents and family members treated me as an outcast … denied me basic care and rejected me accommodation in the family home because of untold humiliation I brought onto the family. This made me to do all manner of menial jobs including head porter on peoples’ farms to take care of myself and baby. The most painful of it all was that, all my eight siblings were never enrolled in the school system. They are all illiterates … family members also either did not enrol their wards or have them withdrawn from school because of my bitter experience.

Attribution and Social learning theories fits this study. In a series of narrative interviews with the traders, many other women attributed the circumstances that led to the truncation of their education to a variety of reasons. But the teacher factor featured prominently. Many other lost faith in the school system as a consequence of the direct observation and bitter experiences of pupils or students. Other factors that influenced their school exit included negative peer influence, lack of motivation from parents and the propensity and preference of the Ghanaian society to enrol the male-child to the girl-child. All these culminated and played a major role in the early exit from the school system. School dropout rate has become global problem resulting in developed and developing states scheming national policies or strategies to curtail the phenomenon. For instance, the European Horizon 2020 Strategy and the US No Child Left Behind Act are but a few policy-oriented strategies by developed states to stem the tide of the high school dropout rates in their respective states.

**School Environment, Teaching and Pedagogy in Ghanaian Schools**

The school environment is the soul, heart and body of every school. School environment is an unparalleled window of opportunity to motivate and also keep students in school until they attain appreciable level of education or certification. Hence, the school environment and/or climate play an integral part in preventing school dropout rate and successful completion of students. The school climate can either be a pull or push factor in the retention and/or attrition of students. As aptly captured by Freiberg and Stein (2005): A school’s climate can define the quality of a school that creates healthy learning places, nurtures children’s and parents’ dreams and aspirations; stimulates teachers’ creativity and enthusiasm, and elevates all of its members (Freiberg & Stein, 2005:11). In this perspective, a ‘good’ school climate can retain
pupils in the educational ladder until they obtain senior high school certificates. Senior High School in most countries in Africa including Ghana is the minimum foundation or benchmark for further studies or for employment. The school climate, do not only serves the needs and aspiration of students but teachers and parents’ as well. Consequently, when the school environment is not made conducive enough by teachers, school authority and by extension parents, high school dropout rate is the final product. A conducive school environment must have the following characteristics:

- Absence of bullying, assaultive and violence of all sort from any quarter.
- Teachers ought to be approachable such that students can discuss their problems/concerns with them.
- Freedom of students to express themselves without fear and panic
- Engage students in school governance processes
- Confer with parents from time to time on how to improve or maintain academic excellence
- School rules must be unambiguously written and made aware to students and parents/guardians
- Control as much as possible overcrowding and lightening system in class or school.
- Well motivated teachers and administrators to give off their best care for students.
- Extra-curricular activities to stimulate and retain students’ interest in school.

Further, Sprague and Walker (2002) aptly captured a safe school environment as having:

- Clearly defined goals in a school improvement plan and close monitoring and feedback regarding progress toward these goals
- High academic expectations from all students
- Clear and positive expectations for behaviour
- High levels of student bonding and engagement with the schooling process
- Meaningful involvement of parents and the community.

In analysing the responses’ of participants in this study revealed that, the benchmarks indicated above existed somewhat in schools at the time participants were schooling. Clearly, the missing link were the absence of rapport between teacher-student relationships; cruel tactics of inculcating discipline; the terror of the school environment; sexual harassment by teachers and pedagogical incompetence paving the way for teachers to emphasise teaching and rote learning or memorization instead of learning of students/pupils in schools. A chunk of the participants revealed that, those of them who could not withstand this amateurish teaching method have had to drop out of school to safe themselves from the agony of being flogged, punished and/or humiliated in class and school every week.

**Pedagogy and Teaching in Schools**

A well-thought out pedagogy by a teacher can stimulate and motivate the enthusiasm of students to always want to be in school and in class. It presupposes that effective teaching method in schools is more likely to keep and reduce the high incidence of attrition rate of students. Planning an effective pedagogy by a teacher calls for professionalism and commitment, enthusiasm of the teacher to deliver, motivation and conducive school/working environment to deliver the needed aim and objectives of the curriculum.

However, many of the teachers in the 1960s to late 1970s in Ghana were untrained and their intelligent quotient (IQ) levels were just a one step ahead of their pupils. The bulk of the teachers employed had their minimum qualification not beyond the four year Middle School.
Leaving Certificate (MSLC). The Middle School training was purely academic and its graduates were never equipped with any instructional or teaching skills or pedagogy. They taught their pupils/students rote learning and memorization of the various chapters as written in a textbook. I contacted and interacted with two retired teachers on the methods and preparation made toward teaching their class lessons. A 79 year old retired teacher stated the following:

Honestly, I did not know anything about pedagogy. We were just encouraging our students to be able to recall and recite what were taught. Those who didn’t have the capacity to memorize and recall were simply considered lazy and stupid students. We punished them and even caused their class mates to hoot at them at the end of every term as a way of encouraging them to pick up in class. Others picked up, but majority dropped out of school. We didn’t know of individual difference or slow learners in class. We boxed all our students/pupils as having the same IQ.

Another retired teacher (83 year old who could barely speak) indicated that:

The idea of proceeding to the training college was a non-starter. There were jobs and there were teaching vacancies. The way we taught our students was the same way we were also taught. We taught and repeated what was seen in the textbook. No one trained us how to teach. We taught with our own individual skills. Teachers of today are better equipped with pedagogical issues to deliver better than our time. Many of our students, perhaps could not cope with our method of teaching … I believed they dropped out of school because of frustration owing to their inability to cope with the pace of teaching and learning … I will use different methodology if I were to teach again. We didn’t help most of our students in our approaches to teaching and learning.

Assessment of the various responses of participants and coupled with the standpoint of these two retired teachers suggest that, teachers incompetence in pedagogical related issues also contributed in one way or another in making the school environment not conducive enough to motivate and retain students to complete and receive certification. The frustration of teachers of not getting all students to be able to memorize, recall and speak the English language gave room for the employment of cruel tactics such as corporal punishment, assaultive, slapping, yelling, and hooting among others to deal with their frustration. Hence, in an attempt to solve the inability of majority of pupils/students to grasp what was being taught, the strategies employed by the teachers rather created a scenario where students decided to quit from the school system altogether.

Corporal Punishment and Pupils Attrition Rate in Schools
Corporal punishment is still pervasive in most schools in Ghana. Corporal punishment according to some of the participants in this study contributed and still contributes to high rate of school dropout in Ghanaian schools. Corporal punishment is operationalized in this paper to refer to the infliction of physical and mental pain or torture to an individual for supposedly putting up a deviant behaviour to school rules or understand what is being taught by a teacher (e.g. the physical and mental pain included slapping, caning, kneeling on rough floor with both hands up, hewing of wood and drawing of water from wells or boreholes for the school kitchen, winning gravel to fill portions of gully erosions created on the school compound, digging of a trench and filling it with pebbles, pulling of students’ ears, weeding bushy areas during class hours, cleaning or washing school toilet facilities, heavy knock on the heads of school children and forcing children to focus their eyes on the sunshine, yelling at students in class among others). All these involves some form of physical and mental pain to the victim(s). Corporal punishment is usually administered to its victim by teachers or
heads of school and in extreme cases, students of upper class. A participant of Damongo market narrated:

I dropped out of school because of my teachers in school. The teachers merciless beat us, pull our ears, yelled at us in class, intimidated and insulted us and our parents, punched and kicked us with their hands and legs. What caused my sudden dropped out of school was my class teacher who mercilessly whipped me for lateness until I bled from my back and had some head injuries. My father became infuriated and attacked the teacher in the school. The school authorities expelled me from the school and wrote letters to other schools in the community not to admit me. That was the way my education ended. Consequently, my father decided not to enrol any of my siblings in the formal school system (53 year old participant).

Also a market woman in Tamale indicated the following:

Our teachers were a serious disincentive to some of us. Why I my selling in the market? Certainly the teacher. I was not too good in school academically. I was not also bad either. My teacher didn’t motivate me to learn. We were disgraced by teachers even when we made grammatical errors in the English language whether written or spoken. As a result, I never asked any question or attempted answering one for fear of being mocked at in class by my teacher and colleagues. Indeed, the classroom was synonymous to a military detention room. Flogging, weeping, gnashing of teeth and fear summarizes the nature of the classroom and the school environment in our school days. This compelled me for example to quit the school system in spite of the pressure from my parents and other family members to return to school. I really regretted dropping out of school. But the little education is helping me in my business. I can speak the English language better now. I meet Europeans in this market every day. At least, they understand the English I speak. Imagine if I had continue schooling to the highest level … hmmm (65 year old participant)

Another respondent stated inter alia:

I dropped out of school because of the merciless flogging in school, kneeling on broken rough bricks, pulling of ears and sexual harassment from my teachers. My teacher sexually harassed me when I was in Middle school form one. The teacher occasionally fondled by breads and threatened to disgrace me in class anytime I resisted his sexual advances on me. He often threatened to cane me in class if I ever disclose my ordeal (fondling of my breads and my buttocks) to anyone. This went on until I decided to drop out of school. In spite of my father’s beatings to return to school, I succumbed as a dropped out to save myself of being impregnated by my teacher and the subsequent humiliation from my family and community. That is why I am now in the market selling to fend for myself and children (54 year old trader).

A grocery trader at the Damongo market also stated the reason for her exit from the school system to be:

Excessive caning and violence from teachers: I couldn’t withstand the terror in the school. The morning arithmetical mental exercises that was full of caning for a wrong answer, weeping and gnashing of teeth and the resounding slaps in class were enough arsenals to leave education altogether for good. While the teacher asked questions that demanded immediate answers (the student was not given any space to reflect), the cane was used to brandish the face of the student in anticipation for a possible wrong answer. An incorrect answer was usually met with excessive beatings from the teacher. This was the breakfast
every morning with the accompanied violence associated with it … the physical violence and the mental torture actually forced me to drop out of school / I regret it though (56 year trader).

**Corporal Punishment: Good or Bad Practice in Schools?**

Respondents gave mixed responses to the question of the administration of corporal punishment in schools. While many of the respondents attribute their exit from the formal education to corporal punishment, a few of the respondents thought otherwise. The latter believed that corporal punishment - contrary to the negative connotation expressed by other respondents – encouraged them to learn in order to avoid the wrath of their teachers. They attributed their inability to continue their education to the highest level to ignorance of their parents and the constant sexual advances by teachers. Most parents were not interested in the school system and intimated that, the school system was a cultural imperialism intended to erode the traditional upbringing of their kids. As a result, having enrolled them in school, their parents never motivated them to continue to at least the senior high school level. According to these categories of respondents, basic school materials or logistics such as bags, pen and pencils, mathematical sets, uniform(s) and food for their well-being in school were never provided. The absence of parental motivation other than corporal punishment was the main reason for their premature exit from the school system.

The use of corporal punishment in school remains a controversial and ‘hotly’ debated subject in Ghana. In spite of the fact that many a people see the practice as useful and a stimulant for learning, other members of the Ghanaian society consider the practice anachronistic in modern schooling. Much of the discussion of corporal punishment is based on preconceived notions that this technique is either absolutely essential or intrinsically evil (Vockell, 1991:278). Proponents of corporate punishment are of the view that the technique stimulates and arouse the interest of students to take their studies seriously. Students wanting to avoid caning usually do school assignments in an orderly manner thereby maintaining or increasing academic excellence in schools. They however caution teachers to use the cane sparingly to avoid its abuse. They contend that the total withdrawal of corporate punishment in schools can only lead to breakdown of discipline and lower academic standards. The logical argument of the proponents of corporate punishment is that, the use of corporate punishment can positively result to increase in school discipline and academic excellence. The question then is, what about schools that administer corporate punishment but have lower academic standards and breakdown of discipline?

Opponents of corporate punishment however hold the view that, the technique scares away pupils from school. It also encourages timidity in class since no student want to incur the displeasure of a teacher for fear of being punished by flogging or heavy knock on the head. Again, the administration of corporate punishment reduces to a larger extent, teacher-student rapport for effective academic work. In either arguments, there is a positive effect or merit in the use of corporate punishment and also, a negative effect on the use of same method of punishment by teachers. However, I take the position that, the administration of corporate punishment in schools has had more negative connotations than the positive effect on learning. This is because, the administration of corporate punishment and the fear associated with the technique in the past, have cut short the educational journey of many (uneducated people) in modern Ghana besides the participants in this study. This has put enormous burden (having to find sustainable livelihoods to depend on for the rest of their lives) not only to the
individuals, but the development of Ghana as a whole. For, a qualitative population of a state is one major step toward political and socio-economic development of a state.

**Discussion of Findings**

Many literature on high dropout rate paid little attention to teacher bullying and sexual harassment as major causes of school dropout in schools in the developing world. Factors that have been over flogged as explanatory model for high school dropout include, cultural, socio-economic, parental neglect, peer influence, poverty and their like. This study revealed the enormous role school teachers played in the exoduses of students/pupils from the school system. This study showed that the teacher factor influenced the exit of the majority of the participants from the school system. Hence, many of the dropped outs resorted to petty trading as a means of survival at various markets. Throughout the interview sessions with the market women who dropped out of school, the common reasons (for dropping out of school) were attributed to bullying by teachers through several mechanisms such as sexual harassment, corporal punishment, labourers on the farms’ of teachers, digging trenches and refilling with pebbles among others. Corporate punishment and sexual harassment of students by teachers were overwhelming in ‘pushing out’ many of the market women from the school system.

One of the major findings of this study was that most of the women who were either sexually assaulted or harassed never reported the incidence to school authority or their parents as a result of fear of victimization or humiliation from their teachers. They harboured and endured their bitter experiences until they were ‘forced’ to drop out of school. One of the participants who got pregnant by her teacher went through psychological torture of having to carry the pregnancy of an absconded ‘father’ without support from any quarter. Other women who were not part of this present study might have suffered similar fate or went through worse treatment from the immediate parents and the extended family for getting pregnant while in school. Again, a major finding of this study revealed that, teacher bullying (i.e. corporal punishment, pulling of ears, intimidation and humiliation in school and class, the use of school pupils as farm hands, the terrified school environment among others), have prevented many a parent from enrolling their children in school and particularly, the girl-child. This partly explains why illiteracy among women in northern Ghana is prevalent. Majority of these women have had to resort to petty trading, farming and head porting in markets as their livelihoods to cater for their children. Interacting with these women showed that the women have high intelligent quotient (IQ) which would have propelled them to climb the academic staircase of the school system to the highest level.

Another key finding of this paper was that governments of Ghana in the late 1950s to early 1970s, put premium in the acceleration of building more school infrastructure across the country without a corresponding training of teachers to man these facilities. This resulted in the massive recruitment of untrained teachers who were in many cases, just a step ahead of their pupils in terms of measuring IQ. These untrained teachers lacked knowledge of the basic pedagogy and/or instructional skills to competently teach effectively and efficiently. In other words, instructional pedagogy made no room for individual difference in terms of gifted, fast and slow learners. All pupils were judged to be same in terms of having the academic acumen or capacity to withstand the strains of learning. Students/pupils who could not learn as fast as their colleagues were treated as dumbed students and punished accordingly by these teachers. The school environment became less attractive to many of these students and consequently dropped out of the school system. It is therefore not
surprising that illiteracy among women in Northern Ghana is higher compared to their male counterparts.

**Teacher Bullying in Contemporary Times**

Teacher bullying is still prevalent in contemporary Ghanaian schools. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ghana Education Service (G.E.S.) have jointly taken remedial steps to curb or reduce the menace of teacher bullying in schools particularly corporal punishment. This is as a result of the negative impact it has on pupils or students. The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service policy decision concerning corporal punishment and other forms of bullying by teachers include the following: First, corporal punishment is to be administered only by the head of school or his/her representative but must be supervised by the head teacher. This presupposes that corporal punishment has only been partially outlawed. The fear is that the total abolition of the practice may increase or breakdown discipline and lower academic standards in schools. When pupils/students realized their teachers have been totally ‘disarmed’ in the administration of corporal punishment, they (students/pupils) may not take their studies seriously. In this perspective, undisciplined behaviour of pupils/students may occur. But on the ground, teachers still administer or use corporal punishment and other forms of cruel methods to get compliance from their pupils/students. This means, many other pupils or students may be suffering just as the participants of this study. It also means that many other students may be dropping out of school as a result of teacher bullying. Second, sexual intercourse or harassment by teachers to their students is a serious professional misconduct outlined in the conditions of service of teachers. However, reported cases of teacher sexual advances on their students have not been successfully prosecuted at the law courts. Officials of the Ghana Education Service at the regional and district levels response of sexual harassment by teachers to their students is a transfer from one school to another school. The mere recycling of teachers involved in sexual relation with students does not resolve the fundamental problem of the crime. Unfortunately, this is what the case is in contemporary times.

**Conclusion**

A conducive school environment devoid of teacher’s ‘terror’ is a major step in combating high dropout rate in schools. The absence of conducive school environment was a keystone in the exoduses of participants of this study out of school. Key stakeholders who are capable in creating good school climate for effective and efficient teaching and learning are the teachers. Teacher terror in schools have already and still sending many students out of the school system. The management of the Ghana school system must be proactive in minimizing or eliminating the use of corporate punishment and other cruel tactics in enforcing compliance from students/pupils by their teachers if the ultimate aim is to retain and record high completion rate of students in school. Sexual relation of teachers and students must not be treated with kid gloves. Teachers who either impregnated or having amoral sexual relation with their pupils/students must be severely sanctioned or dismissed from the Ghana Education Service. This will send a strong signal to those engaged in the shameful act to withdraw and also deter others from engaging in the act. For, there is nothing that breaks school discipline and lower academic standards than teachers having sexual intimacy with their female students. Dismissing or the application of severe sanctions against such teachers will assure parents of the safety of their female wards in the Ghanaian schools.
References