Psychosocial Factors Involved
in Dropping Out of University Education

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Abstract: College dropout in the field of tertiary education has become a serious concern among specialists in the field of education in recent years. Programs and projects aimed at increasing the retention rate of students in the first year of college have been developed, and are still under discussion. The causes of school dropout vary, but an important role is also played by psychosocial factors closely related to the course or psychosocial evolution of the individual and his role in society. The tendency to drop out prematurely generates late negative effects, which are perceived much later in terms of professional failures caused by lack of education, as well as capping on certain limiting levels during personal and professional development.

Keywords: Motivation; self-esteem; intelligence; maladaptation; education; college dropout; career; decision making; stress; personality

Introduction

The issue of college dropout targets not only the tertiary education sector but also starts at an early age, where specialists make important efforts to try to limit as much as possible the number of students tempted or constrained by certain factors to drop out of faculty.

By school dropout is meant the action of stopping school attendance, leaving the educational matrix and this can occur at any level of education (primary, secondary, tertiary) without the student having completed the cycle of study started and implicitly without obtaining a qualification professional.

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If in the field of primary or secondary education the causes of school dropout vary from family, pedagogical, psycho-social-economic, in tertiary education the causes are relatively similar, but with slightly different features, related to the free will of the student as well as the influences of the external factors on the student's personality.

Until the age of 18 the child is under the guardianship of the parents, and decisions on the life and development of the child are generally made by parents / tutors, and in extreme cases by the representatives of state institutions that care for the upbringing and / or protection of the child. Dropping out of school until the age of 18 cannot be considered a decision of the child / student, as the child's decision-making abilities are not sufficiently developed to properly analyze such a decision, but these are at most acts of rebellion, despair or traumatic events strongly impacting the student, as well as other contextual constraints related to either intellectual capacity or incapacity, poverty, disabilities or other medical conditions that expose the student to this gesture of dropping out of school.

After the age of 18, when reaching the age of adult, one can speak, at least theoretically, about a sufficiently developed decision-making capacity to support the developing adult in the conscious and informed decision-making process. Obviously, we cannot speak of a fully developed capacity; life itself is a very complex and demanding dynamic process, so that man can always need support or advice in making important decisions. From this perspective, more precisely the responsibility towards decision making is one of the discriminating factors, which allows an objective difference between dropping out of primary / secondary education compared to tertiary one.

What are the Causes or Factors that Intervene and Support the Decision to Drop out of School in Tertiary Education?

A simple classification of the factors involved in school dropout at tertiary education level allows the classification into two categories, respectively endogenous factors and exogenous factors.

Endogenous Factors - Psychological Factors, Biological Factors

Exogenous factors - socio-economic, psycho-pedagogical factors. The psychological factors involved in dropping out of school are a dome that encompasses cognitive development, motivation, personality type, level of personal development.

Analyzed individually, cognitive development and the level or type of intelligence developed is an important role or factor in the academic course of the student. The first year of college is a touchstone for most students, not just for those with a poorly developed level of intelligence. Moving on a high level of difficulty can lead to complexes or mental blockages. In the first year of college many students have a defensive attitude, they are not as expressive as in high school, the accommodation process also activates the coping mechanisms, mechanisms that in some situations reach the extreme limit, in this case school dropout. Depending on the background and the level of cognitive difficulty reached during high school, the degree of accommodation of the student in the first year of college varies from easy to very difficult, which suggests the possibility of considering school dropout.

The level of cognitive development also requires a folding on a specialized profile compatible with the skills acquired by the student, and here comes the role of vocational counselling, otherwise the student risks reaching an area incompatible with his developmental possibilities, which generates blockages and school failure.

Motivation is a psychological factor interdependent on other psycho-social factors and is the engine of the personal and professional development of the student. Motivation is related to the student's developmental goals, vision of the future, perception of reality and resilience to stress. A motivated student will more easily go through the adjustment period and difficulties encountered during academic development, compared to an unmotivated student without perspective and energy tonus to support him in his projects, thus exposing him to the risk of dropping out of school. Lack of motivation can have various causes, either of a cognitive nature, a student is not sufficiently prepared to cope with the level of difficulty to which he is exposed, or of an economic-financial nature, respectively school fees and other related expenses exceed the student's financial potential, demotivating him and exposing him again to the risk of dropping out of school.

Another psychological factor is the contextual stress generated by various problems that the student may face, either maladaptation or inability to integrate into the team. Changing the school environment, switching from one teaching system to another, changing the form of examination / verification of knowledge are factors that can generate a mental pressure on the student, which against the background of a lack of

motivation or a poorly developed cognitive level can lead to the idea of school dropout. In order to reduce these effects, support projects have been developed in the first year of college, such as the ROSE project which aims to increase the retention rate of students in the first year of college, by providing hours of consultations or meditations on some disciplines with a complex educational level.

Personality types and features play an important role in accommodating and traversing the academic environment. Each individual evolves differently, so we cannot say that certain personality types are doomed to drop out of school, but we can draw a perspective and a prediction that considers how certain personality types react or the influence of certain personality features on academic performance. There are many theories about personality types, some classify personality by types of type A, B, where type A personality provides a brave, fighting, hardworking, creative and highly motivated individual, and type B personality illustrates a more relaxed individual, with philosophical tendencies, who does not feel stressed and is hyperactive. From C. Jung's perspective we have two personality types based on two dichotomous pairs of cognitive functions, respectively:

- Rational functions: reflexive R and affective A;

- Irrational functions: sensory S and intuitive I.

Starting from these functions, Jung supports two personality types, respectively introvert and extrovert. The introvert type is oriented towards the inner world, towards thoughts, concepts, theories, and the extrovert takes his energy from other people, prefers interaction with others and is oriented towards concrete and measurable actions.

From the perspective of the type of temperament, respectively choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic and melancholic, four personality types also develop, each type expressing the respective character. This is how we have the choleric who expresses a strong, aggressive, ambitious, independent personality. The sanguine is characterized by spontaneity, optimism, inattention, sociable and cheerful. The phlegmatic manifests a calm, carefree, diplomatic, kind, flexible personality, which reconciles well with other personality types and tries not to upset anyone. Melancholy people are emotional, they focus on details, they are introverts and they try to avoid being in the middle of a crowd.

As mentioned, the type of personality does not give the sentence of success or school dropout, but it can have a contextual influence on the student's evolution. A sanguine

person, for example, may have a fierce reaction; it may quarrel with a colleague or a teacher, which could lead him to drop out of college. A melancholic may feel emotional in front of public exposure to lectures or seminars may have difficulty integrating into the team, which could cause him to attend less college, with the necessary consequences. The examples can continue, the prevailing idea is based on the fact that it is not the type of personality that determines school success or failure; it can at most signal the fact that there are different perspectives for approaching the entire academic context.

Starting from the field of personal development, self-esteem, level of responsibility and conscientiousness towards the actions taken or to be undertaken, are psychological factors involved in the academic evolution of a student, not only from the perspective of success and challenges a student may face. Coping mechanisms are mainly activated in stressful situations. A student's stress can take various forms, but a high level of stress also involves the triggering of the defence mechanism, so some students choose to integrate into clubs and consume their negative energies, to repel, to seek support and energy to overcome stressful situations, other students are forced to face many challenges not only of a cognitive and financial nature, they are forced to learn to cope on their own, to cope with unique experiences, especially in the case of those who face a drastic separation, leaving the environment family and the compulsion to manage on their own create unconscious mental tensions closely correlated with these defence mechanisms that differ from one individual to another, reaching in some cases even the extreme of dropping out of college.

From the perspective of **social factors** there are many aspects to analyze, but in this article I will focus only on the cultural climate, social trends, financial aspects and distorted perceptions.

In the Romanian culture, the mentality has been preserved that a higher education can ensure you a prosperous life and a peaceful old age. Ideologically this concept is well thought out, but from a practical perspective thing are a little different.

First of all, the perception of the need for a higher education of academic level gives rise to some confusion; people come to understand that you can be successful only if you follow a college, the rest of the professions without higher education end up being disregarded. Thus, more and more students choose to attend a college only out of the desire to have higher education, without an analysis of their own inventory of interests and compatibility with the chosen specialization. This is where the lack of vocational guidance comes into play, many students do not know what they want,

do not know themselves and live with the false impression that a faculty will give them meaning. Thus, they end up choosing undergraduate programs that are incompatible with both their level of training and their potential for development, sometimes realizing late that their place is not in that college.

At the other extreme, even in the case of students who responsibly choose their field and program of study, the risk of dropping out of school is favoured by the unstable and deficient economic situation of the student. In the absence of financial support from parents, many students choose to work, drastically reducing the time and resources allocated to study, and momentary financial satisfaction is an imminent danger of dropping out of college for many students. The inability to pay their tuition fees and the constraint of self-maintenance cause many students to turn to the labour market in order to meet the financial needs of self-maintenance. Thus, many students drop out of school prematurely with the illusion that they will return to study, but in most cases, this return occurs after many years, when the cognitive potential is affected by other factors including aging or loss of learning training.

Strategies to Reduce the Rate of Premature College Dropout

These types of strategies are urgently needed at the level of any type of tertiary education institution. As I said, there are projects aimed at increasing the retention rate of students in the first year of college, which provide both cognitive support through meditation programs (discipline consultations) and course supports designed to support students who face difficulties in certain disciplines in college.

An important role in increasing the retention rate of students in the first year of college is also played by the vocational counsellor or the psychologist within the career counselling and guidance centre to help students and propose a personal development plan, helping them to discover themselves, to establish a career plan, with a starting point and a goal to achieve, thus keeping students focused on achieving their own goals, thus avoiding the capacity for personal failure through school dropout and deviation from the path of development harmonious.

Conclusions

School dropout or the inability to complete a form of education, whether at secondary or tertiary level, is a form of school failure and a challenge among many higher education institutions. The causes of this fact vary both from an endogenous perspective, such as psychological factors related to the individual, and an exogenous one, which considers factors, socio-economic, financial, and in some cases psycho-pedagogical. The effects of dropping out of school are perceived by the student only late when the individual constrained by socio-economic trends and fierce competition in the labor market that begins to exert constraints on opportunities for advancement or access to some higher positions, realizes and experiences the regret of dropping out.

In order to prevent and reduce the number of such effects, higher education institutions need to focus their teaching and auxiliary resources in order to set up interdisciplinary commissions specializing in increasing student retention rates through programs to raise awareness of the effects of early school leaving, supporting the students capital through activities that increase their self-esteem and sense of responsibility and usefulness among the academic community, through both moral and financial satisfaction, such as prizes for participation in various projects and workshops, part-time activities with various partners, etc., thus preparing a competent, responsible and useful individual to society through his vocational contribution. The role of the school is to train people; the role of society is to use these people for the purpose of harmonious and equitable evolution for all citizens.

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