

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

TRANSITION DROP OUT AMONG SUCCESSFUL B.E.C.E GRADUATES IN  
RURAL GHANA: THE CASE OF AGONA KWAMAN

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A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION FACULTY  
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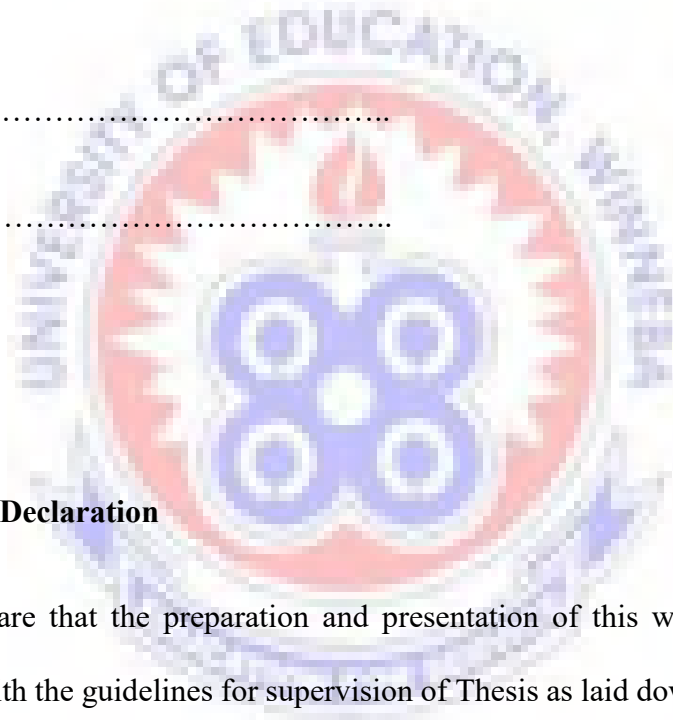
## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

I Kodzo Dennis Seyfert declare that this Thesis with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature: .....

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### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my late parents, Mrs. Gloria Abla Ahiataku and Mr. Theophilus Yao Seyfert, for their sacrifice, which I can never repay. Also, to my sons, Nunana Seyfert and Sedem Seyfert as a source of inspiration, focus and determination in your lives.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.E.C.E	Basic Education Certificate Examinations
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CWIQ	Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationists
GDHS	Ghana Demographic Health Survey
GED	Global Education Digest
GEM	Global Education Monitoring
GNECC	Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
JHS	Junior High School
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NAR	National Attendance Ratio
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
RECOUP	Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHS	Senior High School
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
US	United States
WFP	World Food Program

## ABSTRACT

Senior high school has become the minimum formal educational level to enter into the job market in many countries in the world. As such, countries that have attained a high National Attendance Ratio (NAR) for primary school also have or are working at an equally high NAR for SHS. This effort to attain a high NAR for SHS seems to be thwarted by successful B.E.C.E graduates in rural Ghana's inability to make the transition from JHS to SHS. To some in rural Ghana, school is presumed to be over after JHS. The study therefore examines the causes of this normative school transition drop-out from JHS into SHS from successful B.E.C.E graduates and their caregivers' point of view. A case study research design was adopted and a semi-structured one-on-one interview, field notes and observation was used as the research instruments. Twelve (12) successful B.E.C.E graduate respondents were purposefully selected from three basic schools in the study area, from the 2015/2016 academic year group and interviewed. Twelve (12) Caregivers of the graduate respondents were also interviewed. Glaser and Strauss (1967) constant comparative approach was used to analyze the data. Themes were used as the process to analyze the data after field notes and interviews were transcribed. Other themes emerged from initial themes and were coded into categories. Themes were compared to each category and categories integrated with their properties, until the findings was delimited and written. The findings of the study suggested that the major causes for transition drop-out among both successful B.E.C.E graduates and caregiver respondents in the study area were a varying range of mainly demand/pull factors which were multifaceted and interrelated. The overarching cause which was found to be the lack of finances for the transition was suggested to be fuelled by other related causes. Some of these related causes include; low household income level, unfavourable structure of household, low caregiver level of education, negative personal and or caregiver attitude towards SHS education, high cost of SHS education and child work. Transition dropouts would rather migrate to urban or sub-urban areas to engage in unregulated informal sector jobs for money. Transition dropouts revealed that their actions consequently overcrowd the urban space, placing undue pressure on social amenities, developing slums, worsening sanitary and health conditions, making tax collection difficult and increasing social vices. This would culminate in stagnating or even retarding economic growth. Based on the findings, the recommendations proposed by the researcher were for community leaders to; Organize basic school, religious and community youth programs to inspire transitioning to SHS and discourage transition dropout among both successful B.E.C.E graduates and their caregivers. Institute an education fund for needy but brilliant graduates to make the transition to SHS. Encourage caregivers to start saving early towards their wards SHS education. Award financially inadequate caregivers who has defied the odds and made sure their eligible wards made the transition to SHS.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The importance of progressive education in reducing poverty and realizing socio-economic development of both individuals and states' is enormous. As such, lifetime earnings is said to increase with each level of education attained, since the skills needed in the labour market are becoming more knowledge-based. This shift in demand has made secondary or high school education, the minimum credential for finding a job in almost all OECD countries. High school graduation rates therefore provide a good indication of whether a country is preparing its students to meet the minimum requirements of the job market (OECD, 2015).

Mehan (1997) asserted how economists and educational policymakers maintain that completion of high school is the absolute minimal educational level necessary to prepare youngsters for the vast majority of jobs in the modern economy. The work force of countries all over the world continues to establish high standards for employees. Jobs are competitive; applicants not meeting certain criteria, including the possession of at least a high school diploma, are not hired for certain positions. The labour force today requires increased literacy, technology and entrepreneurial skills, and the ability to be a lifelong learner (Woods, 1995).

Meanwhile, low transition rates from first cycle to secondary school has been a concern in many countries as senior high education is emphasised all over the world because of its important role in empowering individuals socially and economically. Between 2008 and



2013, Ghana's Net Attendance Ratio (NAR) for primary school was 72% for boys and 74% for girls, while that of secondary school was 40% for boys and 44% for girls. In contrast, Lebanon recorded a primary school NAR of 98% for both boys and girls within the same period and a secondary school NAR of 77% for boys and 85% for girls. Egypt's NAR within the period for primary school was 89% for boys and 87% for girls, while for secondary school it scored 70% for both boys and girls (UNICEF, 2015).

Low transition rates reflect bottlenecks in countries' education systems. While some of the world's lowest high school transition rates are found in sub-Saharan Africa, the situation varies dramatically between countries: 98% of students' transitioned to senior high school (SHS) in the Seychelles, but only 44% in Nigeria and just 36% in Tanzania. Meanwhile, in sub-Saharan Africa, enrolment into SHSs grew nine folds. SHSs also expanded at rapid rates in many other African countries. Despite this growth, sub-Saharan Africa still has the world's lowest level of participation in secondary school (GED, 2011).

In Ghana, senior high education is recognized as critical to the country's quest to develop at a faster rate because it is the most accessible form of higher education today with greater potential of sustaining higher levels of literacy, increasing political awareness, strengthening democracy and producing a pool of bottom-level manpower crucial to national development (Quist, 2003). Admission into SHS in Ghana is however merit-based. That means successful transition from junior high school (JHS) hinges on good grades. Yet, many JHS students perform academically poorly and therefore cannot gain admission into SHS (Ajayi, 2012), which is one of the major barriers to successful transition from JHS to SHS. The government of Ghana (GoG) has shown commitment through policy directives and interventions to address many of the challenges facing the educational

system that have led to improvement in various key indicators in education in recent years, notably, Gross Enrolment Rates, Gender Parity Index, Net Enrolment Rate and Net Admission Rate (UNICEF, 2007; MOE, 2006). However, most of these efforts were mostly geared toward achieving universal primary education (MDG 2); enrolment, retention and completion of basic education (JHS) and less about increasing the transition rate at least among successful B.E.C.E graduates.

Thus, in spite of all these measures and its recorded achievements, for most students, graduation from the JHS marked the end of the formal education process. Dropout rate during the transition from basic school to SHS which is 70% is higher than the 22% dropout rate during basic school (Ansong, 2013). The Gross Enrolment Ratio for SHS in Ghana is 40% (UNESCO, Institute for Statistics, 2013). Results of the 2010 census show that among the entire population of Ghana, 26.7% have a JHS education or its equivalent, 10.9% have secondary education or its equivalent, and 4.1% have a post-secondary education (GSS, 2012). This means more than four in five Ghanaians have never progressed from JHS to secondary school even though secondary education equips young people with the knowledge and skills that broaden their chances of future educational prospects, economic wellbeing, and social mobility. Less than half of SHS age youth attends school in Ghana (GDHS, 2014). Whiles 66% of rural primary school aged children are actually attending school, only 32% of rural senior high-school aged children are currently attending school (ibid).

Many Ghanaian students are still unable to acquire secondary education in spite of efforts to make education accessible and progressive, the 2016 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report has said. The first of a new series of post-2015 reports, says 53% of students

in Ghana are able to complete JHS education, while only 39% are able to complete SHS education (citifmonline.com, 2016). Thus, ensuring access through an increased focus on enrolment in JHS, does not guarantee other important educational outcomes. The issue of low SHS transition rates continues to dog Ghana despite efforts to offer subsidized senior high education. Evidence of such high attrition lends credence to the fact that many rural students drop-out of school after the B.E.C.E. This is primarily due to students' inability to pass the B.E.C.E (Ajayi, 2012) but equally disturbing is the inability of successful B.E.C.E graduates in parts of rural Ghana to progress or make the transition to senior high institutions.

The implications of not earning a regular SHS certificate in today's global society are far worse than in the past. The number of jobs available to dropouts are decreasing, and the jobs pay less money, require more work hours, and yield less over a lifetime (Lanthier & Lan, 2006). Research evidence shows that future career opportunities and life chances of young people are largely determined by their educational attainment at school (Müller & Gangl eds. 2003; OECD, 1998). The impact of early school leaving on young peoples' future life-chances in terms of increased probability of social exclusion later in life is well documented (Croxford, 2004; Biggart 2000).

The consequences of dropping out are costly to the young person concerned as well as to society (Lanthier & Lan, 2006). While patterns of disengagement may get established earlier during one's educational career, school transitions are critical stages where pupils are seen to be more at risk of disengaging and dropping out than at other times during their schooling (Numminen & Kasurinen, 2003). Unfortunately basic school graduates, who

drop-out of transitioning, do not form part of the Global Out-of-School Children (UNICEF, 2012).

The opportunity cost of investment in the educational sector is hence exacerbated by persistent transition drop-out among basic school graduates who are eligible to make the transition to SHSs in rural Ghana. For Ghana to achieve its new Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1; to end poverty in all its form everywhere and SDG 8; promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, it is imperative that stakeholders decipher the reasons behind the problem of transition drop-out among basic school graduates who are eligible to progress. While the reasons for leaving school are complex, in order to promote social inclusion and combat educational disadvantage – a priority in contemporary societies – a better empirical understanding is needed about factors that result in the phenomenon from the graduates and their caregivers or guardian’s point of view. This would eventually help to curb the problem.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The importance of normative transition, particularly from the JHS level of education to the SHS and beyond, in advancing economic and social development and in reducing poverty is well documented (Müller & Gangl eds, 2003; OECD, 1998; Quist, 2003) and cannot be overemphasized. Ghana has made commendable progress towards the achievement of the Education for All goals (UNICEF, 2007; MOE, 2006). Meanwhile, participation in education in Ghanaian society is still inequitable. In spite of the inequality, some rural Ghanaian basic school finalists, manage to pass the B.E.C.E and are placed in SHSs across

the country. However, many of these successful B.E.C.E graduates are unable to make the transition to the SHSs.

Whiles many people attribute the cause of the problem to financial difficulties, others attribute it to the attitude of parents or caregivers or even the graduates themselves and other unforeseen reasons. This situation is what motivated the researcher to carry out this study to find the empirical reasons for this unfortunate situation and make recommendations to possibly curb the problem.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to establish and describe the nature and causal factors responsible for transition drop-out among successful B.E.C.E graduates into SHSs in rural Ghana.

### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the causal factors that influence transition drop-out among successful B.E.C.E graduates from JHS to SHS in Agona Kwaman.
2. Describe what the transition dropout's are engaged in, in Agona Kwaman instead of transitioning to SHS.
3. Establish transition dropout's perception of the effects of transition drop-out on society?

### **1.5 Research Questions**

From the objectives of the study, the following questions emerged:

1. What are the causes of transition drop-out among successful B.E.C.E graduates from JHS to SHS in Agona Kwaman?
2. What are the transition dropout's engaged in, in Agona Kwaman instead of transitioning to SHSs?
3. What are transition dropout's perception of the effects of transition drop-out from JHS to SHS on society?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Children are the future of every nation and this future can only be realized if children are well equipped with the necessary skills to enable them take over from the aging population. Quitting school right after basic school (JHS) despite being eligible for further educational pursuits might be detrimental to individual and societal development. Therefore listening to the voices of the respondents of the study would provide a richer contextual understanding of their aspirations towards schooling, work and general economic well-being.

The study would throw more light on the problem of transition drop-out to SHS among eligible JHS graduates in the study area. Resultantly, the findings of the study would help authorities concerned to know the magnitude and causes of the problem in the study area. Based on existing evidence and good practices, the study would provide a number of innovative and practical ideas and recommendations that policy makers and other

stakeholders could draw on, and if implemented, would help minimize the problem in the community and rural parts of the country at large.

Again, the research outcome would make significant contributions to knowledge and will serve as a catalyst for policy debate and program innovation in the designing of targeted interventions to tackle the barriers and circumstances that hinder transition dropout's progression to the next level of their education. The result of the study would reveal practices, systems, and structures that perpetuate social and educational inequities which will guide concrete educational sector reforms towards more equitable opportunities of transitioning to SHS among eligible basic school graduates for better socio economic development. The study would also likely stimulate interest in the research area and possibly engender further research in the future.

### **1.7 Delimitations**

The study was confined to Agona Kwaman, a community in the Agona West Municipality of the Central region in order to unveil the situation on the ground with regards to SHS transition drop-out, in spite of candidates' success at the B.E.C.E in rural Ghana. This was because the extensive nature of the municipality as a whole which would require administrative and supervisory research roles would not permit the researcher to accomplish the task in the specified time frame. Also time constraints and inadequate resources would not allow the researcher to cover the whole of the municipality. The units of analysis were, transition dropouts and one parent, caregiver or guardian of the graduates.

## **1.8 Limitations**

There were some limitations to the study. First, related literature on transition drop-out were scanty, neither were there books written on the causes of low school normative transitions. As a result, the researcher had to rely on international publications and in-school drop-out literature for the review of related literature chapter.

Secondly, the findings obtained are limited to the context of the study. This makes transferability of the results of this study restricted to its context. Although the methodology associated with qualitative research elicits rich, in-depth responses, the information gathered was not intended to represent all transition dropouts. Differences in definitions of dropouts may also limit transferability.

Finally, due to constraints of time and money, the study focused on successful B.E.C.E graduates from public JHSs in the study area. Considering the fact that I was the interviewer, and also a school administrator of one of the schools from which the respondents transitionally dropped out, there is a possibility for students to hold back or not to share as openly and as freely. Especially if they had any negative feelings towards the school or the school administration. I addressed this by notifying the informants about my role as a researcher during the interview and by reminding them about the ultimate goal of listening to their narratives in the hopes of helping other transition dropouts.

## **1.9 Definition of Terms**

Transition in the study is the normative school transition defined as the major flow point of students from JHS to SHS (Abbott, 2014).



Drop-out is defined as the act of a youngster below the age of 23 leaving education without a SHS certificate (Cabus & De Witte, 2012).

In-school drop-out is defined as the act of a student quitting school before he or she graduates a given level of education (CEDEFOP, 2008; Wahba, 2013).

School dropout refers to a pupil/student who quits school before he or she graduates a given level of education.

Transition drop-out refers to the act of a student unable to make the transition from JHS to SHS (Ansong, 2013).

Transition dropout refers to a student graduate who is unable to make the transition from JHS to SHS (Ansong, 2013).

### **1.10 Organization of Study**

The thesis has been organized into five main chapters. The first chapter outlines the general introduction, problem statement, purpose, objectives and significance of the study. The second chapter contains the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and review of the theoretical perspectives on the causes of school drop-out in general. The methodology and techniques employed in eliciting the required answers to the research questions are detailed in chapter three. Chapter four are the outcomes of the data gathered from the field in themes of prose and discussions highlighting the major findings of the study with inferences drawn from them in view of the related literature. The final chapter contains the summary of findings, recommendations, conclusion and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of related literature based on theoretical and empirical studies. It considers a definition of transition and drop-out in education, explores some theories of drop-out, and provides a conceptual and theoretical framework to the study. The chapter reviews literature on the causes of the phenomenon under two broad headings namely; Demand and Supply Factors. Under these major factors, there are sectional and sub-sectional headings. However, there was no literature on transition drop-out as such, the chapter heavily relied on in-school drop-out literature.

#### 2.2 Definition of Transition

The word transition is rather open; and, in spite of an increasing political and educational interest, it is not very well defined. It deals with border crossing, a physical movement from one physical context to another (Vrinioti, Einarsdottir, & Broström, n.d.). Dunlop and Fabian (2002:148) define transition as “being the passage from one place, stage, state, style or subject to another over time.” In education, the term transition typically refers to the three major flow points of students from one level of education to another (Abbott, 2014).

This is when students move from basic school (middle school/JHS) to a second cycle school (TVET/SHS), and from second cycle school to tertiary school (polytechnic/University/colleges) (ibid). This is referred to as ‘normative school transition’ (ibid). Students experience other transitions during their educational journey, such as advancing from one class or grade level to the next which is ‘non-normative transition’

(ibid). Progression from the first transition point to the second for as many JHS graduates as possible is what would raise the NAR for secondary school attendance. This would evidently increase the minimum level of human resources for better personal and national development.

The three major transition points are an integral part of education development and thought to be a good indicator of balanced or unbalanced development of education between two levels (ibid). However, it has been reported that a large proportion of graduates fail to proceed to SHS especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa is thus faced with the problem of transition rates with a larger proportion of students failing to join level one in senior high education. Causes may include the increased costs families associate with senior high school, from tuition fees and school uniforms to time away from employment and household chores (GED, 2011).

### **2.3 Definition and Types of School Drop-out**

The definition of the term drop-out seems controversial. What makes a student a dropout and how to measure dropout rates vary among countries and even states. These differences resulted in variations in the operational definition of drop-out used across studies. There is therefore no standard definition or consensus on who a dropout is. Dropping out most commonly refers to a student quitting school before he or she graduates (CEDEFOP, 2008; Wahba, 2013; EU Commission AL, 2010). It is assumed to be the premature termination of a cycle or stage of education, most often targeted at elementary or secondary school children. For countries like Ghana that has no open access to SHS, JHS graduates who are unable to make the transition, cannot technically be categorized as dropouts. Meanwhile,

in the United States, in addition to dropping out referring to a student quitting school before he or she graduates, it also connotes avoiding entering a university or college.

The U.S. NCES (2009) identifies four different rates to measure high school dropout and completion. Status dropout rate, status completion rate, event dropout rate and averaged freshman graduation rate. The status dropout rate, reports the percentage of individuals in a given age range who are not in school and have not earned a high school diploma or equivalent credential.

The status completion rate indicates the percentage of individuals in a given age range who are not in high school and who have earned a high school diploma or equivalent credential, irrespective of when the credential was earned. The first two rates focuses on an overall age group as opposed to individuals in the U.S. school system, so it can be used to study general population issues (ibid).

The event dropout rate estimates the percentage of high school students who left high school between the beginning of one school year and the beginning of the next without earning a high school diploma or its equivalent. Event rates can be used to track annual changes in the dropout behaviour of students in the U.S. school system (ibid).

The averaged freshman graduation rate estimates the proportion of public high school freshmen who graduate with a regular diploma four years after starting ninth grade. The rate focuses on public high school students as opposed to all high school students or the general population and is designed to provide an estimate of on-time graduation from high school. Thus, it provides a measure of the extent to which public high schools are graduating students within the expected period of four years (ibid). For the purpose of this

study, drop-out is defined as a youngster below the age of 23 who leaves education without a SHS certificate (Cabus & De Witte, 2012).

Kronick & Hargis (1990) had documented four various groups of dropouts. Quiet dropouts, Low achievers, Non-Curricula's and Persistors. Quiet dropouts are low achievers who have experienced continued failure through most of their time in school. Their reaction to chronic failure is not overt and attention getting. Their primary distinguishing characteristic is their stoicism.

Low achievers on the other hand have experienced continued failure, but are unlike quiet dropouts, because they react to failure in disruptive, annoying ways. This group avoids failure by avoiding school through truancy. Paradoxically, they are punished for their behaviour while in school and if they try to avoid school.

Non-Curricula's are another group of dropouts whose causes of the problem of drop-out reside outside of school. There may be problems of abuse, alcohol, drugs, poverty, health, and a myriad of others as to why the child doesn't learn and becomes truant and eventually quits school. The child cannot learn if he/she comes to school tired, hungry, and afraid.

Persistors are the final group of dropouts that have poor performance, but have compensatory behaviours to continue to attend school. These compensatory behaviours could include, athletics, art, or cheating. Some from this group might actually graduate but they are barely literate. However, one can argue that dropout students do not necessarily remain dropouts forever. Sometimes students return to school the next term or after a number of years.

## **2.4 Theories of School Drop-out**

Multiple theories have been related to the drop-out problem. Life course theory presents the idea that schooling outcomes are based on the paths individuals follow throughout their lives (Entwistle et al. 2004). Human capital theory states that, other things being equal, personal incomes vary according to the amount of investment in human capital (Schultz, 1971).

Battin-Pearson et al. (2000) presented five different theories. Academic mediation theory states that the relationships between general deviant behaviours, associations with other students practicing deviant behaviours, lack of social bonding in school, lack of parental expectations and education, and generally being of low socioeconomic status contribute to the tendency for a student to drop-out of school.

General deviance theory predicts drop-out tendencies based on deviant student behaviours. Deviant affiliation theory provides an explanation for the tendency to drop-out of school based on bonding with antisocial peers.

Poor family socialization theory relates that the tendency to drop-out of school is due to lack of high expectations from parents and/or lack of parental education. Structure strains theory states that demographic indicators of drop-out tendency are based on gender and socioeconomic status.

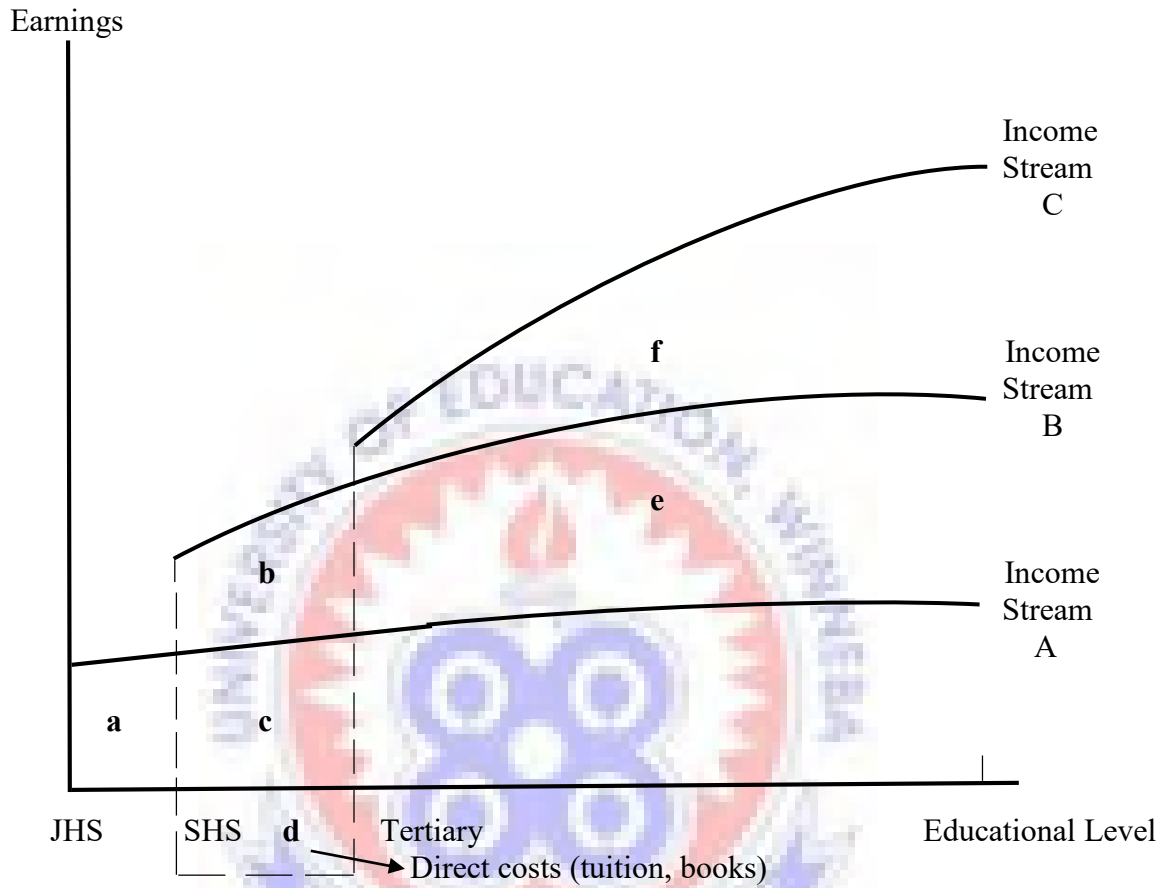
## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

The Human Capital theory underpinned this research. The theory stressed the significance of education and training in the development paradigm. It views development in terms of investment in human capital, and thinks of the set of marketable skills of workers as a form

of capital in which workers make a variety of investments for increased productivity and varying personal income. This perspective is important in understanding both investment incentives, and the structure of wages and earnings. Why is it important to invest in children's education especially beyond basic school?

Human capital is an individual's stock of skills, specialized knowledge, experience, and acquired abilities that result from formal and informal education (Ansong, 2013). The human capital development framework is grounded in the assumption that people are rational and weigh the benefits and costs of their investment in human capital (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 2003). Differences in levels of education and skills gained by persons require that they receive different wages (Gonçalves, 1999:1-4) The consequence of this is a shift from a functional distribution of income to an individual distribution of income (Zweimüller, 2000:1-16).

The increase in wages associated with the acquired skill is a pure compensating differential that is not a payment for innate ability, but merely compensation to the individual for making the investment. The cost of education particularly include the opportunity cost of other pursuits, in terms of both time (the wages of common labour) and other investments. The essence of Human Capital Theory is that investments are made in human resources so as to improve their productivity and therefore their earnings.

**Figure 2.1****Education and Alternative Income Streams**

Source: Adapted from BLGR, (2012)

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, human capital investment involves both costs and benefits. The costs include both direct expenditures such as tuition and books and opportunity costs in the form of foregone earnings. A JHS graduate faces three earnings trajectories. For example, he can drop-out of obtaining a SHS certificate, becoming part of income stream A for the remainder of his working life. If the individual after JHS, decides to obtain a SHS certificate, he/she earns nothing between JHS and SHS, he/she foregoes earnings equal to



the (area  $a + c$ ) including the direct costs (area  $d$ ) associated with obtaining the SHS certificate. The benefits of obtaining a SHS certificate consist of the difference between earning streams A and B for the remainder of his working life, equal to the (areas  $b + e$ ). If the individual is contemplating obtaining tertiary education, the additional costs include the direct costs (area  $d$ ) and foregone earnings equal to (area  $b + c$ ), while additional benefits equal the earnings associated with income stream C rather than B (area  $f$ ). According to Figure 2.1, tertiary education yields the largest net present value of lifetime income.

The analytic framework for the individual decision is analogous to the investment in physical capital. To Human Capital theorists, the development of any society relies on how educated its citizens are and how scarce resources are channelled into improvement of their education. They opine that educated persons have strong linkages with other factors of production (land, capital and entrepreneur) to maximize productivity in society. Based on this, Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) supported the assertion of the proponents of the theory such as Schultz (1971), that an educated population is a productive one. Supporting the argument further, Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1997: 102) maintain that “Human resources constitute the ultimate basis of wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agencies who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organization, and carry forward national development”.

In view of this, governments the world over commit some percentage of their Gross Domestic Products (GDP) to formal education for human resource development. Non-governmental organizations as well spend their hard earn scarce resources training and

sponsoring workers to upgrade themselves and to some extent educating themselves. The assumption is that, through improved and quality education, the labour force of a country is thought better ways of doing old things and acquiring new knowledge to enhance their capacity and capability. Unfortunately, Human capital development seems to be hampered among the economically disadvantaged, hence the need to ascertain why this is the case, in order to device ways to curb it.

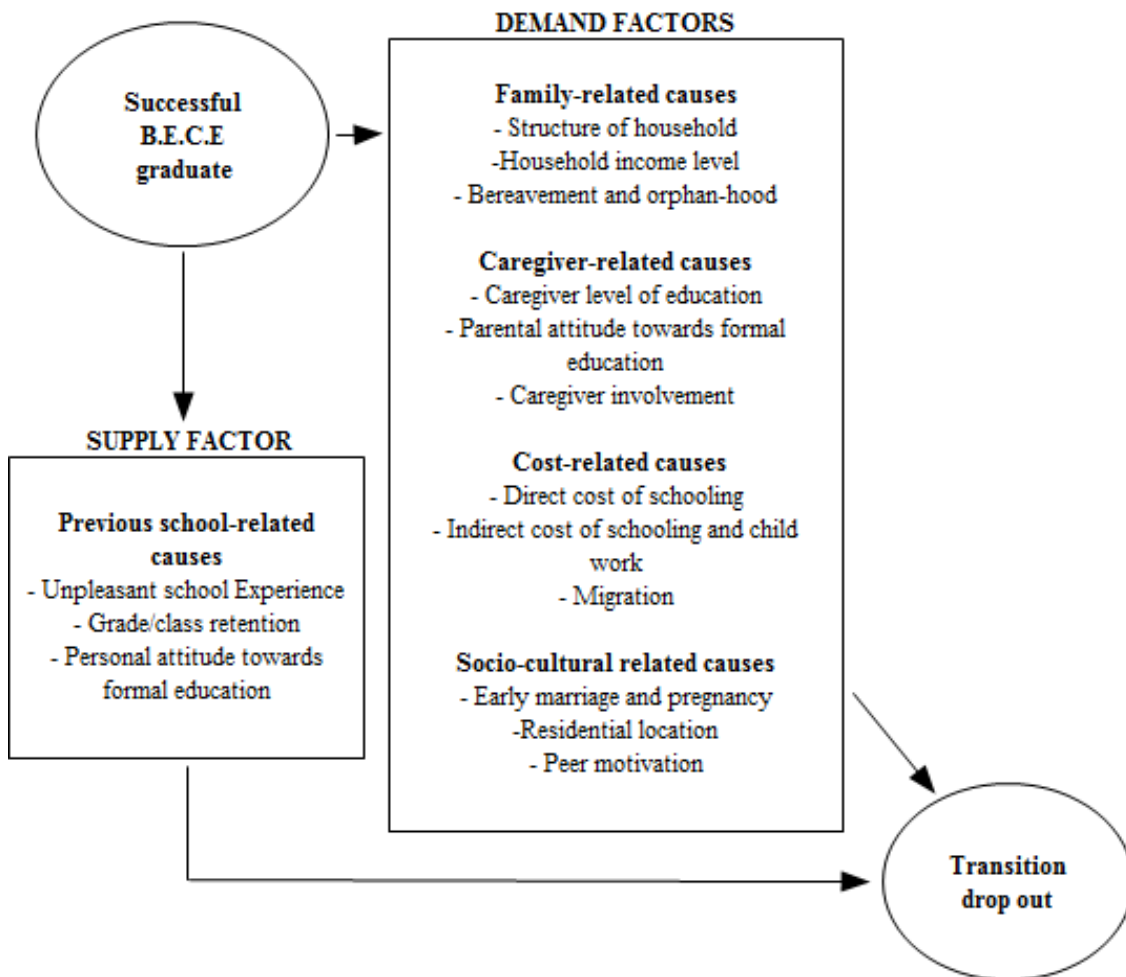
## **2.6 Conceptual Framework**

The factors related to transition drop-out are assumed to be around the individual, family and caregiver. There are also economic, societal and cultural constraints. These social and economic forces are largely beyond the control of educators but may be influenced by public policy. The conceptual framework that guided this research provided the overview of the variables that appear to have an effect on transition drop-out to SHS by eligible basic school graduates.

The demand factors consisted of family, parent/caregiver, costs, socio-cultural and personal-related causes. The Supply factor was of previous school-related causes. Subsumed under each factor were sectional and sub-sectional factors. Each of the factors are closely interwoven and their effect on successful basic school graduates transition to SHS are potent and far reaching and affect their persistence to remain in school.

**Figure 2.2**

**Major Factors That Influence Transition Drop-out Decisions**



Source: Adapted from Palu's (2014) framework.

**2.7 Background of JHS Education**

Education in Ghana is divided into three phases: basic education (kindergarten, primary school, and junior high school), secondary education (senior high school, technical and vocational education) and tertiary education (universities, polytechnics and colleges). Education is compulsory between the ages of four and 15 (basic education). Junior high education is characterised as the first stage of the second level education which follows the

completion of the first level educational stage or primary schooling (Adu-Gyamfi et al. 2016)

The concept of junior high education was first developed in the USA after World War I to provide an alternative to the then-existing 8-4 educational plan. The junior high school was for the 7th to the 9th years of formal schooling. By 1940, in the USA, the 6-3-3 organisational plan replaced the 8-4 plan (NCES, 2009). In West Africa, Nigeria adopted this 6-3-3-4 plan in the 1970s and Ghana also followed the same path in 1987, although the country had planned it as early as in 1974 (Adu-Gyamfi et al. 2016).

It could be said that the concept of JHS is widely used. JHS in Ghana is the second stage of the 6-3-3-4 plan of education and is considered as the latter part of the basic education, replacing the position held by middle school. The 1961 Education Act specified 'primary education', consisting of primary and middle school education, to be compulsory and free. Therefore JHS is categorised as an educational stage with open access. Basic education is universal and covers the first nine years of schooling (primary school and JHS). The goal of universal primary education is to expose children to a wide variety of ideas and skills before the transition to a secondary educational stage (Adu-Gyamfi et al. 2016).

## **2.8 Factors and Predictors of School Drop-out**

For many transition dropouts in urban and suburban areas, progressing to SHS is expected. These students receive the appropriate information about high school programs, and maintain the economic resources to attend. However, for many rural students, SHS attendance is not feasible due to pedestrian factors such as individual choice, socioeconomic status, and financial concerns among others. Disadvantaged successful JHS

graduates often make the choice to enter or to abstain from further education because of one or more of these factors.

The predictors and the reasons for dropping out of school are usually multi-layered and complex. Dropping out of school does not happen all of a sudden, research shows that dropping out of school is a long-term process of disengagement that occurs over time and begins in the earliest grades (Barton, 2005). Students are said to exhibit identifiable warning signs of dropping out at least one to three years before they drop-out (Allensworth, 2005; Neild & Balfanz, 2006; Roderick, 1994; Rumberger, 2004). This process is known as the process of 'student attrition', which has various underlying factors. For example, students are more likely to drop-out of school if they have one or more years of retention in grade (Plank et al. 2005) or the influence of the student's commitment to the school by peers and teachers and his/her motivation (Wenger, 2002). In addition, Attwood and Croll (2006) and Henry (2007) also identified the lack of interest in schooling, as revealed by truant behaviour.

An array of interrelated factors are said to contribute to dropping out of school. Meanwhile, most researches had shown that dropping out of school is caused and or influenced by factors linked with students themselves, their families, the schools they attended, the communities in which they lived (Rumberger, 1995), socioeconomic status (Kaufman et al. 2004). Multiple retentions, lack of connection to school, lack of confidence, and limited future goals among others as barriers to school continuity (Queen, 2002). Anguiano, (2004) revealed four factors that affected school completion: two-parent families, parent involvement, parent education, and family income (all aspects of family life). Other researchers (McDonough, 1997; Hossler, Schmit & Vesper, 1999; Kahlenberg, 2004; Kirst

& Venezia, 2004) have proposed six areas that influenced high school students' decisions to attend institutions of higher education: Socioeconomic status, social and cultural capital, family influences, financial concerns, high school organization, and access to higher education. According to them, these factors remain prevalent when students decide to discontinue their formal education.

Other researchers identified the reasons why students drop-out of school to fall into three categories, school-related, social-related, and family-related. School-related factors include school size, school climate, policies, practices, location, programs, teacher quality, curriculum, absenteeism rates, and grade retention rates (Allensworth, 2005; Bryk & Thum, 1989; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Roderick, 1994). Social-related factors include substance abuse, race, sex, and language (Bryk & Thum, 1989; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Krohn, Lizotte, & Perez, 1997; Rumberger, 1983). Family-related factors include socioeconomic status, mobility, family structure, parental education, and parental involvement (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Rumberger, 1983; Rumberger & Lawson, 1998; Swanson & Schneider, 1999).

Kronick and Hargis (1990) focused on curricular; school related causes, and non-curricular; out of school related reasons why students drop-out of school. Rumberger (2001) explained why students drop-out of school based on two conceptual frameworks. One framework based on an individual perspective that focused on individual factors associated with dropping out, and the other based on an institutional perspective that focused on the contextual factors found in students' families, schools, communities and peers.

Schargel, Thacker, and Bell (2007) identified and sorted risk factors of dropping out into four categories: (1) previous school experience (2) personal or psychological characteristics (3) adult and family responsibilities of student and (4) family background and cohesion. The second category, personal or psychological characteristics, included external locus of control (i.e. being in agreement with others' perception of their individual ability, worth, or value), and low self-esteem; poor peer support; depression or other emotional problems; early sexual activity or promiscuity; and substance abuse. In the category of adult and family responsibilities the authors included having a child and having to work to help support the family. The fourth and last category, labelled as family background and cohesion, includes single-parent homes, permissive parenting, poor parent-child relationships, the family's dependence on public assistance, parents' unemployment, having a sibling who has dropped out of school, and parents who did not graduate from high school.

Hunt (2008) perceived the causes of drop-out as focused on the influence of a series of interrelated demand and supply factors that interact in a complex way to incite children to drop-out of school. Ananga (2011) drew on Hunts perspectives in conceptualising drop-out as an outcome of contextual conditions setting a process in motion that pushes and/or pulls children until they eventually drop-out of school. In view of these background, I drew on Hunt and Ananga's perspective to categorize drop-out predictors into two broad complex interwoven conditions of demand or out-of-school and supply or in-school factors that ultimately results in pull-out or push-out of students from school.

## **2.9 Demand Factors**

This group of factors that cause drop-out to occur are out-of-school factors broadly and variously located in the family and the community. These causes are the circumstances that occur and ultimately pull students out of school. This main factor subsumed sections which includes; family-related, caregiver-related, cost-related and socio-cultural related causes.

### **2.9.1 Family-related causes**

The section encompasses the sub-sections: Structure of the household, household income level and bereavement and orphan-hood.

#### **Structure of the household**

Rumberger's (1983) study in the US focused on how family background affects the tendency for students to drop-out of school. The most uniform indicator was 'cultural index', or the amount of reading material in the household. Rumberger found that more reading material in the household was correlated with a lower dropout rate. He also found out that an increased number of siblings correlated with increased dropout rates. Residence location, urban, suburban, or rural location, was also found to be significantly related to dropout rates for males. High levels of educational aspirations were associated with lower dropout rates.

Astone and McLanahan (1991) also in the US focused on family structure and parental practices. They found that children in families with two birth parents receive more parental encouragement and attention with respect to educational activities than children from non-intact families. In addition, Astone and McLanahan found that children from single-parent and step-parent families are more likely to exhibit signs of school disengagement than



children who live with both birth parents. The precocious transitions analyzed by Krohn et al. (1997) may also be factors in themselves that may lead to school drop-out. Goldschmidt and Wang's (1999) findings revealed that females are significantly more likely to drop-out of school. In particular, female dropout rates may be higher due to teenage pregnancy and teenage family situations. The findings of Goldschmidt and Wang (1999) supported the findings of Astone and McLanahan (1991). They found that parent education, single-parent household, and parent checking homework have a greater effect in increasing the odds that a student drops out of middle or high school.

According to Kimmel (1985: 257) 'children of divorced parents are more likely to show adjustment difficulties than children from intact families. They tend to like school less, they do less academically and they feel less optimistic about their future prospects.' A study in South Africa reported that children who live with their biological mothers are not very likely to drop-out of school when compared with those pupils whose mothers were living somewhere or who were bereaved (Grant & Hallman, 2006). Rumberger et al. (1990) investigated the interaction styles between parents and children and the consequences for drop-out. Dropouts were more likely to live in households characterized by a permissive or an authoritarian parenting style, their parents were more likely to use extrinsic punishments as a reaction to poor grades, and reacted with more native emotion to both good and bad school grades.

Rolleston's (2009:38) study on fosterage in Ghana found that 'fostered children are 7% less likely to enter or attend basic school in Ghana compared to the household head's biological children'. When examining the progress of fostered children, Rolleston found they had a 19% likelihood of completing senior high school. Large family size requires

that parents engage in child selection as to who goes to school (ibid). Casely-Hayford (2000) studies suggest that parents strategically select the children who appear less capable on the farm to attend school.

### **Household income level**

One factor that has been found to affect the school continuity of pupils is socioeconomic status of households and especially poverty, and ignorance. Poverty and associates deny many children from continuing with education. (UNESCO, 2002). Children from poor families probably feel more pressure to contribute to the family income, and thus leave school to seek work at an earlier stage. Many researchers confirm that the level of family income greatly determines the chances of pupils' survival in the educational system (World Bank, 1980; Wanna & Tsion, 1994; Patrinos & Psacharopoulos, 1996). Poverty is considered to be a major factor in the impediment of enrolment and retention in Ghanaian schools (Canagarajah & Coloumbe, 1997; Chao & Apler, 1998; GSS, 2003; Akyeampong et al. 2007).

Children from low socioeconomic households, and those that are vulnerable and prone to income shocks, commonly face some form of demand to withdraw from school if their parents cannot afford the direct cost of education (Gubert & Robilliard, 2006). According to World Bank (1980), the income profiles of dropouts show that the problem is mostly prevalent among pupils from low-level of parents' income. Although many authors cite low socioeconomic status as the primary factor in drop-out, Hammond et al. (2007) established some overall trends concerning dropouts, but concluded that no one factor predicted whether a student would be a dropout.

It is necessary to determine how family income status influences students' choices to continue formal education because it is the education factor that could assist the student in climbing up the socioeconomic ladder. Academic achievement and low family income status are high predictors for dropping out. According to Waggoner, (1991) the students from low income family status are twice as likely to drop-out of school as students from average or above average means. Graham-Brown (1991) documented that the rate of early school leavers of low-income families' children are three times more than those from higher income families. Kaufman et al. (2004) reported an even higher figure, identifying students living in low-income families as being six times more likely than students from high-income families to drop-out. The environmental hazards students are exposed to in low-income homes create the probability of poor educational performance. The early developmental environment of hunger and poor nutrition, lack of home learning and parent unavailability, student mobility and school transfers, along with parents' lack of school participation has adverse effects on student academic and social performance. These factors can create the possibility of poor student performance and in later educational development, dropping out of school (Mayer et al. 2000).

Higher socioeconomic status tended to be a factor for staying in school and in all cases, students with lower socioeconomic status tended to drop-out at higher rates than other students (Rumberger, 1983). Household poverty in general, and its implications for continuing formal education, is probably the largest documented barrier which restricts Ghanaian children's participation in schooling. Ghana's poverty profile reveals that at least 45% of the country's population is below the poverty line (UNICEF, 2012). The World Bank's (2010) assessment of Ghana's education system indicates that the most deprived

districts also contain the highest proportions of children out of school, with a lower Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) compared to more endowed districts.

In Ghana, most out-of-school children - both those who have never enrolled and those who have dropped out - come from economically deprived households. According to a Ghana child labour survey report, child workers claimed to be working to raise the money to go to school (GSS, 2005). Data from the Ghana Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) survey of the GSS (2005) reveal that persons from households in the highest wealth quintile in Ghana are nearly three times likely to have completed middle school than persons in the lowest wealth quintile (Oduro, 2008).

### **Bereavement and orphan-hood**

Bereavement amongst family members, in particular parents, often makes children more vulnerable to drop-out, non-enrolment, late enrolment and slow progress (Bicego et al. 2002 cited in Hunter & May, 2003; Case et al. 2004; Evan & Miguel, 2004; Lloyd & Blanc, 1996 cited in Ainsworth et al. 2005). Even though being orphaned is often linked to an increased likelihood of childhood poverty, this is dependent on the household context and who then becomes the child's caregiver.

Orphan-hood often exacerbates financial constraints for poorer households and increases the demands for child labour and drop-out (Bennell et al. 2002; Yamano & Jayne, 2004). Studies in Ghana on drop-out children also consistently point to the loss of either parent or the loss of economic earning of a parent as meaning the child drops out or results in non-enrolment (Korboe et al. 2011; World Bank, 2010; UNICEF, 2010). In most cases, older children have to drop-out of school to find an alternative means to cater for themselves and

their younger siblings upon the death of their parents (Korboe et al. 2011). The challenges of bereavement, loss of caregiver livelihood and orphan-hood are indeed rife in producing dropouts

### **2.9.2 Caregiver-related causes**

The sub-sections under this section are: Caregiver level of education, caregiver attitude towards formal education and caregiver involvement.

#### **Caregiver level of education**

A strong predictor of drop-out have been found to be the parents' educational background and expectations for their children's academic success (Abbott et al. 2000). The tendency for all females to stay in school increased as their mothers' level of education increased, while the tendency for all males to stay in school increased as their fathers' level of education increased (Rumberger, 1983). Ersado (2005) argues that parents' education is the most consistent determinant of a child's participation in education. It has been documented that the higher the education of the parent or the household head, the greater the chances of increased access, regular attendance and lower dropout rates (Connelly & Zhen, 2003; Hunter & May, 2003; Duryea, 2003; Ainsworth et al. 2005; Grant & Hallman, 2006). Some researchers indicated that non-educated parents cannot provide the support or often do not appreciate the benefits of schooling (Juneja, 2001; Pryor & Ampiah, 2003).

Parents' level of education represents a potential predictor to drop-out. Better educated parents spend more time with their children, thus supporting their accomplishments and increasing the likelihood that they will remain in school (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). Rumberger & Thomas (2000) and Hossler et al. (1999) posited that better educated parents

influence the academic performance of their children by imparting the values, aspirations, and motivation needed to remain in school and succeed. By implication, illiterate or semi illiterate parents do not care for the education of their children. Similarly, the higher the level of parent's literacy, the lower the rates of drop-out among their children and vice versa. Children of parents who did not finish high school and families with an older sibling who dropped out are more likely to discontinue formal school (Green & Scott, 1995).

### **Caregiver attitude towards formal education**

Another parental cause that can deter the schooling of children is parental attitude towards further education. Parents' who have a low expectation of the value of education either do not send their children to school or do not allow them to stay in the educational system even in areas where schools are available. This attitudinal problem is believed to be more problematic in societies that have no awareness about the value of education except in terms of economic benefit (Bray, 1981). In addition to this, a handful of stories of local children who have been educated but failed to reap the benefit can also change the attitude of parents and lead to a drop in the demand for schooling. Particularly this situation seems more relevant in the case of education provided for rural people. The attitudes of parents who refuse academic education for their children will only change when the rewards from education improve relative to those of an uneducated (ibid).

An expanding array of qualitative literature points to the fact that poor quality schooling is fuelling an exit in the system. Particularly among parents who have experienced more than one cohort of children leaving school and were unable to find jobs, and unable to attain the educational learning success and other key benchmarks in the family/community. When coupled with the need for farm labour, parents are unlikely to see the immediate and long

term benefits of sending their children to school (Lloyd, 1992; Wolf & Martina, 1997; Stephens, 1998; Casely-Hayford et al. 2009). Parents who do not see the immediate and long term benefits of sending their children to school due to their experience of poor quality education and or where their children do not meet the social and economic success markers in the community, are unlikely to continue to invest (Casely-Hayford et al. 2009; Reddy & Sinha, 2010).

Some parents believe that boys are more intelligent, they perform better in school and that they are a better educational investment than girls. A factor often ignored in discussions of parental preference for boys' education is the prevalence of patrilineal inheritance systems. As the prime beneficiaries of family assets, boys are favoured in human capital investment decisions. In addition, parents worry about wasting money on the education of girls who are likely to get pregnant or married before completing their schooling. There is a strong belief that, once married, girls become part of another family and parental investment is lost (Long & Fofanah, 1990, Prouty, 1991; Davison & Kanyuka, 1992; Kapakasa, 1992).

Some communities and parents hold a negative view of educated girls. For example, in Chad, some parents believe that schools push girls into prostitution, make them unfaithful to their husbands and make them difficult to control by parents (Colclough & Lewin, 1993). In some regions of Cameroon, educated girls are perceived as being too independent and demanding and being likely to challenge the traditional submissive role expected of them in marriage (Cammish & Brock, 1994).

### **Caregiver involvement**

Factors such as parental academic support, supervision, and educational expectations were also identified as valuable predictors of projecting dropout. ‘Social capital’ is formed through the time parents invest in their children, children upbringing and the amount of support given to the children and the encouragement to further children’s education. Parents greatly influence their children’s social capital both in education and in society. The parent show the student what their expectations are for the student. This consists of educational, financial, and status desires for the child (Hossler et al. 1999). They opined that social capital can be learned from other places, such as schools, but it begins in the home. ‘Cultural capital’ on the other hand is the interest of maintaining a particular status and privileges. Many students in middle and upper class families are taught about cultural capital through their families (McDonough, 1997). According to Hossler et al. (1999) parental support is a key factor in influencing students’ aspirations to progress. During a child’s development, the family structure and expectations are learned. Students therefore, rely on the opinions of their family members.

Parental involvement improves the basic academic skills of minority children and has a positive effect throughout their school years (Keith & Lichtman, 1994; Marcon, 1999; Overstreet, et al. 2005), which ultimately may help with the basic school to senior high school transition. Although parental involvement and academic progress are positively correlated, maintaining disadvantaged parent involvement is oftentimes difficult (Reglin, 1993; Winters, 1993; Ouimette et al. 2006). Mostly, parents who do not participate at all in their children’s schooling come from the lower socioeconomic class (Constantino, 2003). Furthermore, Ingram et al. (2007) and Ramsburg (1998) found that parents who



view education as part of parenting will be more involved than parents who do not view education as part of their role as parents.

The research by RECOUP (2010) in southern Ghana suggests a complex relationship of non-attendance and exclusion based on the child's lack of parental care demonstrated by hunger in the classroom, lack of school uniforms, not to talk of academic support. A growing body of literature in Ghana points to the inter-relationship between the lack of parental support and the tendency among children to drop-out particularly in endemic poverty areas (Casely-Hayford & Ghartey, 2007; GNECC, 2009; Korboe et al. 2011). Another issue related to the high risk of in-school drop-out is the lack of parental support among children in endemic poverty zones (RECOUP, 2010). Parents from poverty endemic areas, both rural and urban, often lack the ability to provide the emotional, social and economic support for their children to enrol and stay in school. Parental support for schooling is a widespread factor in ensuring that the necessary environment for school participation is sustained.

### **2.9.3 Cost-related causes**

The sub-sections under this section includes: Direct cost of schooling, Indirect cost of schooling and Child work and migration.

#### **Direct cost of schooling**

The payment of school fees acts as a barrier to enrolment and retention (Colclough et al. 2000; Hunter & May, 2003; Liu, 2004; Mukudi, 2004). In Ghana fees represent a significant proportion of household spending, although this proportion varies depending on the wealth quintile (World Bank, 2004). The proportion of school fees as a component

of household income is highest among the poorest households in Ghana (World Bank, 2004). Studies on school enrolment and attendance in Ghana at the basic level suggest that the main reason for non-attendance in Ghanaian schools was school fees (Boakye, et al. 1997; Avotri et al. 1999). Basic education has since been made mostly free as a constitutional requirement. Meanwhile, government subsidies dropped substantially at the SHS level as the Constitution recommends since it does not require the government to fund senior high institutions.

The relatively high cost involved at the SHS level is also a major deterrent to sending children from poor households to senior high school (WFP, 2010). For instance, in the 2011/2012 academic year, SHS students paid an equivalent of about USD 500 in annual tuition (Public Agenda, 2011) and almost USD 100 in direct costs of school charges and materials (Innovation for Poverty, n.d.). Clearly, as one transitions from JHS to SHS, the number of school-related supplies increases and the cost of education rises to more than 50% of many families' annual incomes (Ghana Health and Education Initiative, n.d.). The drastic increase in educational expense may account for the high dropout rate (70%), which is higher during the transition from JHS to SHS than the in-school dropout rate during JHS (22%) (Ansong, 2013). This may be an indication that many families cannot bear the cost of senior high education.

Many students become increasingly concerned about transitioning due to financial concerns. Gladieux (2004), stated that the gap in attendance at the college level is so wide between lower-class students and middle-class and upper-class students because of lack of college affordability. Like many developing countries, Ghana's economy is growing, and there are competing demands on meager public funds available for social programs like

education. Conventional mitigating measures such as scholarships and fellowship opportunities at the senior high school level are scarce, thus individuals and families have to find ways to pay for educational expenses (Ansong, 2013). This situation saddles caregivers with the cost of SHS education.

### **Indirect cost of schooling and child work**

In-kind or opportunity cost of schooling is also another obstacle to further schooling in most developing countries. Global literature suggest that indirect costs are often more critical to poor households than direct fees charged (World Bank, 2004; World Bank, 2009). An in-kind cost, as Wagner (1993) and UNESCO (1998) described it, includes the cost of the child or student engaged in any income generating activity. In most developing countries, children engage in income generating tasks (Graham-Brown, 1991). Thus, by sending them to school and keeping them there, their families will loss a real income on which they depend (UNESCO, 1998). Child labour is described as the main reason behind drop-out cases in Tanzania (Dachi & Garrett, 2003). While poverty is often cited as creating an enabling environment that encourages child labour (Blunch & Verner, 2000; Duryea, 2003) and leads to drop-out.

Duryea (2003) highlighted the pull of the labour market rather than the push of poverty as a main factor in children dropping out of school in urban Brazil. Studies also show that rural children are more likely to work than urban or peri-urban children (Canagarajah & Coulombe, 1997; Blunch & Verner, 2000; Ersado, 2005). Hence, in-kind cost is one of the deciding factors for further education of the rural child. Rose and Al Samarrai (2001) state that in the case of Ethiopia while boys may be the first to be enrolled in school, in times of economic crisis, if waged employment is available, they may also be the first to withdraw.

Girls are found to be engaged in more duties that take them out of school than boys (Kane, 2004).

Parents may initially enrol children at pre-primary level as a form of day care to enable them to have enough time to work. However, as children progress through schooling, the family upkeep is contested with education costs due to high poverty levels and low incomes. Research found that the opportunity cost of schooling rises with age in Ghana (Avotri et al. 1999; Hunt, 2008; Rolleston, 2009; WFP, 2010; Korboe et al. 2011). As children get older, the opportunity cost of school participation increases as the family forgoes the child's ability to contribute more towards the family survival through their labour activities on the farm, and within the household by engaging in income generating activities. Studies on child poverty revealed that it is a tremendous sacrifice for parents from poor households to support children in public education; particularly if the outcomes are limited literacy and numeracy attainment, and the inability to work in traditional farming activities within the family (GNECC, 2008; Korboe et al. 2011). This is an indication that caregivers may have a low expectation of the value of SHS education.

### **Migration**

Migration patterns of communities, child migration to work and demands of the labour market influences schooling decisions and drop-out patterns (Ping and Pieke, 2003, Hashim, 2005; Hunt, 2008). In situations where rural-urban migration exist with opportunities for children to work and earn money, school children often terminate their schooling in order to migrate and find work (Hunt, 2008). Dunne and Leach (2005) indicated an increased vulnerability to early withdrawal for child educational migrants in Ghana and Botswana.

Hashim (2005) argues that child migration can be linked to both increased and decreased educational opportunities. For example, children may move into urban areas to access education but also may migrate to gain paid employment, which may limit educational chances. Duryea (2003) found that a buoyant job market acted as the main force pulling children out of school in Brazil. Similarly, Okumu et al. (2008) emphasise how communities can influence dropout rates by providing employment opportunities.

#### **2.9.4 Socio-cultural related causes**

The sub-sections under this final section are: Early marriage and pregnancy and Residential location.

##### **Early marriage and pregnancy**

The relatively young age of marriage in many African countries as described by Newman (1984) means that marriage is still an important reason why girls do not enter SHS or, having enrolled, leave before the cycle is completed. In a study investigating primary reasons for drop-out, Rumberger (1983) found out that African-American females most often cited marriage as reasons for leaving school. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the parents in Nigeria preferred marriage over school for their teen aged daughters. Parents from the region who held stronger views of the potential negative impact of education on their daughters religious beliefs, the majority of them rural, also indicated a stronger preference for early marriage over schooling for their girls (Soumare, 1994).

Even though the situation has since improved, UNICEF (2012) Revealed that early marriage can be a result of parental cultural norms, social pressure in Ghana, and the inability of parents to take care of the girl's basic needs. Studies in Ghana reveal that

dropout girls are at risk of dropping out, for they remain a key target for early marriage and pregnancy. Parental inability to cater for basic school needs particularly at JHS and beyond has often led to girls turning to outsiders for assistance for provide clothing, food and school fees across both rural and urban settings (Casely-Hayford & Wilson, 2001; FAWE, 2011). The lack of education for girls as a risk factor for child marriage has been well documented. In a UNICEF (2005) study of 42 countries, women between the ages of twenty (20) and twenty-four (24) who attended primary school were less likely to marry by age eighteen (18) than women without a primary education. The same study found that in Tanzania, women with secondary education were 92% less likely to be married by their 18th birthday than women who only attended primary school.

### **Residential location**

Communities have a tremendous impact on the acceptable behaviour of residents and the establishment of cultural norms. The residential location where a person lives is therefore believed to affect the decision to drop-out of school. Research has documented the enormous educational disadvantages of an impoverished environment (Coleman et al. 1966; Mayer, Mullins & Moore, 2000). Furthermore, there is evidence that indicates that the different characteristics of neighbourhoods are helpful in examining dropout rates among communities (Clark, 1992). Dropout rates are higher in rural than in urban and peri-urban settings (Birdsall et al. 2005).

Birdsall et al. (2005: 338) claim that “in many countries, the rural-urban education gap is the most important factor explaining education differentials”. This is because households in rural areas tend to be poorer, schools more inaccessible, household members less educated and pressure on children to work to support the household greater. The most

important reason is resources. School resources, family resources, and economic resources are all contributors to the dropout rate based upon location (Lund, 2009). In Ghana, women and men in urban areas are much more likely to achieve higher levels of education than those living in rural areas (GDHS 2014).

Communities play a crucial role in adolescent development along with families, schools, and peers. Population characteristics of communities are associated with dropping out, but not in a straightforward manner: living in a high poverty neighbourhood is not necessarily detrimental to completing high school, but rather living in an affluent neighbourhood is beneficial to school success (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). This suggests that affluent neighbourhoods provide more access to community resources and positive role models from affluent neighbours than impoverished neighbourhoods.

## **2.10 Supply Factors**

The supply factor predictors that cause drop-out to occur are in-school factors broadly and variously located in or around the school. These causes are the circumstances that occurred in school to ultimately push students out of school. This broad factor contains the sections: Previous School-Related Causes and Personal Attitude towards Formal Education.

### **2.10.1 Previous school-related causes**

The section enclosed sub-sections such as; Unpleasant school experience, Grade retention and Personal attitude towards formal education.

### **Unpleasant school experience**

Negative school related experiences also persuade students to decide to leave school early (Rumberger, 1995). In southern Ghana RECOUP (2010) suggested a complex relationship of non-attendance and exclusion based on negative experiences at school (verbal abuse and chastisement for coming late on a regular basis). High school organization and guidance remains a necessary element for school transition (McDonough, 2004). This suggests a likelihood of drop-out due to negative school related experiences.

### **Grade retention**

A high predictor of dropping out of school was the academic factor of a student being retained in a grade. A student who was retained was 11 times more likely to drop-out of school (Fine, 1991; Rumberger, 1995; Bracey, 1996; Janosz et al. 1997). Research findings in the US show students who have been retained or repeated in the ninth grade are at a higher rate for dropping out of school (Gewertz, 2007). Students who get retained in the ninth grade are more likely to feel like outcasts. Most of these failing students view high school as an unattainable goal.

#### **2.10.2 Personal attitude towards formal education**

Data confirms that one of the main reasons why children are reported not attending school is their lack of interest in schooling since they found schooling useless (GSS, 2006). Individual motivational factors and lack of interest in schooling are closely related to the quality of classroom instructional practice (UNICEF, 2015). Bridgeland et al. (2010) released findings that revealed that the leading reason cited by students for dropping out was not seeing the connection between classroom learning and their own lives and career dreams. The informants in this study did not see the value of some of their classes nor their



relevance. According to the authors, “many informants said that the accumulation of tough circumstances and other barriers students face, rather than one particular problem, better explained many students’ decision to drop-out”.

### **2.11 Effects of School Drop-out**

The drop-out problem had reached far beyond its impact on students who leave school and their families. This crisis affect their local community’s economic health and the nation at large, as individual consequences develop into increased cost on a national scale. The drop-out crisis deserves national attention as large numbers of dropouts are linked with devastating social costs and consequences to society (Groth, 1998; Hoyle & Collier, 2006). Economically, society as a whole greatly suffers when students leave school prior to obtaining a high school certificate/diploma. This economic impact is reflected in the loss of productive workers, the earnings and revenues they would have earned, and the high cost associated with increased incarceration, health care, and social services (Bridgeland et al. 2006). The consequence of dropping out of high school is devastating to individuals, communities, and our national economy (Orfield et al. 2004).

Individual dropouts suffer because many have difficulty finding steady, well-paying jobs not just when they first leave school but over their entire lifetimes (Rumberger, 1987). Most of these youth are headed for a life of sporadic employment and low wages (Barton, 2005). According to Orfield et al. (2004) approximately two thirds of all state prison inmates in the US have not completed high school. Additionally, young women who dropout of high school are more likely to become single parents at young ages. Darling-Hammond (2007) and Murray and Naranjo (2008) revealed that dropouts presently make

up about 50% of the US prison population and earn approximately 50% less money in their lifetime than a typical college graduate.

Accordingly, Hoyle and Collier (2006) reported that dropouts are a significant financial burden to the US government as approximately 260 billion dollars is lost annually in wages, taxes, and community services. Hoyle and Collier further asserted that the drop-out crisis is an American social tragedy, as large percentages of dropouts are adversely impacting America's ability to sustain the medical, educational, and overall social needs of its community. Bridgeland et al's. (2008) research in the US also reported that dropouts earn about one million dollars less over their lifetimes, are twice more likely to slip into poverty, are eight times more likely to be in jail, and are half as likely to vote. Most importantly, dropping out can prevent a youth from reaching his/her fullest potential.

Communities and society at large also pay a price as a result of young students dropping out of school. Sum et al. (2009) reported how the incidence of institutionalization problems among young high school dropouts was more than 63 times higher than among young college graduates. The implications of dropping out of school reach beyond social and economic consequences. There are also emotional and psychological implications to dropping out of school that reach well beyond the economic repercussions. Reyes and Jason's study (1992) revealed that among other negative consequences of dropping out, there is a greater likelihood of low-status and disenfranchisement from society and its institutions. School dropouts are also more likely to receive disapproval from parents, friends, and society, and to have poor self-esteem (Tidwell, 1988). Some researchers and educational reform advocates have considered these issues significant enough to call the

drop-out problem an educational and civil rights crisis (Orfield et al. 2004). Others have called it a silent crisis and a silent epidemic (Bridgeland et al. 2006; Oguntoyinbo, 2009).

## **2.12 Conclusion**

For many in Ghana, progressing beyond JHS is critical to attaining an increasingly informed citizenry, future socioeconomic wellbeing of individuals and the state at large. There are several interwoven demand and supply inadequacies that conspire to contribute to the problem of school transition drop-out. Two of the major barriers to progression are low academic performance and inability to afford fees and school-related expenses (Ansong, 2013). What causes would empirical research reveal to necessitate transition drop-out to SHS among eligible B.E.C.E graduates in rural Ghana? Are these causes the same as the causes of in-school drop-out during basic school? What are the transition dropouts doing with their lives? What are the effects of transition drop-out on communities? This study contributes to the knowledge base, by examining these questions and shedding light on how findings may confirm or deviate from what we know anecdotally and empirically.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methods and procedures used to carry out the research. The chapter concerns itself with the research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling technique. The unit of analysis, instruments used in the study, the administration of the instruments, collection of data, as well as data analysis procedure are also major components of the methodology. The aim of the researcher is to ascertain the causes of transition drop-out among successful B.E.C.E graduates.

#### **3.2 Research Approach**

Cohen et al. (2007) indicated that several approaches to educational research are contained in paradigms of qualitative, naturalistic and ethnographic research. The characteristics of this paradigms are numerous but generally reflect the fact that meaning arises out of social situations and is handled through interpretive processes. To understand a situation, researchers need to understand the context because situations affect behaviour and perspective and vice versa. In view of this, the study was situated within the qualitative research paradigm for its interpretive and constructivist epistemology.

Constructivism is an epistemology, a learning or meaning-making theory that offers an explanation of the nature of knowledge and how human beings learns. The real understanding is only constructed based on learners' previous experience and background knowledge. It maintains that individuals create or construct their own new understandings or knowledge through the interaction

of what they already believe and the ideas, events and activities with which they come into contact. (Ültanır, 2012).

It was thought that this research approach was more appropriate to explore the different conditions and factors which contributed towards transition drop-out from the insiders' point of view. It would then be as a result of individual and social experience and not by finding and recording reality. This would help provide a high quality of knowledge base for educational field improvement. The objective was to obtain an in-depth and detailed understanding of the issue and to shed light on behaviours that perpetuate low socio economic development and deepen poverty. Practices, systems, and structures that also perpetuate social and educational inequities would be brought to the fore.

### **3.3 Research Design**

I chose to study transition drop-out among successful B.E.C.E graduates in Agona Kwaman (a rural Ghanaian community). This was because many successful B.E.C.E graduates especially in rural Ghana seems to end their formal education at the basic school level, in spite of their ability to progress. Meanwhile, research on drop-out have concentrated on in-school drop-out to the neglect of transition drop-out which according to Ansong (2013) is of a higher rate than in-school drop-out. This was the catalyser that provided the inspiration for the study.

To bring to light the causes for the phenomenon of transition drop-out that seems to have only been researched in different facets, a more in-depth investigation was required to understand the context of the behaviour. A case study research design was therefore

adopted as instrumental in providing opportunities for the in-depth analysis of the problem to set the stage for a sweeping statistical survey and or a comparative comprehensive study.

Gall et al. (2007) described case study as the in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon in its real-life context that reflects the perspective of the respondents involved in the phenomenon. They listed three major purposes of case studies: (1) description, (2) explanation, and (3) evaluation. A case study is often used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one or a few easily researchable examples (Lynn & Lynn, 2015). It is a useful design when not much is known about a phenomenon. The design can provide detailed descriptions of specific and rare cases and excels at bringing an understanding of complex issues through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships (ibid).

### **3.4 Unit of Analysis**

In the view of Kumekpor (2002), a unit of analysis is the actual or empirical unit, object, occurrence etcetera that can be measured or observed so as to study a phenomenon. Two units of analysis were factored into the research. These included; transition dropouts in Agona Kwaman who were eligible to make the transition to SHS and a caregiver or guardian of the dropouts. This is because caregivers and the society as a whole cannot be delineated from an individual's socio-economic development.

### **3.5 The Study Area**

Agona Kwaman is a rural town in the Agona West Municipality which was carved out of the former Agona District. The Municipal capital is Swedru. The major occupation of the

people of Agona Kwaman is farming and petty trading, supplying Swedru, Kasoa, Bawjiase and Accra markets with farm produce. It is about 44 miles (or 70 km) west of Accra, and has a total population of 3,846 inhabitants (GSS, 2012). There are three (3) public mission-based basic schools, churning out at least forty-five (45) B.E.C.E graduates every academic year.

### **3.6 Study Population**

The entire group of individuals in which I was interested in was all transition dropouts from public basic schools in the study area who dropped out from transitioning to SHS and their caregivers. However, since it was impractical to collect information from the entire population, the accessible population consisted of all transition dropouts who failed to make the transition to SHS in the 2015/2016 academic year from the study area and their caregivers.

### **3.7 Sample and Sampling Technique**

The finite part of the population whose responses were studied to gain information about the whole was twelve (12) graduate respondents and twelve (12) of their caregivers/guardians, with an equal representation of male and female respondents. I purposefully selected twenty (20) transition dropouts, even though my goal was to contact and interview a total of 12 respondents. I started with a list of twenty, since I knew that tracking all of them would be challenging and that with statistical probability I would be able to contact a little more than half of the potential respondents from the original list. This was because the transition dropout respondents were engaged in activities other than

schooling. They were therefore widely dispersed, with some of them based in urban and sub-urban centres.

The techniques for selecting the sample of all transition dropout respondents was purposive sampling. In purposive or judgemental sampling, the goal is to select cases that are likely to be information rich with respect to the purpose of the study. It is not designed to represent accurately a defined population rather, the intent is to achieve an in-depth understanding of selected individuals (Gall et al. 2007).

### **3.8 Research Instrument**

A semi-structured, one-on-one interview and data from field notes that I developed based on the review of the literature were the research instruments employed. According to Gall et al. (2007), the semi-structured interview involves asking a series of structured questions and then probing more deeply with open form questions to obtain additional information. The open-ended interview involves a predetermined sequence and wording of the same set of questions to be asked of each informant, in order to minimize the possibility of bias and to facilitate the analysis of the data obtained (Gall et al. 2007). An interview affords the interviewer the opportunity to explain more clearly the information s/he wants to convey “If the informant misinterprets the question, the interviewer may follow it up with a clarifying question,” (Kumekpor, 2002: 29).

The interview guides consisted of two sets of fourteen (15) item questions to ensure that respondents express themselves to give the researcher detailed information for the study. The interview guide was developed based on transition dropouts and their caregivers/guardians understanding of the importance of transitioning to SHS and the



factors hindering their transition. The interview guide was given to the researcher's supervisor for scrutiny and advice for further improvement.

### **3.9 Data Collection**

A letter obtained from the head of Department of Social Studies, University of Education, Winneba, was sent to sources where information needed for conducting the study was obtained. I sought consent from caregivers and children who were 18 years and above, before engaging them in the study. Permission was also sought from caregivers of underage respondents, for their children to participate in the study. The letter outlined the scope and broad aim of the study and reserved the option for respondents to opt their children or themselves out of the study.

In this study my main source of data was one-on-one interviews with the respondents. I conducted and recorded semi-structured interviews with twelve (12) transition dropouts and twelve (12) caregivers of the transition dropouts. Each interview location was chosen by the participant on the basis of their perception of comfort and quiet, which they felt would present minimal or no interference. Each interview was audio recorded. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for all participants and all recordings were erased after transcription, the data was secured on one computer via password protection and was only accessible to the author of this study.

### **3.10 Validity**

Creswell (2007) defined validity as the accuracy of the account using one or more of the procedures for validation, such as member checking, triangulating sources of data, systematic data-collection procedures or using peer or external auditors of the

accounts and other techniques. These are aimed at producing high quality data that are credible, accurate, and true to the phenomenon under study. Of the methods recommended, rich and thick description, member checks, and peer debriefing were utilized for the purpose of this study to assure validity.

### **3.10.1 Rich and thick description**

In case study research, the term description means that the end product of a case is a rich and thick description of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009). Schwandt (2007) added that to thickly describe social action is actually to interpret it by recording circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations that characterize a particular episode. In this case study, I provided a rich and thick descriptions by including a detailed profile of participants and by including multiple excerpts taken from the narrative generated from the interviews, in an effort to offer the reader insight into the respondents' perceptions and their views about the reason/s for transitionally dropping out of school.

### **3.10.2 Member checks**

Member checks are described as “the participants adding credibility to the qualitative study by having a chance to react both to the data and the final narrative” (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 127). After an interview was transcribed, each participant was asked to read the transcript of his or her interview to confirm that the data was accurate. There was an arrangement made with each participant for time that was convenient for them to read the transcript of the interview. A place was provided for the transcript to be read in my presence and for the respondent to correct or amend the transcribed interview.

### **3.10.3 Peer debriefing**

Peer debriefing, another validation strategy used in this study, is described by Creswell (2007: 29) as one that provides an external check of the research process. He continues to state that the peer is a person who “keeps the researcher honest” and “asks the hard questions”. Merriam (2009) argued that such an examination or review can be conducted by a colleague either familiar with the research or one new to the topic. Fortunately, my supervisor naturally assumed this role as he critiqued my methods and questioned my interpretation and analysis of data. His support and feedback were critical to the research process.

### **3.11 Data Analysis**

The study adopted an interpretive research analysis process focusing on real life experiences of transition dropout who dropped out of transitioning to SHS to highlight the reasons behind transition drop-out. Glaser and Strauss (1967) constant comparative approach to analysis was used. This process involves: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory. Themes were used to analyse the data obtained. Data for the study consisted of words, phrases and meanings in the transcribed interviews, supplemented by field notes during the interview. Once the field notes were gathered and the interviews transcribed, the first step was to examine the data and code it into as many categories of analysis as possible while comparing incidents applicable to each category.

To lessen the burden of the analysis, a qualitative computer software analysis program NVivo 10 was used as a data management package to analyse the data. The main function

of the qualitative data software was not to analyse data but rather to aid the data analysis process. The NVivo coding process began with open coding which identified various basic themes and organized them into coherent categories. This step involved reading and re-reading the text and identifying the coherent categories and providing descriptive labels for each category and sub-category. During the course of the analysis key themes were identified on which the analysis was focused. The development of these emergent themes was guided by the initial research questions. As is typical in emergent analysis (Miles et al. 2014) the themes evolved as work with the data progressed.

This step was repeated until new themes stopped emerging, indicating that the open coding process had reached its saturation point (Gibbs, 2008). As the themes or categories emerged I compared them to those in the existing review of the literature and to prior research and theory. Next was integrating categories and their properties. The categories were summarized to determine the extent to which they addressed the research questions. Categories were merged and divided to capture a minimal representation of how the parts fit into the whole. Themes were retained as trustworthy when they were indicated by a majority (greater than 50%) of the respondents. This threshold helped to support the argument that the findings reasonably represent the data.

The themes emerging from the data analysis which met the inclusion criterion were explored to identify patterns. These patterns represent connections within and between the themes. I identified the properties to each category and further compared them with the initial comparison of themes. This process led to the discovery of how some themes may be related to other themes or to the transition drop-out characteristics and attributes, providing a mechanism for clear data visualization to support the emergent themes and

explanatory patterns. Finally, the findings was written. This involved interpreting the themes and patterns that were related to transition drop-out among successful B.E.C.E graduates. Discussion of the themes and their relation to existing literature and theory has been explored in the next chapter of this study.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This section presents and discusses the data collected from respondents. The main objective of this study was to ascertain the major factors responsible for transition drop-out among B.E.C.E graduates who are eligible to progress to SHS in the study area from their perspective and their caregiver's perspective. By capturing their stories after dropping out of transitioning to SHS, I attempted to look at the transition drop-out experience through the eyes of successful B.E.C.E graduates and their caregivers, in search of answers and solutions to minimizing this phenomenon, especially in the context of the study area. It was also my intention, through the findings of the study, to capture their voices and facilitate a better understanding of their specific needs.

In an attempt to identify the factors that may have significantly contributed to the problem in the study area, I also explained the significant themes of each factor relating to the factors and provided support using relevant quotes from the transition dropouts' interview to demonstrate that the themes emerged from the data. In all the factors that I found that were related to transition dropouts, all themes were given by more than 50% of the respondents. I further analysed and discussed data collected from the field and the related literature within the framework of the stated objectives of the research.

#### **4.2 Background Information of Respondents**

Twelve (12) transition dropout respondents who were eligible to progress to SHS were selected from the study area. For gender equality the study considered an equal number of

female and male respondents. All respondents were below twenty-three (23) years old besides a female informant who was a few months shy of 23 years. This was because, she was a returnee to school after she had dropped out for a couple of years to have a baby before her success at the B.E.C.E. One other female and male informant were twenty-one (21) and twenty (20) years old respectively. A quarter of the respondents, two male respondents and a female one, were eighteen (18) year olds, with one other seventeen (17) year old male informant. The rest, were three (3) female and two (2) male sixteen (16) year old respondents. This is in other for the study to be situated within the definition of drop-out adopted by the study, which is defined as a youngster below the age of 23 who leaves education without a SHS certificate (Cabus & De Witte, 2012). The other unit of analysis included a caregiver each of all successful B.E.C.E graduates in the study area.

### **4.3 Themes that Emerged from the Category of Family-related Cause**

The themes that emerged from the category of family-related cause of transition drop-out included; unfavourable structure of the household and low household income level. The stories of 83.3% of transition dropout respondents were, replete with themes of unfavourable structure of the household while all (100%) transition dropout respondents narratives was dotted with themes of low household income level.

#### **4.3.1 Unfavourable structure of the household**

Findings suggested that most transition dropouts are from non-intact nuclear families and that many of them do not necessarily stay with a parent or both parents neither are their parents necessarily their caregivers. In-school drop-out research had collaborated that family background is known to influence student's academic achievements and drop-out

behaviour. Parental education, children of divorced parents, single-parent and step-parent households have a greater effect in increasing the odds that a student drops out of school (Kimmel, 1985; Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999). When examining the progress of fostered children, Rolleston (2009) found they have less likelihood of completing SHS – thus becoming victims of transition drop-out.

#### **4.3.2 Low household income level**

Both groups of respondents, cited the lack of finances as the cause of transition drop-out. Studies in the literature is aligned with this accession by a range of arguments. UNESCO (2002) argued that poverty and its associates deny many children from continuing with education. Poverty is considered to be a major factor in the impediment of enrolment and retention in Ghanaian schools (GSS, 2003; Akyeampong et al. 2007). Children from low socio-economic households commonly face some form of demand to withdraw from school if their parents cannot afford the direct cost of education (Gubert & Robilliard, 2006). Waggoner (1991) over two decades ago opined that students from low income family status are twice as likely to drop-out of school as students from average or above average means. Graham-Brown (1991) also documented that the rate of early school leavers of low-income families' children are three times more than those from higher income families.

#### **4.4 Themes that Emerged from the Theme of Unfavourable Structure of Household**

Themes that emerged from the theme unfavourable structure of household were; low household aspirations towards SHS education, number of children caregiver cares for, gender and marital status of caregiver and who the caregiver is.



**Table 4.1****Themes from unfavourable structure of household**

<b>THEME</b>	<b>THEMES</b>
Unfavourable structure of household (83.3%)	Low household aspiration toward SHS education (66.7%) Number of 0-3yr olds caregiver cares for (91.6%) Gender of caregiver. Female (83.3%) Marital status of caregiver. Singles (75%) Who the caregiver is. Female family member (58.3%)

Due to the unfavourable structure of the household, 66.7% of caregiver respondent narratives were replete with themes of low household aspirations towards SHS education and 91.6% of caregiver respondents had children between 0 to 3 years to care for beside the transition dropout respondent. 83.3% of caregiver respondents were female's while 75% of caregiver respondents were single and 58.3% of caregiver respondents were older female family members.

**4.4.1 Low household aspirations towards SHS education**

More than half of the transition dropout respondents had no one in their household who had transitioned to SHS. This provided the graduate respondents with a low household aspiration towards SHS education.

**Table 4.2****Caregiver who have had children transition to SHS**

<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>YES</b>	4	33.3
<b>NO</b>	8	66.7

The data uncovered Four (4) caregiver respondents answered yes to whether they had other children who had transitioned to SHS. A caregiver had two (2) other children who were a SHS graduate and a University graduate. Three (3) caregivers had had at least a kid who had transitioned to SHS, but they dropped out. Eight (8) caregiver respondents, had no child or children who had transitioned to SHS. Research from the literature suggests that children in families with an older sibling who dropped out or were unable to transition to SHS are more likely to discontinue formal school (Green & Scott 1995).

#### 4.4.2 Number of other children caregiver cares for

The other number of children the caregiver cares for also emerged as a direct effect of some transition respondent's inability to transition to SHS. This however, did not apply to the majority of transition dropout respondents

**Table 4.3**

**Other children caregiver cares for**

<b>NO. OF CHILDREN</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>0</b>	4	33.3
<b>1&amp;2</b>	4	33.3
<b>3</b>	3	25
<b>4 OR MORE</b>	1	8.3

Three (3) of the caregiver respondents had three (3) other kids to look after. Four (4) of them had one (1) and two (2) other kids to take care off, whereas a quarter of the caregivers had no other kids to take care off. Only one caregiver informant had five (5) other children to look after. The literature revealed that Rumberger's (1983) study found out that an

increased number of siblings or children to cater for correlated with an increased dropout rates. In this study however, the highest number of other children caregiver had to care for was three (3) children. It was only one caregiver that had as many as four (4) other children to take care off.

#### 4.4.3 Gender and marital status of caregiver

The gender of caregiver respondents revealed by the narratives was largely of a female majority and their marital status was also largely dominated by single women.

**Table 4.4**

**Gender and marital status of caregiver**

	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>SINGLE</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>MARRIED</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>MALE</b>	2	16.7	1	8.3	1	8.3
<b>FEMALE</b>	10	83.3	9	75	1	8.3

The gender of caregivers of the transition dropouts rested more on female caregivers rather than male ones. Among the ten (10) female caregiver respondents, nine (9) were single caregivers, resulting in a whopping 90% of female caregiver respondents being single caregivers. This means 75% of caregiver respondents were single caregivers. There was a single male caregiver respondent, and a married male and a female caregiver informant who were in a separate intact union. This resulted in just two (2) intact caregiver families representing a meager 16.7% intact caregiver respondents revealed by the data.

Yaw, a 16 year old boy, who worked as a ‘trotro mate’ (bus conductor) in Kasoa, told me:

My father was married to another woman and when I go to him for money he asked me to go to my mother.....so I stopped going. My

mother helped me and my sister until I completed JHS and I was given Konyako SHS, but my mother alone could no longer help us.

18 year old Esi, who was petty trading in town, said

My mother took care of me but it was difficult. I had to go home during break to take money for food or get food to eat from my mother. When I finally passed the B.E.C.E, one of my teachers wanted to help me enrol into Nyakrom SHS where I was placed, but when he consulted my family they were not ready to support him financially.

Esi now has a son with a SHS student in town and trying to survive by petty trading.

Ironically, 21 year old Sisi, the daughter of an intact family who was helping her parents on the farm, told me:

My parents are poor farmer, they just don't have the money to send me to the Mozano SHS where I was placed and no other family member would... After all, those who would go to the SHS would also go and come back to join us in this town or go struggling in the city for jobs.

These narratives of children in non-intact families revealed that the effect of not living with both birth parents, played a role in them dropping out of transitioning to SHS as they realized that the financial strength of their caregivers to support their SHS education was minimized and faced with no support from other family members, they decided to drop-out and earn some money instead. Their stories suggested that the possible reason why they dropped out of transitioning into SHS, was the lack of parental/caregiver encouragement, attention and financial support towards their SHS education.

The narratives collaborates research from the literature review which found that children in families with two birth parents receive more parental encouragement and attention with

respect to educational activities than children from non-intact families. They also found that children from single-parent and step-parent families are more likely to exhibit signs of school disengagement than children who live with both birth parents (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999). Another study by Grant and Hallman (2006) reported that, children who live with their biological mothers are not very likely to drop-out of school when compared with those pupils whose mothers were living somewhere or who were bereaved.

However, a single biological mother, who is not financially sufficient or has a low expectation of the value of further education, heightens the likelihood of the child transitionally dropping out, just as in Esi's case. In fact, the researcher's observation revealed many more of such cases in the study area. In the same vain, a financially insufficient intact family or one with low appreciation of the value of further education would also increase a child's likelihood of transitionally dropping out, as in Sisi's case. However, the findings established that all caregiver respondents of the transition dropouts affirmed and enumerated the immense value of SHS education, translating into them having high expectations of the value of education on the surface.

#### **4.4.4 Who the caregiver is**

The nature of the caregiver of transition dropout respondents uncovered in the stories, mostly varied between other older close family relations, rather than biological parents.

**Table 4.5**

<b>CAREGIVER</b>	<b>The caregiver</b>	
	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>BROTHER</b>	1	8.3
<b>MOTHER</b>	3	25
<b>STEP MOTHER</b>	1	8.3
<b>FATHER</b>	1	8.3
<b>AUNT</b>	3	25
<b>GRANDMA</b>	3	25

The data collected revealed that three (3) caregiver respondents were biological mother caregivers. There was one (1) biological father caregiver, who together with a biological mother caregiver, formed the two (2) pairs of intact parent caregivers the data uncovered. But for two male caregivers, one father and a brother, three (3) caregivers were the aunts of the transition dropout respondents, three (3) other caregivers were their grandmothers and one (1) was a step mother.

20 year old young man, Jojo, a hawker in Accra said to me:

I stayed with my grandma all my life because my mother dropped out of school to give birth to me...my grandma helped me to complete my B.E.C.E but even though I was successfully placed in Nyakrom SHS, I think I would be too much of a burden for her with two of my small cousins needing her support too.

16 years old girl Ama, told me:

My mother and father had stopped (divorced) when I was in class 4, so I lived with my stepmother ... when I passed the B.E.C.E and was given Mando SHS, I feared that my father who didn't make any preparation for my going to SHS, would not send me to the school. Truly, he did not. All I do now is help on the farm and take care of my younger sibling. I am planning to go to Kasoa to look for money (work) to continue school.

Kofi, an 18 year old boy who worked as a 'trotro mate' (bus conductor) in Accra said:

When I was in JHS I stay with my aunt all the time because my mother give me to my aunt when I was about 7 years, so she could go and work in Mankesim. I heard she was sending me money in the beginning but later she stopped sending. So before I had passed the B.E.C.E and was placed in Bisease SHS, I knew I had to struggle for myself and go to the school or learn driving.

These narratives of foster children also revealed that the effect of not living with their parents, played a role in them dropping out of transitioning to SHS as they realized that nobody was showing interest in supporting their schooling further and faced with no finances they decided to drop-out and earn some money instead. Their stories suggested that the possible reason why they dropped out of transitioning into SHS, was the apathetic attitude of their foster parents towards their SHS education. This may also has arisen due to financial inadequacies and as a result preference to support own/favourite children over others were developed or just due to a low appreciation of the value of SHS education by their caregivers.

This aligns with the progress of fostered children in the literature review, where Rolleston (2009) study on fosterage in Ghana found that fostered children are 7% less likely to enter

basic school in Ghana compared to the household head's biological children and they have a 19% likelihood of completing SHS. Large family size requires that parents engage in child selection as to who goes to school (ibid).

#### **4.5 Themes that Emerged from the Theme of Low Household Income Level**

Themes that emerged from low household income level included; low caregiver educational background, unskilled caregiver occupation and misplaced caregiver financial priority. The background of 91.6% and 91.6% of caregiver respondents were, replete with themes of low caregiver educational background and unskilled caregiver occupation respectively, while all (100%) caregiver respondents narratives was scattered with themes of misplaced caregiver financial priority.

##### **4.5.1 Low caregiver educational background**

Even though most caregiver respondents had acquired some formal education, it was only up to middle school/junior high school level.

**Table 4.6**

**Caregiver educational background**

<b>LEVEL OF EDU.</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>SENIOR HIGH</b>	1	8.3
<b>JHS/MIDDLE</b>	7	58.3
<b>PRIMARY</b>	3	25
<b>NONE</b>	1	8.3



Three (3) caregiver respondents were middle school form two leavers, two (2) were middle school form one leavers and two (2) others were middle school form four leavers. One (1) caregiver informant was not educated at all, while three (3) were primary six school leavers and just one caregiver was a senior high school graduate. As a result, 91.6% of caregivers had not acquired any form of SHS education. Ersado (2005) argues in the literature that, caregivers' education is the most consistent determinant of a child's participation in education. It has been documented that the higher the education of the parent or the household head (caregiver), the greater the chances of increased access, regular attendance and lower dropout rates (Ainsworth et al. 2005; Connelly & Zheng, 2003; Grant & Hallman, 2006). Some researchers indicated that non-educated parents cannot provide the support or often do not appreciate the benefits of schooling (Juneja, 2001; Pryor & Ampiah, 2003). Children of parents who did not finish high school are more likely to discontinue formal school (Green & Scott 1995).

#### **4.5.2 Unskilled caregiver occupation**

As an effect of having a low educational background, majority of the caregiver respondents were engaged in unskilled occupation. The leading occupation was farming.

**Table 4.7**

<b>Caregiver occupation</b>		
<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>PETTY TRADING</b>	5	41.7
<b>FARMING</b>	6	50
<b>TEACHER</b>	1	8.3

As many as half of the caregiver respondents were farmers, while a quarter of them were petty traders. Meanwhile some caregivers who were into farming were also petty trading and making palm oil. There was one (1) caregiver who was a non-professional teacher. Due to low caregiver educational background, caregivers had to resort to unskilled labour to earn a living in order to educate their children. Unskilled occupation is generally an associate of poverty and as such, many studies in the literature confirmed that the level of family income greatly determine the chance of pupils' survival in the educational system (World Bank, 1980; Wanna & Tsion, 1994; Patrinos & Psacharopoulos, 1996). According to World Bank (1980), the income profiles of dropouts show that the problem is mostly prevalent among pupils from low-level of parents' income. Kaufman et al. (2004) reported that students living in low-income families as being six times more likely than students from high-income families to drop-out.

#### **4.5.3 Misplaced caregiver financial priority**

Ravaged by low educational levels and resultant unskilled occupation with its attendant low income levels, caregivers in the study area, in spite of these, have misplaced financial priorities. Despite their financially challenged situation, observations revealed that caregivers are ready to borrow huge sums and spend them lavishly on outdooing, weddings and funerals in order to pay back later in bits and pieces mostly with interest. This kind of caregiver behaviour, seems to fly in the face of rational thinking, as such they would hardly admit to it.

The moment there is an impending ceremony to be undertaken, be it a wedding or a funeral ceremony, money is somehow found to organize it and dress up in new clothes for it. Caregivers would go the long hall to get money for these ceremonies yet they can't find

money for a child who had been successful at the B.E.C.E to transition to SHS. This caregiver behaviour suggested a confirmation of the fact that they may not appreciate the value of SHS education. They probably hold the notion that the ceremonies are a one-time payment while the cost of SHS education is recurrent for the duration of the course. The ceremonies also served as fund raising forums in order for them to make more money than they have invested in them, realizing some profits from them sometimes, while the profit from SHS education is not as readily realized if realized at all.

#### **4.6 Themes that Emerged from the Category of Caregiver-related Cause**

The themes that emerged from the category of caregiver-related cause of the phenomenon were; low caregiver level of education and negative caregiver attitude towards SHS education. The narratives of (91.6%) of caregiver respondents were replete with themes of low caregiver level of education whereas all (100%) caregiver respondent's stories were covertly dotted with themes of negative caregiver attitude towards SHS education.

##### **4.6.1 Low caregiver level of education**

Findings revealed that majority of the caregivers had a low level of education. This means they were primary in-school dropouts or primary school transition dropouts, or they were middle/basic in-school dropouts or basic school transition dropout or they were completely formally uneducated. Meanwhile, a strong predictor of dropping out have been found in the literature to be caregivers' educational background and expectations for their children's academic success (Abbott et al. 2000). The tendency for students to stay in school is said to be dependent on the level of education of their parents.

#### **4.6.2 Negative caregiver attitude towards SHS education**

Most caregivers sounded as if they were in support of SHS education as beneficial to their wards'. However, their attitude and preparation towards supporting their wards' further education were to the contrary. This seems to suggest that caregivers had become despondent after experiencing cohorts of students acquire SHS education and to them, still remain unsuccessful. This translates into them having a low expectation of the value of education, or their behaviour were simply guided by the fact that, they just cannot find the money to do so. Studies in the literature collaborates this by asserting that parents who do not see the immediate and long term benefits of sending their children to school due to their experience of children not being able to meet the social and economic success markers in the community, are unlikely to continue to invest (Casely-Hayford et al. 2009; Reddy & Sinha, 2010). This attitudinal problem is said to be more problematic in societies that have no awareness about the value of education except in terms of economic benefit (Bray, 1981).

#### **4.7 Themes that Emerged from the Theme of Low Caregiver Level of Education**

Themes that emerged from the theme of low caregiver level of education were; high caregiver dropout rate and low caregiver education beyond middle school. The background of 66.7% of caregiver respondents were dotted with themes of high caregiver dropout rate while (91.6%) of caregiver respondents background were replete with themes of low caregiver education beyond middle school

#### **4.7.1 High caregiver dropout rate**

A quarter (25%) of the caregiver respondents dropped out from school at the primary school level. A much higher figure, 41.7% dropped out from school at the middle school level while only one (1) caregiver was not formally educated at all. One (1) other caregiver was the only caregiver who was a senior high school graduate, this was because he was an older brother of the transition dropout respondent. This situation is quite detrimental to supporting further education of children. This is because, research had established that caregivers' level of education represents a potential predictor to drop-out, as such, better educated caregivers spend more time supporting their children's accomplishments and increasing the likelihood that they will remain in school (Rumberger & Thomas 2000). Caregivers influence the academic performance of their children by imparting the values, aspirations, and motivation needed to remain in school and succeed. By implication, illiterate or semi-literate parents do not care for the education of their children (Hossler et al. 1999).

#### **4.7.2 Low caregiver education beyond middle school**

Further revelations were that caregivers who even completed middle school and were successful at the Middle School Leaving Certificate (MSLC) hardly made the transition from middle school to secondary school. As such many caregivers in the study area are either primary or middle school dropouts or transition dropouts. This suggests that caregivers may have a low expectation of the value of education except in terms of economic advantage. According to Bray (1981) caregivers who have a low expectation of the value of education find excuses not to send their children to school even if the schools or the finances are available. In addition, caregivers' had experienced or heard a few stories

of school mates or children in general who have been educated beyond middle school/JHS but failed to reap the expected benefit can also result in caregivers finding excuses to further educate their kids leading to a drop in the demand for SHS education.

#### **4.8 Themes that emerged from the theme of negative caregiver attitude towards SHS education**

The themes that emerged from the theme of negative caregiver attitude towards SHS education were; low expectation for SHS education, caregiver desire decent living for child and low caregiver involvement in child education. The narratives of all (100%) caregiver respondents were covertly replete with a low expectation for the value of SHS education and yet, all (100%) caregiver respondents desired a decent living for their 'children'. All (100%) the narratives of the caregiver respondents were also dotted with themes of low caregiver involvement in child education.

##### **4.8.1 Low expectation for SHS education**

After both groups of respondents had clearly enumerated the importance of further education, they covertly seems to harbour low expectations of the value of SHS education. This could be because, some cohorts of successful B.E.C.E graduates who had made the transition to SHS and yet had not bettered their lives especially according to the local's or community standards resulted in the attitude. Other cohorts of in-school dropouts and transition dropouts that had achieved success in their lives according to community standards also reinforced this attitude. An array of qualitative literature points to the fact that caregivers who had experienced more than one cohort of children leaving school unable to find jobs, and unable to attain the educational learning success and other key

benchmarks in the family/community, coupled with the need for farm labour, caregivers are unlikely to see the immediate and long term benefits of sending their children to school (Lloyd, 1994; Wolf, 1997; Stephens, 1998; Casely-Hayford et al. 2009).

#### **4.8.2 Caregiver desire decent living for child**

Even though caregivers' experiences and their lack of enthusiasm to further educate their children suggest a low expectation of the value of education on their part, they nonetheless ironically touted the importance of SHS education and expressed the means by which their children can earn a decent living in the future.

Kofi's caregiver his aunt, told me,

JHS is not an enough school level to complete because if he goes beyond JHS it would open up the mind of the child. I would make sure his future is secured by letting him learn the repair of broken down cars.

Esi's caregiver her mother, said,

If she is able to further her school beyond JHS, it will not only help her but also help me because, she may become someone prominent in future. I would do my best for her to go to SHS.

Yaw's caregiver his step mother, told me,

The JHS level cannot help you get a good job but further school like SHS can help you get more knowledge, get a good job and become responsible in society. His future is secured because he said he would learn plumbing.

Clearly, caregivers desire a decent living for their children in the future but fell short of providing them with SHS education. May this be because they have a low expectation of

the value of SHS education, the importance of which they well enumerated or it is more of simply not having the means or not being ready to make the financial sacrifice?

#### **4.8.3 Low caregiver involvement in child education**

Caregivers invested very little time in the amount of support and the encouragement to further educate their children. Probably stemming from the fact that caregivers were mostly not educated beyond middle school or current JHS level, they do not see SHS education as part of their caregiving/parenting role and so they are completely detached from their wards education besides feeding and some financial support at the JHS level. These included; checking on subject notes and exercises, helping with homework and projects, and liaising with subject teachers to assess the progress of the students. They scarcely even took a look at their report cards.

Children' daily financial support ceases after JHS whiles emotional and social support are totally absent. They are virtually left to fend for themselves, suggesting that the completion of JHS is the completion of school (formal education). Again, caregivers hardly made any kind of prior preparations for their care receiver's transition into SHS. This included; purchasing of trunks or suit cases, chop boxes, mattresses, toiletries and groceries. This further buttresses the assumption that caregiver's had a low expectation of the value of SHS education and therefore considered JHS education as an end in itself rather than a means to an end.

Arguments from the literature confirms that caregiver involvement is a key factor in influencing students' aspirations to progress and that during a child's development, the family structure and expectations are learned. Students therefore, rely on the opinions of



their family members (Hossler et al. 1999). Parental involvement is said to improve the basic academic skills of disadvantaged children and has a positive effect throughout their school years (Keith & Lichtman, 1994; Marcon, 1999; Overstreet et al. 2005). Although caregiver involvement and academic progress are positively correlated, maintaining disadvantaged caregiver involvement is oftentimes difficult (Reglin, 1993; Winters, 1993; Constantino, 2003; Ouimette et al. 2006). Furthermore, caregivers who view education as part of parenting will be more involved than caregivers who do not (Ramsburg, 1998; Ingram et al. 2007).

#### **4.9 Themes that Emerged from the Category of Cost-related Cause**

The themes that emerged from the category of cost-related cause of transition drop-out were; high cost of SHS education and child work. The stories of all (100%) transition dropout respondents and even caregiver respondents were replete with themes of high cost of SHS education, whereas the narratives of 83.3 % of transition dropouts were dotted with themes of child work.

##### **4.9.1 High cost of SHS education**

Caregiver's low educational levels, lead to them being engaged in unskilled or semiskilled labour, resulting in low household socioeconomic levels and culminating in the lack of financial muscle to pay for SHS education. The relatively high and recurrent cost involved at the SHS level was a major inhibitor to further educating disadvantaged children. This is collaborated by the literature which revealed that, as one transitions from JHS to SHS, the number of school-related supplies increases and the cost of education rises to more than 50% of many families' annual incomes (Ghana Health and Education Initiative, n.d.). The

drastic increase in educational expense may account for the high dropout rate, which is higher during the transition from JHS to SHS than the dropout rate during JHS (Ansong, 2013).

#### **4.9.2 Child work**

The findings revealed that most transition dropouts gravitated towards paid work for their survival by engaging in informal sector income generating activities in urban centres more than labour activities on the farm. This could also place the transition dropouts in the position to help the family back home when the need arises. Family may sometimes deliberately push them out as a ploy to get them to generate income in order for them to serve as financial support for the family in time of difficulty, since the family was unable to support them to enter SHS. Studies in the literature do not totally conform to this findings in terms of the kind of income generating activities they are engaged in and the primary reason why they had to engage in it.

#### **4.10 Themes that Emerged from the Theme of Child Work**

Themes that emerged from the theme of child work were; work for SHS education, work rather than SHS education and migration and peer influence. All (100%) transition dropout stories were replete with themes of migration and peer influence while 58.3% of their stories were replete with themes of work for SHS education. The narratives of 66.7% of transition dropout were dotted with themes of work rather than SHS education.

##### **4.10.1 Work for SHS education**

Transition dropout respondents, who were very much aware of their caregiver's financial predicament and also due to peer influence, decided to migrate to the big cities in search

of work as bus conductors, house helps, bar and chop bar attendant's etc. Some of them had the intension to save enough money to support themselves into and through SHS, however, after spending much more than their estimated period to accumulate their expected sum of money, which could only ensure their entry into the SHS, they become complacent. Having also tasted the life of prolonged paid work, going back to school without financial support and having to fend for themselves felt difficult and scary. Others contended with the idea of beginning the journey back to school, only to drop-out, for lack of financial support.

Research from the literature supported the argument of a relatively high cost involved at the SHS level as a major deterrent to sending children from poor households to SHS (WFP, 2010). The drastic increase in educational expenses may account for the high dropout rate during the transition from JHS to SHS than the traditional dropout rate during JHS (Ansong, 2013). Even though, Duryea (2003) highlighted the pull of the labour market rather than the push of poverty as a main factor in children dropping out of school in urban Brazil. Studies also show that rural children are more likely to work than urban or peri-urban children (Canagarajah & Coulombe, 1997; Blunch & Verner, 2000; Ersado, 2005).

#### **4.10.2 Work rather than SHS education**

Some transition dropouts opted out of transitioning into SHS and chose work rather than further schooling even before they completed JHS. This was so because, knowing their caregiver's financial predicament, they resigned to their faith. Knowing pretty well that there wasn't the slightest chance that they could make the transition to SHS. Some others, whose convictions were also based on their caregiver's financial inadequacies, were of the view that even if they could pay for the admission fee, paying for subsequent fees and

supplies would be a mountainous challenge, so why border. Others personally or through their caregiver, considered the opportunity cost of transitioning into SHS, which was an enormous financial burden sometimes to the detriment of younger sibling who are yet to complete JHS. As a result, they would rather work and support their younger siblings and the family as a whole. Studies on child poverty in the literature collaborated this by arguing that it is a tremendous sacrifice for parents from poor households to support children in public education; particularly if the outcomes are limited literacy and numeracy attainment, and the inability to work in traditional farming activities within the family (GNECC, 2008; Korboe et al. 2011).

#### **4.10.3 Migration and Peer Influence**

There exist the opportunity for school dropouts and JHS leavers alike to migrate to the cities to work and earn money. These youngsters came back to the community to attend festivals, funerals and other ceremonies with the hidden intent to show off their newly acquired second hand fashionable clothes, shoes, sounds systems, digital TVs and chic mobile phones, tablets and laptops from the cities. They are largely admired and looked up to by others who cannot wait to embark on the trip and acquire these goods for themselves. It was easier for those who started to migrate to the cities to work during school holiday breaks to finally leave for the cities to work after an unsuccessful B.E.C.E.

Consequently, transition dropouts who were successful at the B.E.C.E and due for transitioning to SHS, were aware of their bleak prospects of transitioning to SHS even before graduating. This crop of transition dropouts, decide to terminate school after the B.E.C.E and join the work force, for reasons of acquiring material stuff and or supporting the family. This was supported in the literature by a study that indicated an increased

vulnerability to early withdrawal for child educational migrants in Ghana and Botswana (Dunne & Leach 2005). Child migration to work and demands of the labour market influences schooling decisions and drop-out patterns (Hunt, 2008; Ping and Pieke, 2003, cited in Hashim, 2005: 13).

#### **4.11 Theme that Emerged from the Category of Socio-cultural related Cause**

Early marriage and pregnancy was the only theme that emerged from the category of socio-cultural related cause of transition drop-out. The narratives of 25% of caregiver respondents were scattered with themes of early marriage and pregnancy.

##### **4.11.1 Early marriage and pregnancy**

Transition dropout who are girls end up loitering the community aimlessly until young men who have some money to spare, especially city 'returnees' end up impregnating them and derailing their future due to caregiver neglect. Out of 50% of transition dropout respondents who were girls, 33.3% of them fell into this category. Based on certain observations, some caregivers, without overt admission, seemed not to endorse girls transitioning to SHS. These caregivers therefore deliberately drag their feet or conveniently use reasons of high cost of attending SHS as their trump card. They would rather make sacrifices for boys than girls. If caregiver's financial situation would not allow for sacrifices to be made for even boys, then it is most improbable for sacrifices to be made for girls. Arguments in the literature collaborated the argument that parental inability to cater for basic school needs and beyond has often led to girls turning to outsiders for assistance for provide clothing, food and school fees across both rural and urban settings (Casely-Hayford & Wilson, 2001;

FAWE, 2011). The lack of education for girls as a risk factor for child marriage has also been well documented and presented in the literature.

#### **4.12 Theme that Emerged from the Category of Personal-related Cause**

The only theme that emerged from the category of personal-related cause of transition drop-out was negative personal attitude towards SHS education. Half (50%) of the narratives of transition dropout respondents were dotted with themes of negative personal attitude towards SHS education.

##### **4.12.1 Negative personal attitude towards SHS education**

The only supply or push factor found to have contributed to transition drop-out of successful B.E.C.E graduates in the community was their personal attitude towards SHS education. A few graduate respondents seemed quite unenthused about furthering their education even though their answer to the question was to the contrary. This could be due to the usual problem of financial shortcomings generating a lack of interest or a more severe issue of plain lack of interest due to uneducated or semi educated ‘successful persons’ serving as role models in the community.

The literature confirms that one of the main reasons children are reported not attending school is their lack of interest in schooling since they found schooling useless (GSS, 2006). Bridgeland et al. (2010) revealed that the leading reason cited by students for dropping out was not seeing the connection between classroom learning and their own lives and career dreams. SHS education is therefore not considered as important among this group of transition dropouts who are eligible to progress, if they could start petty trading,

commercial driving, farming etc and become as successful as or even more successful than their role models.

#### **4.13 Effect of Transition Drop-out Society**

The perception of transition dropout respondents on the effects of transition drop-out on society, were that, they themselves (youngsters) experience a large inability to realize their full potential at least through formal education and to a large extent are unable to achieve their desired dreams. Due to their low level of education, they are more difficult to train on general clerical duties with the use of modern technology. Even with learning a trade, they are required to spend a minimum of as much as three years on the average to complete an apprenticeship training. Their stories revealed that, they face great difficulty in finding a well-paying job over their lifetime, so they stick to informal sector jobs i.e. trading, street hawking, house helping, gardening and bus conducting ending up as commercial drivers and traders with a few becoming tradesmen/women.

The narratives of transition dropout respondents revealed that in addition to having individual consequences, the local and urban communities are also affected. The local community in general seems to lose sight of the value of SHS education. This is because some transition dropouts who even though did not make the transition to SHS, are able to carve a decent living for themselves in the future compared to their colleagues who spent time and money attending a SHS and have achieved lessor or only equally.

In addition, local traditional community leaders and mentors are also largely semi-educated informal sector workers themselves overseeing community resource appropriation and strangulated community development. This does not inspire others yet to graduate to aspire

for SHS education, as a result, the community tends to accept JHS graduation as an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Individuals begin to get hopeful that SHS education and beyond is not the only way if not the way to attain success in life. Many transition dropouts find it necessary to migrate to major cities in search of manual and informal jobs, leaving behind the aged and young children to work on the farm. As such, school transition drop-out could be said to be a contributory factor to rural-urban migration in the local community.

The informal jobs that the transition dropouts are engaged in are mainly carried out in urban communities. The stories of transition dropout respondents captured that they gravely congested and overcrowded the urban space. Even though this informal sector jobs creates simple terms to abide with, such as, large scale employment and small scale entrepreneurial opportunities to all people regardless of education which is heavily relied on by formal economies, it is not controlled or regulated by the government. Transition dropouts therefore lamented they do not get benefits like social security and minimum wage payments. It is also difficult for governments to tax the informal economy, creating problems in infrastructural development and economic policy making, as overcrowding places undue pressure on social amenities, develop slums, worsen sanitary conditions and increase social vices in urban areas.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This section summarises the findings of the study, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations to be adopted by interested stakeholders. It also suggests areas for further research.

#### 5.2 Summary of findings

The purpose of this study was to establish the causes of school transition drop-out among successful B.E.C.E graduates in rural Ghana, using Agona Kwaman in the Agona West municipality of the Central region as a case. Through utilizing a semi-structured one-on-one interview method, the narratives of transition dropouts who have dropped out of transitioning to SHS and that of their caregivers were analysed to illustrate the factors which may have contributed to this phenomenon. Countless studies on school drop-out had come to a largely similar findings with slight variations without particular reference to transition drop-out.

Under family-related factors of transition drop-out, two factors were identified; low household income level and unfavourable structure of household. Low household income levels, inspired by low caregiver educational background, unskilled caregiver occupation and misplaced caregiver financial priorities were the range of causes established to be responsible for the problem in the study area. An overarching theme found throughout transition dropout and caregiver respondent's narrations were that financial resources were unavailable for the transition to SHS. In all cases, the transition dropouts had the desire to

further their education into the SHS but both their major and minor reasons for not doing so was, the unavailability of financial resources for the purpose. This was known to many of the JHS graduates before their success at the B.E.C.E. Due to low caregiver educational background, majority of the caregivers were engaged in unskilled occupations with its resultant low income levels. Meanwhile caregivers made financial sacrifices for lavish ceremonies and spent the low household income on other endeavours rather than SHS education.

One other theme that was found to run through most of the stories was an unfavourable structure of household, engineered by a low household aspiration towards SHS education, the number of children to be catered for by the caregiver, marital status of the caregiver and who the caregiver was. These were the other sets of causes attributed to the issue. In all cases except two (2), the successful B.E.C.E graduates were from non-intact families. Single mother households and other matured female family member playing the role of a parent were predominant, meanwhile a step mother household also prevailed. Interestingly, caregivers with as low as two and three children to cater for, were still unable to support one to make the transition into SHS.

Under caregiver-related reasons for transition drop-out, two factors were identified; low caregivers level of education, and negative caregiver attitude towards SHS education. Low caregivers level of education, necessitated by high caregiver dropout rate and low caregiver education beyond middle school were the group of causes that influenced the problem. Negative caregiver attitude towards SHS education on the other hand, brought about by low expectations for SHS education, and low involvement in child's education, were the range of causes attributed to the issue. Although the stories of both units of analysis

suggested a high expectation of the value of SHS education, caregivers exhibited a negative attitude towards SHS education. Caregiver's earlier experiences of cohorts of SHS graduates, saw their life's as far from successful. Caregivers therefore covertly did not see SHS education as beneficial, by their own or the community's standards. However, caregivers desired a decent living for children in spite of their low expectation of SHS education. The narratives were also entirely laced with the theme of low involvement in child education besides providing an irregular daily school stipend, school uniform, food and some books.

Under cost-related reasons for transition drop-out, two factors were identified; high cost of SHS education and child work. The high cost of SHS Education inspired by the direct cost of SHS education in relation to transition dropout's low household income level, made households saw SHS education to be out of their financial reach. Child work engineered by work for SHS Education, work rather than SHS education and migration and peer influence were the group of causes responsible for the problem. Under socio-cultural related reasons for transition drop-out, one factor, early marriage and pregnancy was identified to be the cause of the issue among some female graduates in the study area. Some female transition dropouts were involved in early marriages and or pregnancies. Worsened by the fact that some caregivers covertly admitted to preferring to enrol boys for SHS education rather than girls if they are to make the sacrifice.

Under personal-related reasons, negative personal attitude towards SHS education was the only theme that emerged as the supply/push factor that ensured transition drop-out. These cohorts of transition dropouts, might have grown despondent due to low caregiver support and involvement in their education and or were inspired by earlier JHS transition dropouts

considered to be successful, by their own or the community's standards. Even though, they were also without SHS education. As such, the majority of transition dropouts found refuge in migrating to urban area, mostly through peer influence, to engage in informal sector jobs for money, as an occupation moving forward rather than SHS education, or to save enough and finance themselves through SHS or be able to acquire the finances in order for them to learn a trade. These was what most of them were engaged in instead of SHS education.

Transition dropouts perception of the effect of transition dropout on the community were that, it has great inability to realize their individual optimum potential and it also make them suffer severe difficulty in finding a well-paying job over their lifetime. In addition, the large migration of youngsters from the rural community towards urban and sub-urban areas, crowded up the city centres and left the rural areas sparsely populated with more aged than youths. Although the informal sector jobs that transition dropouts are engaged in provided employment and small scale entrepreneurial opportunities to everyone irrespective of education, it is done without proper regulation and control from the government. Again, the lack of regulation and control contributed to the haphazard and congested nature of most city centres, putting pressure on limited social amenities and worsening sanitation, informal settlements, hindering the collection of taxes from these informal businesses and increasing the cities unbanked population. Transition dropouts are therefore very much aware of the effects of transition drop-out on individuals and the community which has the responsibility for stifling and retarding national development.

### 5.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that, the majority of the causes of transition drop-out among successful B.E.C.E graduates to SHSs in the study area were demand/pull factors and were found to be of a varying range, multifaceted and interrelated. The overarching theme, the lack of finances for the transition, was suggested to be fuelled by other themes. In effect, instead of transition dropouts progressing to SHS, they rather enter the job market right after JHS education. With their rather basic level of education, they add to the teaming unskilled informal sector workers in urban and sub-urban areas. It might also take relatively longer to provide them with training on a job and when they are trained on a job, it seems to constitute a successful attempt in churning out half-baked artisans.

Again, there is a loss of potentially capable skilled human resources to the community and country at large and as transition dropouts continue in the path of their caregivers in terms of their inability to enter SHS, the situation of financial incapacity for SHS education could persist in a vicious cycle. These consequences would surely stagnate and retard national and human resource development. It is for this reason that as many eligible JHS graduates as possible should make the transition to SHS in order to raise the National Attendance Ratio (NAR) of SHS education. This would ensure; a more efficient and quicker trained artisans, farmers, drivers and the likes, the realization of some individual potentials if not all, a reduction of low household income level issues, the acquisition of an equivalent level of education or higher by children of such individuals, curb the demerits of a low NAR for SHS education and sustain overall national development efforts.

Thankfully, free SHS education became a champagne issue before and during the 2016 general elections. The proponents, the then opposition NPP government of Ghana who took over the reins of governance, promised to make SHS education free for successful B.E.C.E graduates. This government policy is a laudable one, that could curb the incidence of a low NAR for SHS education but questions have been raised about its implementation and sustainability due to inadequate financial resources.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

In view of the crucial role SHS education plays in the advancement of society, every effort must be made to ensure that the NAR for SHS education in Ghana is increased. This could be achieved by community leaders taking steps to curb the troubling phenomenon through inspiring members of the community to see value in SHS education. Based on the outcome of the study, the following recommendations emerged as a way of minimising the transition dropout rate among successful B.E.C.E graduates in the study area.

- Community leaders and other mentors in the community should inspire youngster's especially successful B.E.C.E graduates to further their education to SHS. This can be done by community leaders themselves in churches, mosques and community programs or by inviting young SHS/tertiary students or graduates who has just entered the job market as resource persons in basic schools, religious and community organized youth programs. A sketch to encourage transitioning to SHS can be organized during the programs.
- In the similar vein, some transition dropouts who have achieved so called success and are looked up to by youngsters in the community, should be invited as resource

persons to discourage transition drop-out. This should be in basic schools, religious and community organized youth programs. A sketch discouraging success through transition drop-out could also be used in these programs.

- Community leaders should encourage caregivers to support their wards to progress to SHS. This can be done by encouraging caregivers to save towards their wards transition to SHS. The saving can start when their wards enter JHS.
- Community leaders and well-meaning community members should institute an education fund to support really needy but brilliant successful B.E.C.E graduates to make the transition to SHS and even beyond.
- An award scheme may also be instituted by the community leaders to reward needy caregivers who defied the odds and ensured that their ward/s who were successful at the B.E.C.E made the transition to SHS. This would inspire other caregivers to plan and provide the needed involvement and financial support for their wards SHS education.

### **5.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

A quantitative study may be conducted on a broader scope which would lead to a much more generalized conclusion. A comparative quantitative study between general in-school drop-out and transition drop-out behaviour may also be undertaken.

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## APPENDIX A

### UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

#### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SUCCESSFUL B.E.C.E GRADUATES

##### **Introduction**

This is an academic work with the aim of finding out the conditions and factors which contribute to transition drop out among successful B.E.C.E graduates in rural Ghana. I would therefore be grateful if you would respond to these questions. The information provided would be treated as confidential.

1. Who is/was your caregiver?
2. Who do/did u stay with?
3. Was your caregiver involved in your schooling? If yes, how?
4. Do u know anyone close to you who has benefited greatly from schooling?
5. Do u think schooling beyond JHS is beneficial? Explain?
6. What is the main reason why you dropped out of transitioning to SHS?
7. What is the other reason why you dropped out of transitioning to SHS?
8. Did you think of dropping out of transitioning to SHS prior to completing JHS? If so, for how long? Why?
9. Was there a specific situation/s in JHS that made you drop out of transitioning to SHS? If yes, name it/them? And explain?
10. Did you engage in paid work when you were in JHS? When? Where?
11. What are you currently engaged in?
12. Are you inspired by your peers who are hustling in the cities? Why?
13. Do u have to take care of someone/something at home?
14. What is your plan for the future?
15. How does transition dropout affect society?

## APPENDIX B

### UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

#### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS OF SUCCESSFUL B.E.C.E GRADUATES

##### **Introduction**

This is an academic work with the aim of finding out the conditions and factors which contribute to transition drop out among successful B.E.C.E graduates in rural Ghana. I would therefore be grateful if you would respond to these questions. The information provided would be treated as confidential.

1. How are you related to the successful B.E.C.E graduate?
2. What is your marital status?
3. What is your level of education?
4. Did you complete the said level of education? If no why?
5. How many kids do you take care of in school?
6. What do you do to take care of the kids?
7. How many of them are successful B.E.C.E graduates?
8. How many of them have transitioned to SHS?
9. How involved are you in your wards education?
10. Do you consider JHS completion as an appreciable level of education? Explain?
11. Do u know anyone close to you who has benefited greatly from schooling?
12. Do u think schooling beyond JHS is beneficial? Explain?
13. What is the main reason why you did not ensure your ward's transition to SHS?
14. What is the other reason why you did not ensure your ward's transition to SHS?
15. How secure is your wards future? Explain?





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1<sup>st</sup> October, 2016

*TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN*

Dear Sir/Madam,

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR. SEYTERT DENNIS KOBZO**

We write to introduce Mr. Seytert Dennis Kobzo to your office. He is an M. Phil Social Studies Student with registration number #150140214 Education Research Department.

As part of the requirement for the award of the master's degree, he is undertaking a research on the topic '*School Termination among Successful BECE Graduates in Rural Ghana: A Case of Agona Kwame*'.

We wish to assure you that any information provided would be treated confidentially.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION  
MARGARET NYALA (MRS.)  
*for Head of Department*