Student Dropout from Foundation Program at Modern College of Business & Science, Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract

Main reasons for student dropout from higher education may be low academic performance, poor socialization skills, low confidence levels, busy social life and financial issues. As students' dropout from higher education has been rising, there is a need to understand this problem for finding suitable solutions. Research objectives for this institutional research are to explore patterns in dropout data at Foundation program, establish criteria for identifying students at-risk of dropout and identify areas of improvement for reducing dropout rate, as the dropout problem is high at Foundation level of the college. Research methodology includes application of exploratory study based on analysis of secondary data pertaining to 22 semesters, Spring 2012 to Summer-I 2017. Findings revealed that 1966 students dropped out from Foundation program during the study period with an average of 94 students per semester. Dropout rate was higher among males and was more at Levels I and IV. Though dropout happened in Foundation, academic departments would also experience major loss, as Foundation is the 'feeder program' for other bachelor's programs. It is recommended to have a dropout process flow-chart not only to understand the exit journey of dropping students, but also to reverse the journey. It is recommended to set up a dropout committee, design an early warning system for creating alerts and bifurcate Foundation department into Language sub-department and Technical sub-department (Math and IT courses). It is further recommended to have an effective data management system that would enable administration to reduce dropout rates and create a 'feel good' environment for the students.

Keywords: dropout, stopout, system dropout, retention

1. Introduction

An effective higher educational ecosystem of a nation aims at transforming the society into knowledgeable society (UNESCO, 1991). In their endeavor to impart knowledge and enrich the learners with useful information, the higher educational institutions (henceforth referred to as HEIs) not only need to design high utility programs and courses (Duke, 2005) , but they also aim at increasing student enrolment and student retention (Braxton & McClendon, 2002) through emphasizing both academic and non-academic issues (*ibid*). While academic issues include, improvement of programs and learning facilities, non-academic issues entail, general facilities which are equally significant for the success of HEI (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007). A HEI can achieve growth in terms of number of academic activities performed, number of programs offered, global collaborations, advances in research, consultancy and training activities and most importantly, number of student registration (Going Global, British Council Analysis, 2012). While college administration focuses on increasing student strength, they tend to ignore the students that are discontinuing their education before completion of the stipulated program or number of years of study (Cervini, 2015). Hence, addressing student retention has become an indispensable action (Lillis, 2011). One of the serious problems that management of any HEI face is following the right mechanism appropriately deal with the discontinuation of the students from their respective programs.

According to Cambridge dictionary (2017), college dropout is a tendency among students to leave higher education system before completion or in an unusual way. Student dropout refers to discontinuation of education by a learner before completion of stipulated number of courses or hours (Swail, 2004). Dropout occurs when students disengage themselves from college education and terminate themselves from the higher education system (Alexander, Entwisle

& Kabbani, 2001). Student dropouts are of different types; 'stopout' - students who leave and re-join the institution after some time, 'institutional dropout' - students who leave one institution and join another institution, and 'system dropout' - students who discontinue their education (Chen & DesJardins, 2010). According to Herzog (2005), institutional dropout a.k.a. 'transfer-out' (changing the institution) may not affect the national statistics related to higher education. Dropout studies essentially include identifying at-risk students who are considered to have a high probability of dropping (Harton, 2015).

2. Literature Review

Retaining students until they complete their designated qualifications has societal significance (Lee & Burkam, 2003). One important aspect to note is that those who continue (persisting students) had better experiences with their school life than those who drop (Ridge, Farah & Sami, 2013). Moreover, student-related factors that influence dropout include, poor academic performance, bad behavior, lack of self-esteem, to name a few. (Johnson, 1997). As dropout risk is a serious concern for educators and students (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005), there is a need to identify the factors that contribute to student dropout (Johnson, 1997). Low GPA or failure (MacDonald, 1992; Kern, Fagley & Miller, 1998; Cambiano, Denny & DeVore, 2000), poor socialization skills (Oswald & Clark, 2003), low confidence about their ability to complete tasks (Vazquez-Abad, Winer & Derome, 1997) and busy social life, such as marriage, (Bradburn, 2002) could be some of the factors that influence student dropout from college. College dropout rates have been increasing as most of the students drop before completing their educational programs (Selingo, 2016). This problem is not only occuring in developing nations, but it is also apparent in developed countries such as the UK and Ireland as student dropout has been increasing (Baker, 2017; O'Donovan, 2017). Additionally, in the USA alone 3.9 million students dropped out of college in 2015-2016 (Barshay, 2017). Dropouts in the Middle East have been alarming as well. According to El Shammaa (2010), the dropout rate is around 25% in the Emirates.

The government of Oman has been supporting higher education through scholarships, aimed at providing quality manpower to the industry (Rassekh, 2004; Al-Hamadi, Budhwar & Shipton, 2007). There has been a significant increase in the number of higher educational institutions as well as student intake in higher education in Oman over the past two decades (Al-Shmeli, 2011; Al-Sarmi, 2014). However, this mission has encountered an unforeseen problem (Kay, 2015), i.e., an increasing number of students dropping from higher education. With more than 10,000 students dropped out from college in 2014-2015 (Times of Oman, 26 Sep, 2016), figures indicate that an average of 7,000 students leave higher education every year in Oman (Shaibany, 2016). According to the official statistics, college dropout is a serious problem that has been creating hindrance in achieving the higher education mission of the Government in Oman (Muscat Daily, 28 Dec, 2016). The statistics indicates the seriousness of the problem and requests special attention by all stakeholders of higher education in Oman (Pourmohammadi, 2016).

2.1 Need for the Study

Student dropout has been a major problem in many educational institutions (Swail, 2004) as it is evident that student retention rates have been decreasing in 2-year programs (Astin, Korn & Green, 1987) and 4-year programs (Bradburn, 2002). Leaky bucket theory could be applicable in this case (Ehrenberg, 1988) as student dropout could lose revenue. This could be a major concern for two key stakeholders of higher education in any country, industry and society at large (Reyhner, 1992). Thus, there arises a need to investigate main reasons underlying student dropout from their respective programs. As student dropout can be categorized as a 'crisis' in education industry, it needs crisis management strategies to be applied while dealing with this problem (Dianda, 2008). At the Modern College of Business & Science (henceforth referred to as MCBS), the General Foundation Program (henceforth referred to as GFP) is the largest program with students' numbers ranging from 600 to 800 per semester. Hence, dropout from this program will have a significant impact on the institution. Until now, no study is being conducted to understand this phenomenon at the college, and no concrete suggestions have been given to address this critical issue. Though, the college administration has been addressing this issue in various meetings and committees, there is no systematic study conducted. Hence, there arises a need for the study.

2.2 Objectives of the Study

This institutional research on student dropout at the Foundation level is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To explore patterns and trends in student dropout from the foundation;
- To establish criteria for understanding the students at risk of dropout from foundation;

- To make recommendations for student retention at the foundation program.

2.3 Scope and Limitations of the Study

Scope of the current study was limited to the Foundation program only offered by the Department of General Foundation Program (GFP). Data pertaining to 22 semesters only from Spring 2012 to Summer-I 2017 has been analyzed. The current research report is based on analysis of secondary data only. Applications of research results is limited to the Foundation program and cannot be generalized or extended to other forms of education in the college such as Bachelor's or Master's programs.

3. Research Methodology

This section explains the research methodology adopted for this paper and it comprises of description of secondary data used. Secondary data makes a significant contribution to understanding the problem and identifying solutions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). Total number of students registered in Foundation program during the study period is 15597, out of whom 1966 students dropped out. Secondary data pertaining to dropped-out students was collected from the Database Department of the college. Various data points that were considered for analysis include, semester dropped, bachelor's program of the dropped-out students, level left, gender, whether part-time or full-time, details of sponsors, courses studied by dropped out students along with grades in those courses. Data privacy (Bogdanov et al., 2014) needs to be followed while analyzing institutional data. Information that was not collected as part of data privacy policy of MCBS was, name of the student, ID and date of birth (MCBS Policy Manual, 2016). Along with internal database, relevant statistics and information were collected from various valid sources such as websites of HEI's, published reports in newspapers, books related to higher education and research papers on student dropout.

3.1 Data Analysis Tools and Techniques

The data related to student dropout from Spring 2012 to Summer-I 2017 and collected from the Database Department was analyzed using Pivot Tables in MS Excel (Saunders et al., 2007).

3.2 About General Foundation Program (GFP) at Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS)

As per MCBS Student Handbook 2017-18 (pp. 11), the Foundation program at MCBS prepares students for bachelor's education in accordance with the guidelines of Oman Academic Accreditation Authority – (OAAA). The three main subject areas in the Foundation program are English, Mathematics and Information Technology. The program comprises of four levels from 'beginners to advanced - Levels I to IV'. Different courses presented in Appendix 5 are explained below:

1. ENGL 0011, 0021, 0031 & 0041 - Speaking, Listening and Note-taking: The objectives are: to develop fluency and correctness in speaking English; to increase conversational vocabulary; to understand, practice, and adapt features of pronunciation by listening to recorded material; to increase conversational listening skills and to organize and present short lectures.

2. ENGL 0012, 0022, 0032 & 0042 - Reading: The objectives are: To develop writing skills including essay development, organization, vocabulary, and editing for grammar, punctuation and structure; to develop reading skills and strategies.

3. ENGL 0013, 0023, 0033 & 0043 - Grammar and Writing: The objectives are: to review grammar rules, to understand the meaning and use of these structures; to recognize and use these structures correctly in speaking and writing.

4. MATH 20, 21 & COSC 10 – Mathematics and Computer Science: The objectives are: to develop the computational and analytical skills.

3.3 Analysis of Student Dropout Data

The dropout of 1966 out of 15597 students indicates 12.6 percentage dropout from the Foundation program. Data presented in Table 1, clearly indicates high dropout rate with an average of 89 students per semester during the study period. Most importantly, during this period, 34 students paid the registration fee but did not join the program. Though this finding is not within the scope of current study, it creates the need for further study to find out whether there exists a relationship between this behavior and dropout behavior (future scope of current study).

Table 1. No. of students dropped during Spring 2012 to Summer-I 2017

No. dropped	Average dropout per semester
1966	89

Which gender left

Usually, female students are more at MCBS. Around 72% are females. But the dropout is not proportionate. Table 2 clearly indicates that dropping behavior is more among male students than the female students. There is a need to find out the reason for dropout among male students (future scope of current study).

Table 2. Gender distribution of students who dropped from Foundation program

| Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	1027	52.2
Male	939	47.8
Grand Total	**1966**	**100**

Which national left

According to the internal database, nearly 97% of the student body at MCBS comprises of Omani nationals and 3% other nationalities. The dropout pattern is proportionate to this number. Dropout behavior is same for both Omani's and non-Omanis. However, it is required to retain the students irrespective of their nationality status.

Table 3. Nationality distribution of students who dropped from Foundation program

| Nationality	Number	Percentage
Omani	1929	98.0
Non-Omani	37	2.0
Grand Total	**1966**	**100**

Which semester left

Though the dropout pattern is evenly distributed, it can be positively interpreted that the trend has been decreasing. Highest dropouts can be noticed during Spring-2014, Fall-2013, Spring-2013 and Fall-2012 semesters.

Graph 1: Semester-wise dropout of students from foundation program
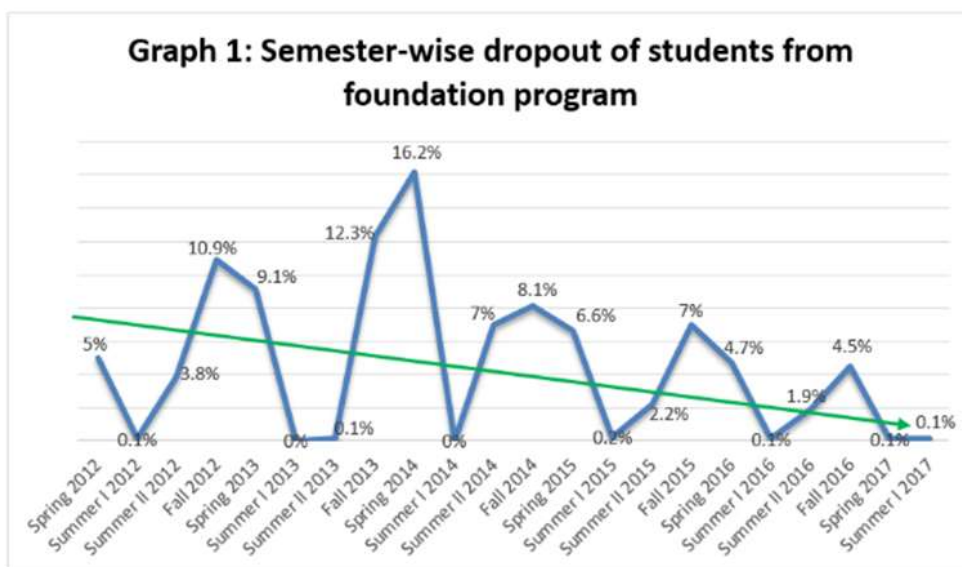
Which level left

Out of 1,966 students who dropped out of Foundation program during Spring 2012 to Summer-I, 2017, highest number, i.e., 41% (806 students) dropped after Level I and next highest, 29% dropped from Level 4. Thus, it is clear that the dropout is more at the entrance and at the exit levels. This data is close to the reality wherein several

studies confirmed that the dropouts are more after first year (MacDonald, 1992; Woodley, Thompson & Cowan, 1992; Benn, 1995; Tickle, 2015) due to which Level I can be referred to as 'make or break' level (Kift, 2014).
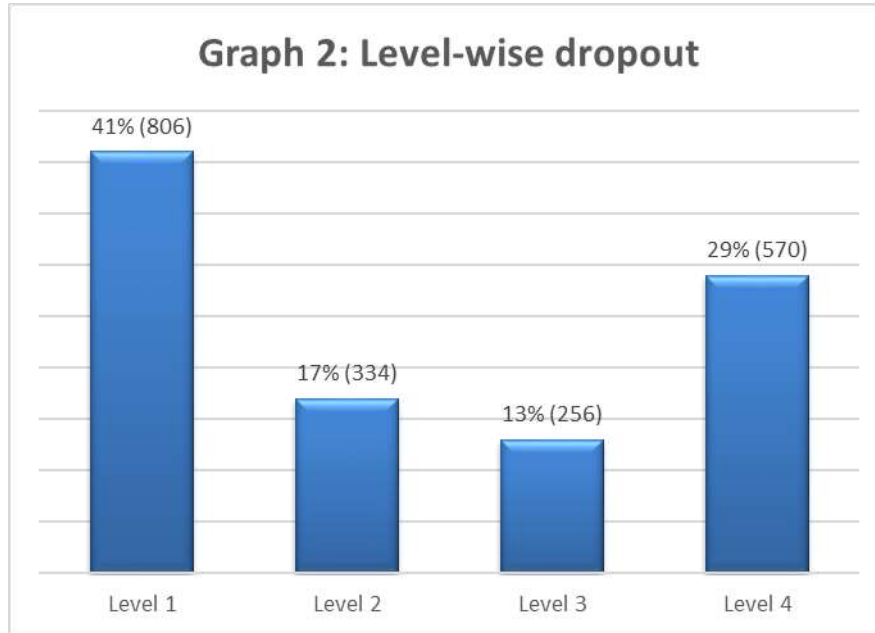
Full time / Part time

According to the registration data, usually around 86% of registered students in any semester are full-time and only 14% are part-time. But the dropout ratio is not proportionate to the registration data. Dropout is noticed more among part-time students. Nearly 22% of those who dropped out are part-time students.

Table 4. Full time and Part time status of dropped out students

Status	Number	Percentage
Full time	1545	78.6%
Part time	421	21.4%
Grand Total	**1966**	**100%**

Potential program of dropped out students (could have joined which program)

Though some students join Foundation program only for the GFP certificate, majority of them join as a part of requirement to continue their higher education. Students proceed to either Associate or Bachelor's programs based on their interest. Hence, Foundation program is called as a 'feeder program', meaning, students from Foundation join the main-stream Associate or Bachelor's programs. That is the reason why dropout at the Foundation program affects registration into credit courses and main stream Associate and Bachelors' programs at MCBS. Table 5 clearly indicates the loss to various Associate and Bachelor's programs due to student dropout at Foundation program. Though biggest loss was to Bachelor of Science Business Administration, Associate of Science Business Administration and Bachelor of Science Airport Management, other programs too lost a number of student registrations due to dropout from Foundation.

Table 5. Potential program of dropped out students

Program	No.
Foundation	663
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration	268
Associate of Science in Business Administration	235
Bachelor of Science in Airport Management	159
Bachelor of Science in Aviation Management	134
Associate of Science in Information Communication Technology	117
Bachelor of Science in Information Systems	82
Bachelor of Arts in Economics	61
Bachelor of Science in Health and Safety Management	55
Bachelor of Science in Computer Science	51
Bachelor of Science in Statistics	49
Bachelor of Science in Accounting	30
Bachelor of Science in Commercial Law	22
Non-Academic English	12
Bachelor of Science in Information Security	10
Associate of Science in Computer Science	6
Bachelor of Science in Transportation and Logistics Management	6
Not clear	4
Associate of Arts in Business Administration	1
Undecided	1
Grand Total	**1966**

Sponsors of dropped students

Student sponsors are one of the key stakeholders of a higher educational institution (Mainardes, Alves & Raposo, 2010). Students who dropped from Foundation program during the study period were funded by 66 sponsors comprising of different organizations. There are also self-sponsored students along with parent-sponsored and MCBS sponsored students. There is a need to know whether the management of MCBS is aware of these 23 dropout cases.

Table 6. Sponsors of dropped out students

Sponsor	Number	Percentage
Different sponsors	1291	66%
Funded by parent(s)	247	13%
Self-funded	405	20%
Funded by MCBS	23	1%
Grand Total	**1966**	**100%**

Courses studied, and grades achieved by dropped out students

Table 7. Courses studied & grades achieved by dropped out students arranged in descending order

Course	No.	D	AW	W	Z	F
ENGL 0013	1923	209	40	26	55	751
ENGL 0012	1835	224	40	27	48	626
ENGL 0011	1774	218	35	21	48	523
ENGL 0021	1057	137	18	16	26	221
ENGL 0022	1001	147	11	11	31	174
ENGL 0023	937	114	14	7	26	157
ENGL 0033	932	118	16	13	21	200
ENGL 0032	872	114	14	14	13	129
ENGL 0031	850	98	14	10	18	120
ENGL 0042	697	104	13	10	23	117
ENGL 0041	651	76	11	7	17	105
ENGL 0043	634	68	14	6	17	90
MATH 10	530	1	16	16	17	119
COSC 10	244	3	3	7	8	49
MATH 20	186	2	3	3	8	41
ORNT 001	124	-	1	-	10	22
MATH 21	1	-	40	26	55	751
Grand Total	**14248**					

Failure and low academic performance could be a reason for dropout (Cambiano et al., 2000). It would be helpful to analyse the results of courses studied by dropped students (Smith & Naylor, 2001; Doll, Eslami & Walters, 2013; Rausch & Rausch, 2015). Table 7 presents grades achieved by the dropped students in different Foundation courses. Though, they studied some credit courses, from other programs, the current analysis is limited to Foundation courses only. It can be seen that ENGL 0013 is studied more number of times with highest 'F' grade (failure) and 'Z' grade (registered but never attended the class). Data presented in Table 7 and Graph 2 are synchronizing, with more failures in Level-1 courses and more dropout in Level-1 respectively. Courses in the other three Levels are studied less number times as there are less takers for these courses due to higher dropout rate in Level – I. There is a need to further analyze this data and look deeper to understand the patterns in student dropout from Foundation. D is the passing grade, AW indicates administrative withdrawal (such as lack of attendance), and W refers to student's self-withdrawal due to personal reasons (Source: Registration Department, MCBS).

4. Recommendations

This section provides valuable suggestions and workable solutions for avoiding recurrence of the problem or at least reducing the degree of recurrence of the problem, i.e., student dropout from Foundation program at MCBS. Main goal is to reverse the trend and discourage or delay the exit process (within the legal and ethical framework).

Chart 1: Student dropout flow-chart

Registrar	Initial inquiry Form-R10 (Redesigned)
Student affairs	Inquiry and filtering process
Advisor	Inquiry and filtering process
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs	Inquiry and filtering process
Internal	Accounts Library IT Support Admin/HR
External	Sponsor
Registrar	Exit interview Database generation
Drop	
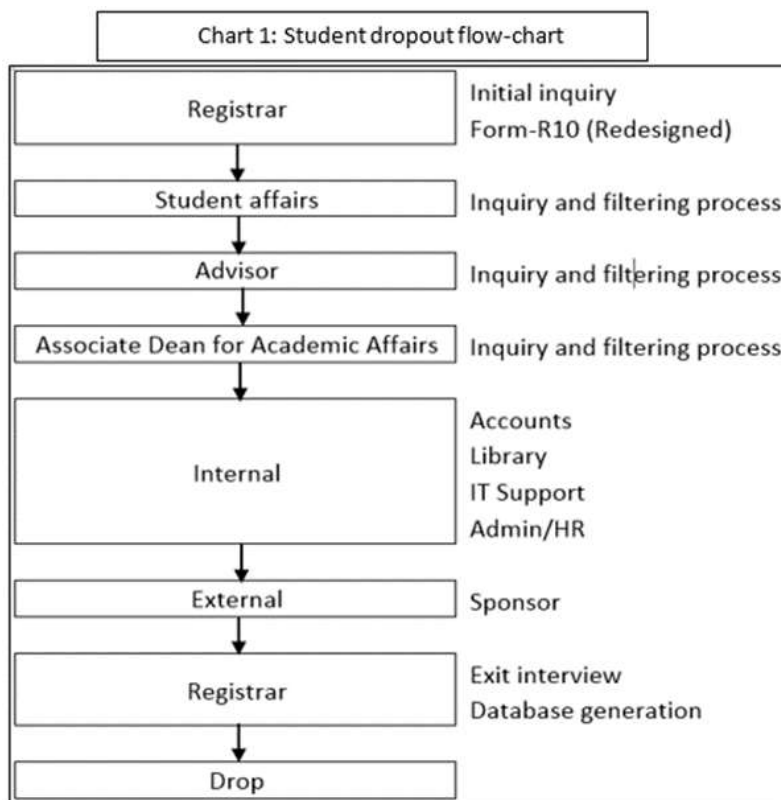
> **Create dropout process flow-chart**

Designed by the author

As of now there is no flow chart explaining the process of a student's exit at the time of dropout.

Existing system: According to the Registration department, a student's dropout (exit) journey starts with filling a 'Clearance From' named as, 'FORM-R10' (Appendix 1). The student then visits five departments, Library, Accounts, Student Affairs, IT Support and Administration, seeking clearance signatures on the form. Though the researcher was told that the student needs to approach, his/her Advisor for signature, there was no provision for Advisor's signature on 'Form-R10'. The student returns the filled-in and signed Form-10 to the Registration department and quits the college after financial formalities.

New & improved system with a 'DROPOUT PROCESS FLOW-CHART': There is a need to have a flow-chart in place so that key points can be identified, and filters can be inserted. The aim of this suggestion is not to apply 'hard management' technique but to make the exit process more systematic through which both the parties (student and institution) can benefit. The main purpose of 'filters' in the exit flow is to have a detailed dialogue with the dropping students, understand main reasons for dropout, and persuade the students to continue their studies instead of dropping. In fact, the 'filters' (officers) need to be trained in this aspect. Student Affairs should be removed from the list of functional departments signing on clearance form and should be made the first filter in the newly recommended dropout process flow-chart. Advisors could be made the second filter and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs could be the third filter. The student will then proceed to taking clearance signatures from four functional departments, including Accounts, Library, IT support and Admin/HR. Then students will go back to Registrar's department for providing needed data (database generation) which can be collected separately or as part of their exit interview. Including the sponsor can be agreed upon after discussion.

> **Redesign the Clearance Form, 'FORM-R10':** There is a need to redesign the 'Clearance Form', FORM-R10. Below are some valuable suggestions:

o   As Office of the Registrar is the concerned department, it should not be mentioned as one of the departments.

o   Make it error-free. It is mentioned as 'Registration Office' on the main form and as 'Registrar's Office' on the counterfoil form.

o   Digitalize the process. The approvals can be made online by the concerned officers. This will also enable data collection and compilation easy.

o   Instead of a counter-foil, the photocopy or scanning can be used so that duplication of signatures can be avoided.

o   Further there is a need to know whether it is a 'stopout' or 'institutional dropout' or 'system dropout'. Though the data mentions that two students were transferred to another college, it is questionable that throughout 22 semesters, out of total of 1966 students, only two students were transferred.

➢ **Collect / generate dropout data**

As data is the lifeline of business decisions (Drucker, 1967; The Economist, 2013), it is essential to generate data related to student dropout. If the outgoing student cannot be stopped, at least get as much information as possible from the outgoing student. For this purpose,

o   Design the existing forms and make separate forms for graduating students and dropping out students. Form-10 for graduating students and Form-11 for dropping out students. Main purpose is to collect specific and separate information from different categories outgoing students.

o   FORM-R11 needs to contain the filters mentioned in the above suggestion along with collecting more data. A separate exercise needs to be conducted for this purpose.

o   Data collection and exit interview can be either separated as two different functions or the exit interview form can contain different sections aiming at collecting all relevant data from dropping students.

➢ **Suggestions related to database on student dropout**

Though the Database department has been effectively managing institutional data, there is further need for improvement in some of following areas:

o   Have clear numbers and statistics about student dropout.

o   Data analytics need to be applied.

o   Error free data collection and data entry are required.

o   All contact details need to be collected.

o   All required details need to be collected at the time of dropout.

o   Feedback interview to be made mandatory and the questionnaire / feedback need form to be filled by the dropping out students. Though there is an exit interview in place, there is a need to further systematize the process through the 'Registration and Dropout Committee'.

➢ **Form the 'Registration and Dropout Committee'**

Though this research was on student dropout, the analysis discovered another category, firstly, those who registered in Foundation program but did not join and secondly those who registered for a course but did not attend a single class. Hence there is a need for Registration and Dropout Committee to monitor both situations. The Committee will be Headed by the Registrar with Associated Dean for Academic Affairs, Student Affairs officer and Deputy Heads of various academic departments as members. The committee can be formed within the existing Administration framework of MCBS.

➢ **Open an exclusive center to deal with issues related to dropout**

John Hopkins University, USA operates an exclusive center dedicated to the dropout crisis (Appendix 4). Named as 'Everyone Graduates Center', it conducts studies not only at the University level but much wider research up to the national level. It is recommended to open such as center at MCBS. Scope of the center can be decided based on the experience.

➢ **Provide advising and mentoring for Foundation students**

There is a need to have Advising and Mentoring activity in the Foundation program. This facilitates close monitoring of the students. Advisors can act as 'filters' in the exit journey of dropping out students presented in Chart 1.

➢ **Design an early warning system for identifying potential dropouts**

The best way of reducing student dropout is to identify the potential dropouts and implementing an early warning system (Balfanz & Fox, 2011; Hoff, Olson & Peterson, 2015). Below are some of the suggestions to identify the

students 'at-risk' of dropping out based on secondary data analysis and discussions with experts (focus groups). For this purpose, 'at-risk' student can be identified at two points, firstly at the time of entry and secondly while studying. While identifying potentially at-risk students at the time of entry or admission falls under the future scope of current research, this section presents how to identify students 'at-risk' of potential dropout while they are studying.

- Student has been failing a course several times

- Student has been failing various courses several times

- Student attended classes but did not do any assessment

- Student has withdrawn from the course

- Student did not attend final exam

- Student received AW

- Student received Z

- Student received warning letters – whether administrative or behavioural

➢ **Involve top management: Top-down approach**

Top management of MCBS will be aware of and will be able to understand the intensity of the problem if it is involved. It is recommended that Associate Dean level officer needs to be involved in the process of student dropout. The same is presented in Chart 1 (student dropout flow-chart).

➢ **Adopt inclusive approach**

It is recommended that more offices and more officers be involved in the process of student dropout. As recommended in the flow-chart, various 'internal' parties such as, Registration and Dropout Committee, Deputy Heads of all academic departments, advisors, top officers (Associate Deans) and Student Affairs Officers need to be involved in the process of student dropout. In addition to internal parties, 'external' parties such as sponsors and parents too could be involved within the legal framework.

➢ **Course restructuring at Foundation level**

Based on the analysis of dropout data, following suggestions can be made related to academic management:

o   Separate attention needs to be paid in case of Level-1. For example, changing classroom management activities at Level-1, increasing number of contact hours for Level-1 courses, changing the evaluation patterns at Level-1, etc. As the researcher is not competent to suggest evaluation methodology for English Language courses, it is recommended for the management of GFP to take it further based on research and expertise. Regarding changing evaluation patterns, the idea is not to dilute the evaluation process but to work on it. Though, the GFP department has been extensively working on the same, it is recommended that the objective needs to be defined as, 'reduce dropouts'. Once, the problem is viewed and understood from this dimension, the whole methodology of working will change.

o   Another suggestion is pertaining to MATH and IT courses offered at the Foundation program. Some of the research questions (suggestions) could be, 'can these two courses be separated from the Foundation program?'   If this suggestion is agreed upon, the new framework contains two sub-departments under the Foundation department: English Foundation and Technical Foundation. All Language courses will be offered in English Foundation (there will be huge demand for this from corporate sector) and MATH and IT courses will be offered in Technical Foundation.

English + MATH & COSC = GFP

➢ **Prolong the exit process (within the legal and ethical framework)**

The main aim of this suggestion it to make a student continues his or her education instead of discontinuing his/her studies. As part of student retention strategy, MCBS can make the exit process more elaborated and detailed. Elaborated exit process enables the managers understand main reason(s) for dropout which could help them either stop the dropping out students or reduce future dropouts. Below are some of the related suggestions: Though some of the suggestions appear to be argumentative, the researcher has included them to initiate a discussion about this key

issue in the institution. (Disclaimer: Some of these suggestions are mostly aimed at initiating a debate and discussion about student dropout at MCBS)

 o Involve more parties inside and outside the college (inclusive approach presented in the previous point). Involvement by more parties prolongs the process.

  ▪Create a no-exit rule: Students cannot drop in the middle of the academic year.

  ▪Create a no-exit semester in an academic year: Student cannot drop after Fall (for example), must study Spring and can drop after Spring only. Legal framework needs to be studied for implementing such strategies.

5. Conclusion

Dropout is not an uncommon phenomenon. There could be various reasons for student dropout from higher education. Different techniques such as RCA-Route Cause Analysis (Rooney & Heuvel, 2004) and WWW-What Went Wrong / What Will Work analysis (Edmondson & Cannon, 2005) are available to investigate the problem and find better solutions. Current research was conducted to explore some of the reasons for student dropout from the Foundation program at MCBS. This institutional research provides insights into the problem. The main objectives of this research are to reverse the trend of dropout, retain more students, and increase persistence. There is a need to create enthusiasm amongst depressed students and enhance student engagement. This will enable spread of positive word-of-mouth and create a 'feel good' environment for the students of Modern College of Business and Science.

6. Future Scope of the Study

Studies can be conducted to identify students 'at-risk' of dropout at the time of admission itself. There is a need to further conduct studies to understand the reasons for students registering but not joining MCBS. The current study can also be extended to find out the reasons for higher dropout rates among male students.

Funding

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Clearance form

Appendix 2 – Semester-wise registration and dropout data

Term	No. dropped	Percentage	No. registered	%
Spring 2012	99	5%	745	13%
Summer I 2012	2	0.1%	137	1%
Summer II 2012	75	3.8%	702	11%
Fall 2012	215	10.9%	1102	20%
Spring 2013	178	9.1%	1064	17%
Summer I 2013	0	0%	248	--
Summer II 2013	2	0.1%	760	--
Fall 2013	242	12.3%	1114	22%
Spring 2014	318	16.2%	1299	24%
Summer I 2014	0	0%	172	--
Summer II 2014	138	7%	757	18%
Fall 2014	159	8.1%	1103	14%
Spring 2015	129	6.6%	924	14%
Summer I 2015	3	0.2%	245	--
Summer II 2015	43	2.2%	598	7%
Fall 2015	138	7%	1012	14%
Spring 2016	92	4.7%	870	11%
Summer I 2016	2	0.1%	182	--
Summer II 2016	38	1.9%	591	6%
Fall 2016	89	4.5%	842	11%
Spring 2017	2	0.1%	735	--
Summer I 2017	2	0.1%	395	--
Grand Total	**1966**		**15597**	

Appendix 3 – Level-wise dropout

Appendix 4 – Everyone Graduates Center, John Hopkins University, USA

Level	Number	%
Level 1	806	41%
Level 2	334	17%
Level 3	256	13%
Level 4	570	29%
Grand Total	**1966**	**100%**

Appendix 5

Courses offered in Foundation Program

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Areas covered
ENGL 0011 Listening & Speaking	ENGL 0021 Listening & Speaking	ENGL 0031 Listening & Speaking	ENGL 0041 Listening & Speaking	Speaking, listening & note taking
ENGL 0012 Reading & Writing	ENGL 0022 Reading & Writing	ENGL 0032 Reading & Writing	ENGL 0042 Reading & Writing	Reading
ENGL 0013 Grammar	ENGL 0023 Grammar	ENGL 0033 Grammar	ENGL 0043 Grammar	Grammar & writing
ORNT 001 Orientation-I (Study skills)		MATH 10 Basic Mathematics	MATH 20-Applied Mathematics or MATH 21-Pure Mathematics COSC 10 Fundamentals of Computing	Math & Computer skills

Source: MCBS Student Handbook 2017-2018, pp.11

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