

CONSISTENT PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATIONS EMPOWERMENT AS A STRATEGIC INTERVENTION TO PERENNIAL STUDENT ABSENTEEISM

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Abstract : Education is essential for everyone, as it molds the holistic facet of every individual – from skills to character. This is the primary precursor to success. Ergo, students must always be present as much as they could in every class in order to learn.

Nonetheless, a perennial concern for teachers is when the learners are absent. Teachers prepare lesson plans with the objectives / goals that 100% of the learners will learn from the day's classroom activities and it is the most satisfying when everyone is present. However, certain uncontrollable factors such as family issues, lack of school motivation, among many more, discourage the students to religiously attend to their respective classes.

This prompted the researchers to determine certain interventions that may help mitigate this concern. It was determined that the surefire way to address this hurdle is to constantly communicate with the parents. As cliché as it is, but the actual scenario is that teachers fail to do this consistently.

Keywords: Parent-Teacher Communications, Absenteeism, Student Performance

BACKGROUND

Formal and institutional education is the most essential part of human learning. It is through this that helps people earn respect and recognition, as well success. It is the indispensable part of life both personally and socially. However, the unequal standard of education is still a major problem that needs to be solved. That is why students must never take this for granted.

One of the most challenging experiences for teachers is when the learners are absent. Teacher prepare lesson plans with the objectives / goals that 100% of the learners will learn from the day's classroom activities and it is the most satisfying when all learners are present on that day and the days thereafter to ensure maximum learning. Sadly, it is very difficult to achieve perfect attendance. No matter how interesting and well-prepared the lessons and teaching materials are, there are learners who are still bound to miss out on the day's activities willingly or unwillingly.

PROBLEM RATIONALE

In a nutshell, this study determined the primary reasons why some students exhibit perennial absenteeism in class. The determinants are as follows:

1. Personal reasons such as family problems, economic hurdles and mental / behavioral state of the student
2. School-manifested challenges such as lack of teacher motivation and poor learning environment (e.g. insufficient facilities)
3. The importance of having a sound and constant communication with the parents in order to address the aforementioned predicaments.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CONCEPT OF THE STUDY

Going to school regularly is crucially important for a learner's education and social skills. Chronically absent students are at a disadvantage both socially and academically. They miss out on critical stages of social interaction and development with their peers, while simultaneously limiting their academic progress. This can result in low self-esteem, social isolation, and dissatisfaction that could well precipitated non-attendance in the first place. As such, this is alarming for administrators, teachers, parents, society in general, and pupils in particular. Unaccepted absences have a negative effect on peer relationships, thinking that he/she does not belong to a group and has no friends to be with. According to Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson and Kirk (2003) teachers identified the effects of absenteeism on children as:

1. Academic under-achievement.
2. Difficulty in making friends which could lead to boredom and loss of confidence.
3. Prolonged absence can have deleterious effects for the child in later life.
4. Students who are absent from school are at the greatest risk of dropping out of school early.

Absenteeism also affects the teacher's ability to present classwork in a sequential and organized way. This can have an effect on the progress of all the students in the class. Families of habitually absent learner can also suffer. For a poverty-stricken family, it may mean a continuation of the poverty and unemployment cycle that may run in the family. This also contributes to family conflicts. Society also suffers when school-age children are not in school. These children may hang out on the streets. Since they have nothing to do, they tend to involve themselves to unhealthy gangs or peers which may result of doing unnecessary things such as stealing, drug addicting, early pregnancy for some female children and many more.

Richards, Platt & Platt (1992) have stated that the purpose of an action research is to 'increase the teacher's understanding of classroom teaching and learning and to bring improvements in classroom practices.' It involves small-scale projects in the classroom. Wiersma claimed that 'Action research is usually conducted by teachers, administrators, or other educational professionals for solving a specific problem or for providing information for decision making at the local level.' In few words, action research is concerned with trying to improve one specific point in a teacher's technique in a particular classroom using empirical measurement.

Learning is a process of knowledge construction, based on the constructivist model (Rubin, 1989). For meaningful learning to occur, connections need to be clear between what is being taught and what one already knows. Piaget suggests that learning occurs through a process of assimilating and accommodating new information into existing organized knowledge.

So learning is successful if prior knowledge exists. To access prior knowledge, teachers need to know their students' culture, language, and previous academic and life experiences to bring them to able to build onto what they already know. Learning is meaningful when students see connections between what they know and the applications they can make to new experiences. When students realize how much they know and how new information can be relevant to their lives, they can become motivated to set their own academic goals. Learning is successful in environments in which students are at the center and in which what students know is valued; it is for this reason that the major themes in this literature review are student/learner centered classroom environments and reciprocal teaching.

Thus, the study is important because this action research can help a teacher identify the reasons behind absenteeism of their pupils and even its causes. The researcher intended to minimize this problem, if not eradicate it completely.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Locale and Respondents of the Study

The study is conducted inside the premises of one grade school academic institution in Paranaque, Metro Manila,

Philippines, during the foregone Academic Year 2018 - 2019. The entire sixth grade level students were selected as the respondents.

Research Design

The research is a causal by nature and used a combination of a descriptive-quantitative design. The descriptive method is designed for the investigator to secure responses to questions that are factual and practices of which the respondents are presumed to have knowledge.

The research was geared towards the fulfillment of a common goal that included the absenteeism of the respondents in relation to their causes. This descriptive design was used as the method of research since it describes the nature of a prevailing conditions and practices, and seeks accurate description of activities, objects, persons and processes.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedures were divided into 3 phrases:

1. The letter of consent was given to the researchers' School head for approval. Upon approval, the letter of consent will be handed personally to the Grade VI chairman and to the different class advisers.
2. After the letters have been given to the different class advisers, the researchers then started the data gathering.
3. After the data had been gathered, it will be submitted for analysis, and interpretation.

Research Instrument

The researchers developed a questionnaire that helped them to collect the needed data or information, to answer the aim or the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was constructed on the basis of the concepts and ideas gathered from professional reading materials, published and unpublished theses related to the study. The first draft of the questionnaire was presented to their adviser for his comments and suggestions. Suggestions were properly considered for the improvement of the instrument. Also, the researchers sought the judgments of the experts on the field in determining the content aspect of the questionnaire.

The revised and modified copy of this instrument was corrected with the help of the researcher's adviser. All the information gathered were tallied, classified, organized, analyzed and interpreted.

Data Analysis

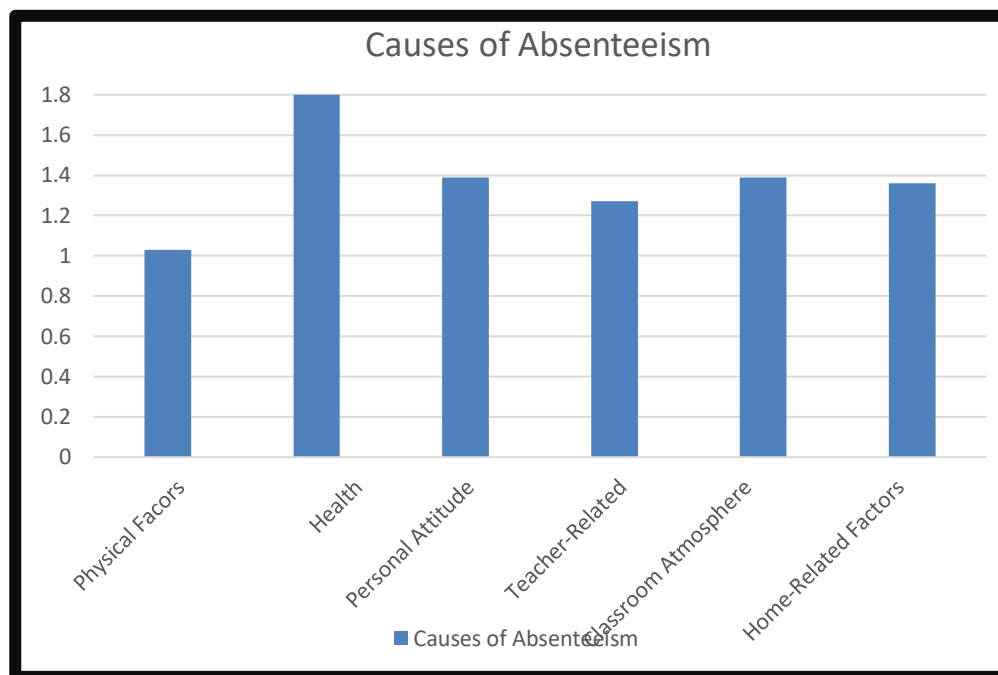
All the data was then organized, tallied, tabulated, and presented in a series of tables and graphs. Frequency counts, percentage weight values and weighted mean were used in the analysis and interpretation of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS)

This part presented the general causes of perennial student absenteeism, as well as the interventions that were made in order to develop a good strategic action plan that may help alleviate tis quandary.

Causes of Absenteeism

Health is the primary reason for absenteeism. Although this seems to be inevitable, but thorough probing to the respondents revealed that their health woes are the effects of family problems and school / classmate related issues – which are the second and third reasons, respectively. The table below summarizes the results:



The respondents said that bullying from their classmates discourages them to attend religiously to the class and their personal issues with their parents) from which they never disclosed what type of problem, and the researchers respected their privacy).

The following details the specific reasons why they are always absent:

1. Health - Fever/flu is the most common reason of learners for being absent. Other diseases like diarrhea come in third with 1.72 average responses. These are all stress-related issues, which are explained above.
2. Personal Attitude - The learners doesn't wake up early enough is the most common reason why he/she is absent. Another reason commonly cited is that they can't concentrate on their studies and that they were not able to study their lessons. Feeling lazy and playing computer games also keep them away from school.
3. Teacher-related - When the learners are scolded for their bad behavior by the teacher, this tends to make them be absent from their classes.
4. Classroom Atmosphere - Bullying by fellow students learners play a crucial role in this matter.
5. Home-related - Learners who say their parents asked them to be absent. Household chores also hurdle them. The other reasons included having money to spend for snacks and other small expenses in school, no breakfast/food, and that their parents quarreled.

INTERVENTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers were able to identify the following interventions that are deemed to be useful:

1. Educate the students on how to take care of their overall well-being. Emphasis should be given to oral health and overall body wellness. Teach them how avoid communicable diseases. Give them information on how to properly wash their hands, which is the main source of germs and bacteria among children. Let them develop proper eating habits. Since most of the children in the school come from poor families, point out to them the cheap but healthy foods. Ask them to pass on this information to their parents.
2. Ensure that classroom atmosphere is conducive to learning. Noise-reduction among learners should be a priority. Older children, like grade VI learners, tend to have louder voices so they should be taught how

to speak softly and without needing to shout. The key here is discipline. The teacher must also see to it that the learners are comfortable and have no other concerns except the lesson at hand. There should be a lively interaction between the teacher and the learner, but the teacher should see to it that noise is modulated so as not to distract pupils from their learning.

3. Inform parents about the benefit of keeping children in school. Emphasize to them that if they keep on asking their children to absent, this will set a bad example to the child. If the parents themselves are keeping the child away from school, they must believe that household concerns are more important than their education.
4. Refrain from scolding misbehaving pupils. As much as possible, remind them of their wrong doing in a most diplomatic manner. Self-control should be a virtue which the teacher should practice in the course of her teaching every day of the school week.
5. Give extra attention to those who are left behind in the lessons. Tap the bright pupils to teach their slower classmates. In other words, cooperative learning should be practiced in the teaching-learning process. Once a slow student fully understands the lesson, he/she can keep up with his/her other classmates, thus self-confidence is gained.
6. Emphasize that academic success is very much dependent on student attitude towards school. Motivate them so they will be looking forward to attending their classes regularly. For those who wake up late, encourage them to get an alarm clock. Do not scold the pupils who come late. Give them a time-table to change their sleeping habits and to study before bed instead of watching TV.

Or simply, constant communication really plays a vital part.

CONCLUSIONS

Among all the causes presented, health is the primary reason why learners are absent from their classes. Stress is the leading culprit in this category. Classroom atmosphere, personal attitude, teacher factor and home-related reasons follow in that order. Another reason they mentioned is related to their physical environment.

The importance of education is undeniable for every single person. It goes without saying that education has a positive effect on human life. Only with the advent of education can people gain knowledge and enlarge their view over the world. Apparently, people may become more useful and civilized if better educated. In areas where residents are not able to receive an appropriate education, life cannot be as thriving and prosperous as locations where there is a high standard for education.

Secondly, education plays such a rudimentary role on our society that we cannot even imagine a life without it. It is a determined element for the civilization of human society. Not only does it help develop healthy surroundings but it also generates an advance community.

Lastly, every child should be given equal opportunities to learn and study. Because the development of a country depends vastly on the standard of education, it must do everything in its power to improve it. Although the educational systems of different countries are not similar but they have to share a common goal which is to provide its citizens a suitable and proper learning.

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