The Causes of Absenteeism and Truancy in Senior High School of Don Eulogio de Guzman Memorial National High School Towards A Proposed School Solution Strategies

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Abstract – This action research used the causality research methodology with a total of thirty-six (36) participants using purposive sampling. From the population, a total of six (6) participants were considered in the pilot test which ran for a month. Likewise, the remaining thirty (30) participants were considered in the actual data gathering further identified as twenty-six (26) absentees and four (4) truants. This study used thematic analysis to interpret the root causes of absenteeism and truancy while rankings and weighted mean were used in revealing the problems in the goal of perfect attendance of the learners. The profile of the participants covered all tracks and strands offered in Senior High School Department of Don Eulogio de Guzman Memorial National High School, the piloted school. The study had a hundred percent retrieval rate using a Likert scale. Among the findings of this study revealed that in the thematic analysis, there were ten (10) root causes of absenteeism and truancy as identified the most roots were learners’ laziness (20), cutting class (20) and learners who worked (20) to support the family financially which were all noted from Strand B. Data revealed that five (5) strands had zero rate absentees and truants. Further, the top most problems of Senior High School learners were ranked 1 was transportation problems (4.90), ranked 3 were unexcused absences, juvenile delinquency, doing household chores rather than going to school (4.83), ranked 5 was peer influence (4.80) and ranked 6 was parents’ lack of money (4.70) where all had descriptive equivalent ratings of always. In support of the goal of perfect attendance in public schools, this action research humbly recommended the following proposed strategies to achieve the objectives. First, is the launching of Skol-Tryk as means of transportation in reaching out learners, Supervised-Work Based to source out “baon or allowances”, inclusion of Guidance and Counseling as a separate subject, the provision of Spiritual Nourishment to further reinforce school attachment, assign a dedicated Teacher-Designate for monitoring, supervision and assessment, and request the concerned parents to regularly monitor on intervals the status of their learners both in school and at home.

Keywords – Absenteeism, School Solution Strategies, Struggling Learners, Truancy

INTRODUCTION

The learner is considered “the core of the educational system”. For without their presence inside the classroom, the picture of the teaching-learning process will not become a reality. It was them who add colors in the teaching profession making it the noblest profession to consider among the professionals around the globe. The canvass compels the everyday presence of the learner inside the classroom to complete the picture of teaching and learning experiences towards in the pursuit of one’s purposes in life, both on the part of the educator and the learner.

Educational Philosophers Sir Hollis Caswell and Doak Campbell once cited “all the experiences children have under the guidance of a teacher”. For without the teachers on their side, no one will guide the learners as to how they grasp knowledge appropriately. Further, Gene Shepherd and William Ragan stated: “the on-going experiences of children under the guidance of the school presents a special environment for helping children achieve self-realization through active participation within the school”. Both from the presented educational perspectives, it is conclusive that the child should be investing time as well as his effort to learn inside the school for this becomes an avenue
wherein his knowledge, skills and attitude are honed. Otherwise, when the child missed-out lessons or no longer attending his subjects then, his learning experience seemed lacking and become less effective.

Therefore, it compels interventions from the school which has jurisdictions to a learner with issues on his attendance while reinforcing his school’s attachment.

One major issue that the schools currently facing today is seeing little or no improvement with its effective dealing with rampant absenteeism and truancy in Basic Education. Despite inducement of the different designs of interventions, programs are still failing to effectively motivate learners to continue attending school classes. DepEd Order No. 36, s. 2016 (Classroom Awards par 4) mandates the school system to award Perfect Attendance every recognition day to help motivate both the learners and the parents. However, the implementation of this would not warrant a perfect attendance on the part of the learner while completing the academic year. He would still miss-out classes and thereby commit absences then, later became truant throughout the entire academic year if left-out unattended.

In support, researcher Hocking (2008) made an Independent Samples Test, the data found on the learners’ attendance proved to be statistically significant. His studies provided evidence that the attendance Certificates were an overall positive motivator for learners and help to increase learners’ attendance at one school.

At present, the conventional approach which is a practice even up to these times to addressing the absenteeism problems from the Basic Education is through the conduct of “home visitation” by the Classroom Adviser. Through this platform, the Adviser personally visits the house of the learner and explains to the parents and relates the effect of non-attendance of their child in the school’s engagements. However, as per researchers’ observation, this practice is somehow abused and the problems continue to pile up in the educational system. Further, a random interview revealed that there is somewhat like perfect attendance among learners in a particular class come assessment and examination days only. These learners missed the school for a quite long time longer than what the teachers might be tolerated and thus, they are now considered truants among the total class population.

At present, the researchers observed that even the School Form No 2 (SF 2) mandated by the Department of Education which is prepared and submitted monthly by the Classroom Adviser is manipulated and window-dressed just to present a more acceptable attendance report on the part of the learner wherein the Adviser may always employ “generosity error” when reporting the total number of days present against the total number of committed absences for the month to favor the learner’s attendance which should not be the case. It does not mirror accurately the correct data of absenteeism and truancy at the teacher’s level. It only somehow covers up what should alert The School Administrators to efficiently position school resources and strategies on this issue.

By continue doing it, inadvertently, we are not providing solutions to at least fair its potential impact, but rather our teachers in the field are becoming an accomplice in the cycle. Sadly speaking, let us not expect any positive changes to properly address the booming numbers of absenteeism that eventually lead to truancy among multi-grade levels.

This action research explored the field of Basic Education in particular in the teaching-learning process where the facilitators inside the classroom ensure the importance of perfect attendance to one’s learner’s life. This initiative served as lay-bare for the entire Division of La Union and replicate the same to weathered attendance at an acceptable level among learners in the Department of Education. The flexibilities of the designs of any school programs and strategies might be of great help to at least minimize absenteeism and truancy at the grass roots to support the goals of the Basic Education which are “no one should be left behind”, “no rejection policy” and “education for all”. The ability of the school to unleash life-long learning skills and competencies through learners’ active participation in the school activities towards their voyage in the pursuit of becoming successful individuals in the field they wish to excel for in the future welcomes the idea of quality education. Perfect attendance can mold our future leaders and the achievers, which is the primary goal of Don Eulogio de Guzman Memorial National High School, as the pilot school of this attempt.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to interpret the causes of rampant absenteeism and truancy in the public schools with the end view to propose school solution strategies to at least minimize the number or to totally eradicate the potential effects among Senior High School learners.
and eventually reinforce school’s attachment to continue their studies along with the posed challenges that beset the Basic Education.

This study aimed to interpret the causality of absenteeism and truancy in Basic Education. The study interpreted the reasons behind the problems of learners why they missed-out classes.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions; 1) how many percentages do learners in the Senior High School for the First Semester of the Academic Year 2019 - 2020 are considered as absentees and truants?, 2) what are the problems encountered why a learner missed-out classes?, 3) what school strategies can help Senior High School learners maintain attendance in the school?, and 4) what is the implication of the objectives of this action research in the Basic Education?

This initiative may be presented in the division level (through the Education Program Supervisors) for subsequent review and simulation among Senior High Public Schools in the entire Division of La Union. This somehow serves as a benchmark to leverage the effect of the increasing number of absenteeism and truancy in the academe and design solution strategies to combat the potential effects.

**Materials and Methods**

This action research employed causality research methodology. The study interpreted the reasons why a Senior High School learner missed-out classes. Thematic analysis was used to categorize the associated problems that challenged the achievement of perfect attendance in the Senior High School.

There was a pilot test that surveyed absentees and truants recorded per track and per strand. The pilot test ran for October 2019.

The pilot test had a total of six (6) participants and was chosen with the most distressed situations of learners based on the recommendations of panel expert judgment. There were two (2) participants for the launching of Skol-Tryk from house to school and vice everyday to ensure that the learner will not miss their classes and subjects the whole day. Another two (2) participants were considered for Supervised Work-Based where the learners had their initial solicited capital and rolled the same on their vacant time to source out daily “baon” to ensure his attendance everyday and lastly, two (2) participants who daily meet the temporary Teacher-Guidance designate in the Senior High School for appropriate guidance, counseling and nourishment.

This study adopted the questionnaire used by researcher Hocking (2008) asking the many reasons why a learner missed-out classes and became absentee and eventually converted as a truant.

The questionnaire was composed of sixty-five (65) benchmark statements and was taken “as is”.

The questionnaire was used both for pilot and actual data gathering.

The data was collected after the learner accomplished the questionnaires within 2-3 months’ time.

The researchers used Excel, frequency count, mean and weighted mean to analyze and present the data for discussions and interpretations.

The Likert scale following the adjectival descriptions of 5 means Always, 4 means Often, 3 means Sometimes, 2 means Seldom and 1 means Never were used. In the interpretation of the most frequent problems encountered by a Senior High School learner, the interval of 0.80 was employed.

The total sampling population was thirty-six (36), for the pilot test and actual data. From the sampling, 29 or translated into 81% were confirmed absentees and 7 or translated into 19% were confirmed truants.

This comprised the 3% (36/1,190) of the total population of the Senior High School for the First Semester of the Academic Year 2019 – 2020.

**Results and Discussions**

The table below revealed the analysis of the root cause of absenteeism and truancy in the Senior High School Department for the First Semester of the Academic Year 2019 – 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic</th>
<th>Stand A</th>
<th>Stand B</th>
<th>Stand C</th>
<th>Stand D</th>
<th>Stand E</th>
<th>Strands</th>
<th>F&amp;S</th>
<th>Stand H</th>
<th>Stand I</th>
<th>R</th>
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<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>late</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>personal</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the findings, the identified contributing root causes both for absenteeism and truancy in the Senior High School as revealed by the learners were distance, laziness, late, absences, teacher’s factors, cutting class, family problem, health issues, working and even personal reasons with total of ten (10) causes.

Further, data revealed that the reason on distance (15) was noted highest with Strand B, the reason on laziness (20) was noted highest with strand B, the reason on late (11) was noted highest with Strand H, the reason on absences (9) was noted highest with Strand I, the reason on teacher’s factor (11) was noted highest with Strand I, the reason on cutting-class (20) was noted highest with Strand B, the reason on family problem (10) were noted highest with Strands C, H and I, the reason on health issues (13) was noted highest with Strand I, the reason on working student (20) was noted highest with strand B, and by reason of personal (10) was noted highest with Strand H.

In summary, among the noted highest reasons why Senior High School Learners were challenged to attain perfect attendance were due to laziness (20), cutting-class (20) and working student (20) which were mostly happened under the strand of Strand B. This alerts now the School Authorities to check and verify the reasons of Strand B learners.

The next table showed the rankings of the most encountered problems of absenteees and truants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REASONS</th>
<th>Average Weighted Mean</th>
<th>Descriptive Equivalent Rating</th>
<th>RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 Transportation problems</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Unexcused absences</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Peer influence</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 Juvenile delinquency</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 Parents lack of money</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 Doing household chores</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the topmost problems that challenged the attainment of perfect attendance in public school were ranked 1 was transportation problems (4.90), ranked 3 were unexcused absences, juvenile delinquency, doing household chores rather than going to school (4.83), ranked 5 was peer influence (4.80) and ranked 6 was parents’ lack of money (4.70) where all had descriptive equivalent ratings of always.

On the bases of analyzing the causes, reasons and problems of absenteeism and truancy, the following school solution strategies were hereby proposed to at least minimize or to eradicate the numbers in Don Eulogio de Guzman Memorial National High School. The proposed strategies are Skol-Tryk, Supervised-Work Based, the inclusion of Guidance and Counseling as a subject, installation of dedicated Guidance Counselor and Parental support to regularly monitor their learners both in school and at home.

These proposals have tried to provide solutions based on the identified root causes, reasons and problems such as distance, financial and other related matters that hampered the achievement of perfect attendance in public schools.

Among the implications of this action research in Basic Education can be a direct solution to the booming numbers of absenteees and truancies in the grass roots. This could be replicated in the entire academe if the educator’s goal is to warrant the attendance of his learners under his supervision and instructions. The root causes, as well as the reasons behind absenteeism and truancy, will continue to progress if it is not attended well and provided with appropriate solutions or strategies. The number will continue to rise. It could happen in all multi-grade levels. The identified problems alert the School Administrators now to reposition the school resources and strategies to combat the problems. If the School Authorities are really serious to eradicate the potential effects of absenteeism and truancy; a budget, a process and a teacher-designate may be immediately designed to address it. Further, this study encouraged continuous improvements to better appreciate the causes and reasons behind absenteeism and truancy because of the diversities of learners and the challenges that beset the Basic Education overtime.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the bases of findings and results of this study, these were the conclusions drawn.

The initial survey of twenty-nine (29) absenteees and seven (7) truants with a total of thirty-six (36) learners who missed out on their classes might just be a portion of the total actual numbers in the entire division to date. It may be concluded that each school, whether the elementary or high school in the region, could have progressing numbers of absenteeisms and truancies.
under their area.

The learners who had frequencies of committed absences can be converted to truancy if left unattended. The identified twenty-nine (29) translated into 81% absentee can contribute to the seven (7) translated into 19% registered truants if did not handle properly.

The identified seven (7) truants were once considered as absenteeisms only. Since, the Classroom Adviser, the Subject Teachers, the Guidance Counsellor and School Administrators did not take serious actions to retrieve learners’ presence eventually they will be considered drop-outs for the semester.

The total of 36 identified learners who have many yet different problems are exacerbated by the fact that the school has no Teacher-Designate and Counsellor to monitor and counsel these learners. In addition, the school has seemed no budget or available resources to finance any proposed solution strategies.

The data revealed that Strand B has the most registered numbers of struggling learners where five (5) of the strands had zero rates.

The most root causes of absenteeism and truancy in the Senior High School are due to learners’ laziness, cutting class and learners who worked to support the family financially in which these are all learners’ personal factors.

Teachers-factor could contribute to the increasing number of recorded absenteeism and truancy in school.

The objectives of the design of Behavioral Contract in the Senior High School become ineffective because it seemed mere compliance.

As of the moment, there are proposals shrink into three (3) to address issues on distances, financial and other relevant matters only to minimize the causes of absenteeism and truancy which does not suffice in the achievement of perfect attendance.

The Open High School Program (modular) becomes the last resort for learners who have initially decided to leave the school for good which is supported both by Parents, Teachers and School Administrators which in turn this strategy will have the possibility to get abuse in the long run.

The initiatives of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as it anchored the Basic Education such as “no one should be left behind”, “no rejection policy” and “education for all” become the greatest challenge to warrant perfect attendance in all public schools.

In light of identified conclusions, this action research recommended the following.

All the schools in the Department of Education – Division of La Union may survey now how many possible absenteeisms and truancies under their jurisdiction. Once the number has been confirmed, we can collate the data and reach-out the Education Program Supervisors (EPSs) to take initiatives to address it seriously.

Since the pilot study confirmed there is a perfect attendance through the implementation of the proposed solution strategies of this research i.e. launching of skol-tryk for distance learners, supervised work-based to source out “baon or allowances” in the school, and other concerns related matters may solicit the help of Guidance and Counselling, these strategies may consider as initial trials for the entire division.

The School Administrators may consider the rental coming from the small businesses operating daily inside the school perimeter to source out funds for the “baon or allowances” of the identified learners who are suffering financially. This is one way of installing a direct solution in repositioning the available resources plus the possible review on the school’s Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) and Gender and Development (GAD) resources, provided there is allotted budget for it. The responsible persons would be the Head Teachers, SHS Assistant Principal and Principal since they are the authorities in the objective disposal of school resources.

The teachers from the Strand B may evaluate the techniques and strategies employed by Strand A, Strand D, Strand E, Strand F and Strand G. Strand B may ask their professional assistance and recommendation in achieving and maintaining zero rates in these strands.

This research highly recommended the installation of a Guidance Counsellor and a Teacher-Designate to man the monitoring, supervision and assessment for the different cases of learners. As per observation, the pilot school has no yet Guidance Counsellor in the Senior High School considering they are one of the biggest schools with the most number of populations in the Division of La Union.

The Classroom Advisers and Subject Teachers of the different strands are busy doing clerical works on top of their teaching loads that served as the main barrier to address outright any small progress of absenteeism and truancy under his supervision. The Master Teachers and SHS Assistant Principal must devise ways to design their defense group or they may
create another team to man the job. In creating the team, let us consider the provision of funds to be used such as allowances, transportation, gasoline and other acceptable incidental expenses.

Noted that there were teachers-factor related concerns that somehow contributed in the number of absenteeism and truancy in the Senior High School, where there must be closed coordination and discussion (PTA Meeting) with the parents of these identified learners, 81% absentees and 19% truants, since it takes a village to teach a child.

The researchers encourage replicating the context of this action research for deeper appreciation and understanding of the root causes and reasons behind absenteeisms and truancies in the Basic Education with the ultimate goal to provide doable strategies to eradicate the problems.

REFERENCES
