



Absenteeism: Its Causes and Effects in Bhutanese Context

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/JESBS/2020/v33i1130274

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Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/62755>

Mini-review Article

Received 02 October 2020

Accepted 08 December 2020

Published 21 December 2020

ABSTRACT

Aims: To understand the reason of absenteeism and its causes and effect in Bhutanese context.

Study Design: Qualitative research design

Place and Duration of study: It was conducted in Wangchu Middle Secondary School, Chhukha Bhutan and it took five years.

Methodology: Data were collected from almost 120 students of classes IX and X including 10 parents and 10 teachers. Data were analyzed using direct content analysis technique. Informal conversation was also arranged for better understanding of the situation of students, teachers and parents.

Findings: The analysis of the data found out more than three areas for reconsideration.

- The curriculum thinning and proper selection of topics to be done.
- Basis for selection of teachers for undergoing training, at the first place, in College of Education should be done on attitude and aptitude not on marks obtained.
- Provide ample avenues for young parents to get enough awareness programs in school which should train them in psychology and values.

Conclusion: This study examined all the perspective put forward by students, teachers and parents. Based on the analysis of the data three measures are suggested for stakeholders. These measures are Proper selection of topics in curriculum and thinning, revamping of selection of teachers and creation of avenues for parents to get awareness programs in schools.

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Keywords: Absenteeism; Bhutanese context; teacher's; the crux.

1. INTRODUCTION

Thirty Two years have rolled by working in different schools in the kingdom as teacher. Most of my service was concentrated in the higher secondary school where the children were in the class range of VII to XII. The absenteeism scenario was almost same with little difference owing to stage of development of the area where the school was located. Rural schools had some features different from the urban school. Presently, I am working in a middle secondary school and I was of the view that the absenteeism aspect would be lesser but the situation is still serious.

In recent years, all the teachers and principals of many schools have started to talk about the absenteeism issues in the schools and it is alarming to see that the number of absentees that are never decreasing. However it is common feature in school to have children missing classes. But in some cases the duration of the child remaining away is alarming. Who is responsible? Children themselves or the teachers, parents and the curriculum? It can be even the environment in school.

This paper is an endeavor to find out the real reason for the failures of the children coming to school so that all the stakeholders are aware of the situation and contribute substantially in rectifying the degrading habits of the children. I have tried to compare the reasons put forward by the teachers, student themselves and the parents, who are considered equally important in molding the habit of students and finally minimizing the absentee situation.

The most important thing that this paper is going to bring forth is the methodology to curve the absenteeism issue prevailing in most of the school that is achievable and doable and create the understanding among all the stakeholders as to where we had gone wrong. The method, that is easily taken up by students, teachers and parents alike, so that the question of missing school is deleted from the issue. All the critical persons are addressed and all agrees unanimously that we have crucial role to play in molding the future of our future citizens. Through the absence of the children I would like to create awareness to all our parents and teachers about the actual role they have to undertake for the

betterment of children and future of our country. This is the main aim of my research.

I would like all the readers to stress more in the recommendations and suggestions in my work as the crux is in there. I am sure the parents as well as teachers, after going through the recommendations and suggestions, would understand that the absence is not the students' problem. It's ours. Thus we have to change ourselves to change the habits of children to make their future bright and make our country leap one successful step ahead.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the twenty first century, with the digital natives, our students, there is no need for children to attend the school. However, there are some emotional aspects that will be missed if we go digital only. Thus attending school is important part in the life of children. Knowing that the 100% attendance in school is important, we still fail to achieve it from our side and from the students' side achieving the said percentage is out of question. There are so many psychological, emotional and cultural aspects that are taught which are not in the book. Thus attending school regularly is part and parcel for a growing child. This is going to affect the individual at first and the nation in general at the end as stated by Robert Agwot Komakech & John Robert Osuu [1] "In the global perspective, it is an undeniable fact that the progress of a nation is very much dependent on the education of its citizens." Thus the proper education of the children is necessary and the schooling without absence from school is a primary need. However when we work in the school the question of getting 100% attendance in school is not going to be there at all by any means. However, it is very important that we try to find out the causes of absenteeism as it has multiple effect in many areas if it is not addressed when it is just beginning. As put forward by Keter, T:

"Absenteeism can lead to depression and also result in poor quality of education as a result of time lost while being away from school. It could also lead to moral degradation that leads to drug abuse, early pregnancies and unruly behavior." (2015)

I fully agree to the moral degradation of our children put forward by Keter, T [2]. It is universal

truth everywhere in the world that children will pick up activities which will lead to unruly behavior. "Though Absenteeism can be remedied by providing adequate co-curricular activities to students Keter, T [2]" especially in a boarding school, the problem remains rampant in a day school too. This is true because "more than half the time in a day the child is at home with their parents". And if the parents are not hyper dealing with their children then the question of remaining absent will be not resolved.

There are uncountable ways or means to curb the absenteeism. Some are by creating of clubs and societies to keep students busy when they are out of class. Schools should strive to have up to date learning facilities like libraries as well as sporting facilities to make students enhance student retention [2]. Knowing all the environment that our students are in is crucial. The movement of our children from home to school and back plays important role in the absence aspect of our children. The situation in the cities are quiet different than any of our school situation in Bhutan but we cannot deny some facts about the reason for being absent from school. As concluded by Julia Burdick et.al [3]

"Every day these students must weigh the incremental benefit of one more day at school against the possibility of real physical injury or death on the way to school. Avoiding danger on the way to school may mean taking a longer-than-necessary route to school, waiting for an unreliable ride to a safer bus stop, or avoiding the trip to school altogether."(2019)

However the role of parents is equally important in dealing with the issue of absenteeism of their children in a day school. In the boarding school the role of all the teachers including the wardens and matrons play crucial role.

This literature review considers the approach put forward by different individuals on the absenteeism of children in school through responding to the following questions:

1. Why do children remain absent?What are the factors responsible?
2. What is the Parents Role?
3. What are the teacher's roles in student's absenteeism?
4. What would improve the attendance of children coming to school?

5. Do the absence of children bear some impact ontheir own achievement?

Bullying and harassment are common reason for a short term absenteeism. But inside the child there may be very serious problem which is not spelt out at all. We, as teachers, have to work hard to find out the real reason of being absent in school. Many absentees are girls. There is dire need for teachers and parents to understand the problems our girl student face as they grow up. Give enough awareness on the understanding of menstruation hygiene and its relation to growing child. As reported by Aditi V et al. [4]

"Focused Group Discussions and the attendance records, it was observed that nearly half of the surveyed adolescent schoolgirls reported that they had been absent during their menstrual period. As reported by most of them, their absence from school was mainly due to physical discomfort during menstruation and the lack of basic facilities such as water, bathroom, and toilet facilities for Menstruation Hygiene Management."(2018)

Through this paper I am optimistic that I will get good answers to the doubts that I have, while trying to answer the following questions.

2.1 Why DO Children Remain Absent? What are the Factors Responsible for Absenteesm?

To understand the actual reasons underlying the absenteeism in school it is important to understand the points put forward by well known authors on the issue. They are all universal reason which are true. Thus I would like to put down the following reasons according to Timothy Keter, Community Relations Coordinator, Eneza education Ltd. (2015), absenteeism is caused by:

Phobic Adolescence: During this stage the growth of a teen, there is a lot of fear developed as a result of physical changes of the body for example growth of pimples, turbulent emotions etc. scares teens away from school.

Lack of interest: Students could be lacking interest in the study, which could be as a result of content that is difficult for them to grasp hence pushing them away from school.

Teacher approach: The approach used by teachers may not be understood by the student and this could lead them to lose interest in

school. Punitive attendance policy plays a big role in absenteeism too.

Pamperness from the family: Students who get excessive pocket money from their families are most likely to absent themselves from school since they need time to spend the money.

Private Couching: Flexible private couching encouraged by some parents could drive a number of students away from the conventional school timetable.

Diseases: Some diseases like asthma which requires attention and care as well as an environment that is warm and not dusty could make students remain home.

School Infrastructural Facilities: Lack of libraries, sports facilities is a hindrance to attendance of school among students.

Entertainment: Accessibility of entertainment facilities like cinemas could divert attention of some students from school. (2015)

I fully agree to all the points indicated above by Keter T. [2] amongst which I consider the reason one, three and four, given above, as the most important dilemma which is quiet related to Bhutanese context. However, knowing the causes only will not serve the purpose. As educationists we have to see the multiple dimensions to overcome the problem of absenteeism. How hard we, as teachers, try helping our children from avoiding absence we still do not succeed due to some unavoidable barriers.

In our context the “teacher approach,” Keter, T. [2] really affects absenteeism to great extent. There are teachers still, in 21st Century, not immigrating to the present century and try clinging to the 19th century where we are dealing with the digital natives. This aspect is very important one that really makes the children loose interest in the subject taught by that immobile teacher and makes the children skip school.

The role of parents comes in the “Pamerness” [2] put forward by Eneza Education. It is true that the children remain absent for trying to find time and space to spend the money. Instead of encouraging the children to go to school they give them situation to move away from school. The parents should love their children but not at

the cost of pampering them by giving cash. This is the most common situation of the working parents of Bhutan.

In the “Phobic Adolescence” [2] mentioned by Eneza Education the change is obvious and one cannot shy away from it. It is emotional and physical development occurring. The teacher as well as parents play crucial role. Not understanding the natural changes occurring to them and teachers as well as parents not explaining the natural process they will surely try shying away from school. The fear and doubts should be cleared so that the children are aware of the natural change and do not fear and do not remain absent.

Some research done on students’ absenteeism tells that there are several factors that lead the students to miss the regular class. In the Bhutanese context there could be many reasons for the students to miss the class as mentioned by Eneza Education but some of the genuine factors in our school are school environment, parents’ role and the influence of their friends, and so on. I would like to focus on the three factors put forward by Eneza education and the three genuinely Bhutanese aspects of Absenteeism. I feel that these are the main reasons behind students’ absenteeism. And I have tried to explain and discuss each of these reasons in brief.

2.2 What are Parents’ Role?

The Bhutanese schools do not have good link with the parents of the students. If there is no proper link between the parent and the schools, there are high chances that the students may lie to either of them and stay absent frequently. Therefore, the schools can try a variety of strategies to build a bridge connecting the faculty and staff with families. The message these strategies convey to parents should be: “You are welcome, you are important to us, and we want to work with you to educate your children” (Lueder, 1998, p. 62). These features are absent in Bhutanese school system. Most of the parents are bother less about their children and they believe whatever their children tell them, due to which there is the problem of absenteeism. The carelessness of the parents will be taken as pretext by the children to remain away from school. They will be blaming parents for their absence. Parents should not forget their responsibilities after bringing this children to this world. Our parents take it for granted that if they

give good facilities and money to their children their duty is over. This is not the actual responsibility rather it is pamperness as mentioned by Eneza Education. Guidance is what is required till the children stand on their own feet. Thus I feel the role parent in the upbringing of the child is most important aspect in the life of the children. Parents should positively influence their children to go to school and never miss school and avoid the children participating in some unexpected truant acts which can be easily solved by participating in projects of the school social workers as put forward by Martell L. Teasley [5].

“school social workers can participate in truancy prevention and reduction projects through collaborative efforts with other school professionals, community organizations, social services agencies, parents, and school children. (2003)

2.3 What are the Teacher's Role in Student's Absenteeism?

The role of teacher in improving the student's attendance is as crucial as it is of parents. Because of this reason the teachers are sometimes known as second parent. As put forward by Eneza Education “Teachers approach [2]” in dealing with the attitude of a child is very important. The wonderful methodology in teaching and a very lively ways of dealing will attract the students to school. If they fail to understand their teacher they start losing interest in whatever the teacher does in school. Positive attitude and lively ways of dealing and teaching will surely minimize the absenteeism aspect of the student. We will see over improvement of the student's performance. As put forward by Chirstopher A. Kearney [6]

“Absenteeism from school is a serious public health issue for mental health professionals, physicians, and educators. The prevalence of unexcused absences from school exceeds that of major childhood behavior disorders and is a key risk factor for violence, injury, substance use, psychiatric disorders, and economic deprivation” (2008).

It is very important that all the teachers, not only in Bhutan, in whole world should take the absence very seriously so that the future of the children in particular and the destiny of the country are safely handled. There is no doubt if this is taken care our country will be free of the

youth problems. However the absence is an important factor in the performance of the children as it really bears high importance for there will be disturbances in the learning aspect of the children. The style with which the teacher would be teaching may be well understood and liked and the absence would be greatly recuded. Any new teacher substitution may take time for the children to pick up from the start for the children and is a blow to school principal to get the replacement in the Bhutanese context which is very difficult as rightly put forward by Tony Bowers [7]

“Teachers who take time away from work through sickness present problems for school principals in covering their work. Their absence will have an impact on students and other teachers, as well as on the money available to schools.” (2010)

2.4 What Would Improve the Attendance of Children Coming to School?

With these digital natives we have to update and adapt ourself to the 21st century and go by the taste of the children where we give them information to sell fish instead of 20th century method to catch fish to survive. In this century with the advanced group of natives the environment that we make or create for them is surely going to affect their absence and absenteeism will be reduced to minimum. Thus the kind of environment which is in itself enjoyable and promising will surely encourage the children to never miss school. If any school provides adequate space and opportunities for students and teachers to spread out, reflect, interact, exchange information, examine and test ideas surely the school will experience heavy rush of admission every year. It is the school environment that makes the students to attend the class regularly or in the absence of this facilities otherwise encourage absence frequently. School rules like school attendance may be felt by some students as punishment in itself, thus acting as negative reinforcement. Negative reinforcement occurs primarily in the phobic incidences and separation-anxiety symptoms that are present in younger children that keep them from liking to go to school as put forward by eneza education. Thus correct positive reinforcement and encouragements are necessary to make children never to miss school. If there are no appropriate amount of reinforcements, the students miss the class.

2.5 Do the Absence of Children Bear Some Impact on Their Own Achievement?

The result of absenteeism has multiple effect. The direct effect of the absenteeism is felt by the children instantly at the end of the year by failing the class. When they fail there is downward movement of the performance of the concerned child. There is no chance of improvement in the child. When the other students are taught and clarification given on certain concept or principle the child absent will not understand. His/Her failure to understand is ultimately borne by the country by producing unsuccessful citizen.

Causes of absence in two different settings: rural and urban absence characteristics:

In Bhutan there are almost three categories of school by its location. Rural, Semi Urban and Urban. The kind of absence in these three locations are different by virtue of the environment they are in.

Normally the rural schools are all small primary schools and the kind of absence in these schools are either sickness or natural calamity. The children in the Primary schools are innocent and ignorant of the happenings of the world. They remain isolated and are not influenced by any of the ill effects of modernization. The range of children remain within 6-12 years.

Semi Urban school students will have some truancy and misconducts with some influence of the urban setting. They will bunk classes to attend some fun or shows that attract youths. They will be in the stage of trial and error. The stage will be for experimentation. The errors that they fall into may either teach them the right path. Some land up remaining permanently absent from school with no point of return. Here the teachers and parents role to cater to their need is crucial. This is the stage where we need to play active part in making them understand the repercussions of development and the side effect of modernization.

Urban setting is the most important environment where the absenteeism is mostly common and serious issue. In this location the schools are in the age range of 13-20 and the children are grown up enough to reason out on the trials and errors made in the lower and primary schools. As much as 85% of the children reason out correctly with good guidance from teachers and parents

and they fall on right track and they can be relied on in future as they make the good citizen of the country and a good son or daughter to parents.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I have tried to present the purpose of the study, the research paradigm, informal conversation, data source and analysis.

3.2 Purpose of Study

In this study I have two important and interrelated purpose which was bothering me and any other teachers in Bhutan as this dilemma is common in all the schools across Bhutan. Through this small research I would like to find out the reality existing in the schools through the eyes of the stakeholders like Parents, teachers and the student themselves.

3.3 Research Methodology and Design

This section mainly talks on collection of information and data about the opinion of different people on students' absenteeism in the class. It is very important that first we understand the nature of the research area and then go with the selection of the methodology. This action research will mainly focus on the students and teachers of Wangchu Middle Secondary School and some parents of the locality for data collection. Author will be facilitated to carry out this action research by few of his teachers and students. Since this aspect requires certain opinion and view of some other people namely teachers, parents, students, etc, survey as a tool to collect the data and information is chosen. Absenteeism is one of the common problems in any school in the world and the problems in schools of Bhutan are no different. Therefore, we need to take in the opinions of different people to improve the situation. A research of this nature requires both wider coverage as well as careful analysis of the problem; this study therefore, qualifies for a mixed method research.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures and Source

By looking at the nature of the research problem, the study will rely mostly on survey. The first tool that we are going to use for the data collection is the survey questionnaire which allows gathering opinions of a huge number of people on

absenteeism. The data will be collected from 59 students of class X and 60 students of class IX. Together with these many students around 10 teachers and 10 parents will also be interviewed and requested to fill in the questionnaires after getting their willingness to participate, which will begin from 4th week of June, 2015. The data will be collected from Wangchu MSS alone as the dilemma of absenteeism is quite common in this school. This tool will allow us to collect the information in an easier way applying more than one person. We can also collect the data in shorter period of time. I am optimistic that this tool will also provide forum to parents and students to voice out their own perceptions as well. This group interview and questionnaires will be always benefiting as it keeps the participants interactive and helps to confirm the validity of the opinion of the individual. During the discussion researcher has the liberty and the flexibility to rephrase, add or probe further into cases wherever necessary.

The second sources that author is collecting the data is from different authentic websites, school hand book, school policy guidelines of different schools and colleges. These will help me in providing the information about how other schools treat this problem.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Informal Conversation

The informal conversation is non-directive process that allows the interviewees greater freedom to express their views [8]. Informal conversation's main intention was to understand the background information of individual students, teachers and parents. This process avoided involving wrong participants as some will be interested but will lack experience. This method helped me to select the suitable participants for the questionnaire interview method that I used in this research.

4.2 Guided Interview Approach

The guided interview approach helped me to get comprehensive data from the participants on the subject being studied. It not only helped me to know the views of different individuals in the subject further it allowed me to generate relevant questions providing the flexibility to decide on the length of the questions required. As per McMillian and Wergin [9] a guided interview

helps to examine the experiences and perceptions of selected participants.

There are different techniques of data analysis; each varies in their presentation depending on the nature of research method used for study. Creswell [10] found that the process of data analysis involves making sense out of the raw data. Accordingly this study was more inclined towards finding the perspective of selected students, teachers and parents thus I adopted Creswell's [10] four steps method of data analysis.

- Identifying statements that relate to the topic
- Grouping statements into "meaningful units."
- Seeking divergent perspectives
- Constructing a composite

For the analysis purpose the above mentioned approach recommended by Creswell was used and I divided the process of my data analysis into the four stages.

Stage One: Identifying statements that relate to the topic

I read the responses of all the participants several times to identify the information and when I was fully convinced I sorted the information into three broad heading:

- Findings from the students of Wangchu MSS
- Findings from the teachers of Wangchu MSS
- Findings from the Parents residing in and around Wangchu MSS.

Stage two: Grouping statements into meaningful units:

I grouped the data that were segmented by verifying the characteristics of the phenomenon as different individuals in different category of people experienced. Thus from the collection of data I grouped the information into four broad meaningful units such as:

- Experience of students on absenteeism: Their views and perspective
- Teachers perspective on the issue of absenteeism and their role

- Parents impressions, perspectives and their role
- Challenges and suggestions.

Stage three: Seeking divergent perspectives:

In this stage I took good time reading all the responses of all the three kinds of respondents. It was all written with sincerity and with genuine feelings of participating in the research which was clear from the responses given. Throughout the research they remained cooperative and honest. They did not hesitate to share their views based on their experiences.

It was very interesting to note that the students of both the levels reacted almost in the same manner. Their experiences and feelings almost tallied. All of them said that the peer pressure was the main reason for their absence in school. Their lack of determination and consistency was very determining factor in the cause of absences,

From the responses of the teachers, almost three fourth of them blamed the parents for the cause of their children's absence in the school. The minor cause was the carelessness of the children themselves. The peer pressure was also attributed as one factor. Seriousness in the part of the teacher was also found as a factor in making absenteeism common in school. Some teachers even blamed the new policy of no corporal punishment as a factor for letting the children remain absent without any reason and no one to question even.

Most of the parents blamed their own responsibility, which they have failed in taking care of their children. They were even blaming the latest technology (mobile and TV) for making their children remain absent in the school. Some of the teachers were also blamed for the absence of the children. The availability of the alcohol variety and the drugs freely in the surrounding is also put forward by the parents.

Stage Four: Constructing a composite

At this stage I finished reading all the perspective of different participants and classified them into meaningful units and divergent perspectives I came to know that it was very important that my small research has some bearing to the important stakeholders like students, teachers and parents at large on the theme: Absenteeism: Its causes and effects in Bhutanese Context.

Students had a feeling that if we have a very good atmosphere with all the required facilities all the children would love to come to school. One of the children had mentioned that "In our school we are chased when we try to engage ourselves in productive game." He continued to say, " ... only if the playground, i.e. Basketball and volleyball ground is left free we would enjoy being in the school throughout." One child had mentioned, "Our parents are least bothered about us." He never knows where we are. He will be always busy in his world." One child had mentioned, "who cares, I will be happy in my own world. May it be abusing drugs. When no one are worried why should we...." I fully agree to the child's statement. One class X student had mentioned the "attitude of teacher is not positive. We hate him and we feel like bunking his class." This is what makes us ultimately be absent from the school. "This ultimately declines our performance". Almost every participant had in the same manner that the absences influence their performance. I fully agree to the view put forward by our students. They mean it from their heart. It is important that we change our attitude and come down and understand their feelings and finally the overall performance of the school will improve.

Though there are huge diversity in the individual responses that I read, I drew a composite of students, teachers and parents experiences to discover the practical situation of absenteeism in school and the best I could draw was from the response of students where it was mentioned, "Only if the teacher changes his attitude and the school improve the facilities for us, we will have no absence in school." Further the care and concern of parent for their child is seriously crucial for the performance of the child in school by never being absent to become "somebody" in near future.

Multiple perspectives of students, teachers and parents on the issue of absenteeism.

4.3 Students Perspective

The students in general had the feeling that the issue of absenteeism would not be there if the schools across had proper accessible facilities for the children to enjoy any leisure. The more important aspect the children had put forward was the "attitude of teachers" and their "strategy of teaching" which they mentioned should be more student-centric. The classes should not be overburdened. The teachers should teach us

“with heart not hurt”. These feelings of student have made a deep impression on how I had been teaching till date. Was it sufficient?

4.4 Issue Faced

The curriculum should have more meaningful lessons which should have more activities with proper facilities to engage all the children when they are in school. Presently it is not as per their need.

Teacher should be there to teach human with heart. The attitude of some of the teachers are not correct thus it is important that we have teachers with right attitude.

Lack of care and concern from parents' side is common. Equal stress and love from parent found missing. Parents have to change their attitude towards children and be concerned today for better tomorrow.

4.5 Teachers Perspective

Almost all the teachers who responded had the feeling of lack of determination on the part of children. They even put forward that they do not have consistency in hard work. They also lack zeal and willingness. They were of the view that the parents were very careless. They said the parents were least bothered about their children. They never ask us how their children are performing in school. They even do not know where their children are when we ask them after finding them missing from school. Child psychology is forgotten for the sake of making the environment ready for their children. Some curriculum is too lengthy which kills the interest of the children and forces them to bunk the class and finally the school.

4.6 Issue Faced

Lack of concern shown by parents for their child. Value of determination, consistency and hard work missing in the children about work. Curriculum found too vast where reorganization found mandatory to make it child friendly and engaging. Loss of age old traditional and values in the children.

4.7 Parents Perspective

The parent themselves had agreed during the informal conversation that many of our parents are really careless about their children. They

have no time for them. They are too busy making money for themselves and ultimately having no time for their children. Parents were almost pleading and saying all this hard work is for my children's future. This leads to the absenteeism in school. Sadly, even the absence of their child is not known by the parents.

4.8 Issues Faced

No time for parents to give to their children because of the kind of job the parents are handling. Heavy duty connected with business or official duty which they cannot compromise. Exposure of children to the modern amenities like mobile and television entertainment keep the child glued to it and make them oversleep or over tire.

4.9 Challenges

After having thorough discussion during the informal discussion and the reading of the responses of the children I have come to the conclusion that there are huge challenges to tackle if we are to have generation of worthy citizen in the kingdom. The serious challenge that I came across is the value that is deteriorating in the present school system across the country. The children have lost the value of respect, the teachers have lost the value of forgiveness and parents have lost the value of care. We are presently blaming each other and we do not have the guts to accept our fault. If only all the people including the children and grownups understand this value of respect, love and care we will have a world worth living. However the degree of fault, I feel, lies in the teachers and parents as children are after all children. They have not faced the proper world. We have failed to give a good environment to our future citizens. This is the biggest challenge that lies ahead.

1. How to make our teachers a real teacher with heart to learn continuously who will be readily willing to change as per the situation. How to make the present teachers a teacher of 21st century and a wonderful role model.
2. How to make our parents a real parent with the image of a good father/mother who is caring and understands that his child needs his care and love which will make a huge difference in the child's life.
3. The third challenge of making the children a worthy citizen is not a big problem if the

above stakeholders are aware of their duties and roles, the students will automatically be on line.

4.10 Suggestions

Teacher's suggestions

1. Selection of trainee teachers for the teacher training colleges should be done very strictly and seriously to have the right person in right place whereby recruiting only those who want to be teacher by having the right aptitude of becoming a teacher not by luck or other factors
2. Have constant workshops or training to keep the teachers abreast with the modern developments on child psychology and behaviors.

Parents suggestions

1. Parent awareness program where the young fathers and mothers should be given some lessons on how to take care of the infants to school going children.
2. How to deal with the psychology of youth to lead them to right path.
3. Program that creates awareness on the duties of parents.

Students suggestions

1. Train teachers who can listen and support the youth who are misled by the peer pressure and bad environment.
2. Include only those teachers who have heart that loves and listens.
3. Adjusting and accepting teachers only to be allowed to become teachers who have the zeal to learn always.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this final part of my research I have presented the major findings, selected recommendations, some limitations and significance of the research. I have tried to present the findings in the following manner:

1. Curriculum vastness

Few of the teachers pointed out that our curriculum is too vast for our students to cope with thereby making our students hate school.

This hating results in absenteeism and finally school dropout. Proper selection of topics as per age has to be carried out by curriculum developers.

2. Positive attitude of teachers

All the three kinds of participants were of the view that the attitude of a teacher will make a very big difference in guiding the children in right direction. Some student participants were giving the names of some teacher who had rude attitude.

One respondent was saying that he cannot utter any word to one of the teacher. If we ask something the concerned teacher would blast back with nasty words. We hate him and his attitudesaid one of the student participant. Hearing this during informal discussion was a curtain raiser for teachers on the quality of teacher that was preferred by children. Soft spoken, understanding, caring and approachable teacher is what the children look or crave for. Thus, teachers having the above mentioned qualities will go a long way in ultimately reducing the absence to zero in school and finally lead in nurturing a leader who is going to be understanding, caring, forward and approachable citizen in the future. Thus admitting only those teachers with the right attitude and aptitude for teaching is mandatory during selection process of candidate in the training institute.

3. Teacher to accept change and become 21st century teacher and be a good role model.

Through this small research I have got good information about the kind of teacher students in general and education system in particular require. They have to be a broadminded person who can change as required and do not remain biased and narrow minded. We as teachers have to act as digital natives with the natives though most of our teachers are digital immigrants. This change is found out to be very important to be excellent teacher. Further the character of a teacher is one aspect that any teacher on earth has to be very careful. The students look at teachers as good role model. Teacher's good character and good role is going to encourage students to be always happy to come to school to meet teachers with these pleasant characters and tremendously decrease the absence of students in school.

4. Parents roles to be taken seriously

Teachers and students alike during the informal discussion have revealed that there is lack of care by parents of their children in the locality. One of the Student respondent had written that "our parents are least bothered about us, they never ask how we are or how did your day in school go by" (2015). This is disheartening. Thus as parent we have greater role to play than to just give food shelter and clothing. To give good values through loving and caring attitude is the most important gift a parent can ever give. Some teacher had pointed out that the parents are all the time drunk and there is no way out that child is not drunk too. Thus as parents one has to sacrifice some enjoyment for the better future of your children who are looking for a good role model character in their parents. Let the children be proud of their parents and parents can do it by just sacrificing. Schools should provide workshop on parenting for the young parents so that they learn the process of caring the children at home.

5. Some expectations of teachers on what you as parent can do and also what you as parent as well as teacher are expected to know about the deeper aspects of life. The emotional, physical and psychological experiences have to be seriously understood by all the stakeholders.

The children may drop school or bunk school because of many underlying reasons. Firstly it may be just drop in grades and that may lead to absenteeism and if unchecked it may ultimately lead to leaving school which is the last thing that a teacher and as well as parents expect. It is mandatory duty of a teacher and parents to know the root cause of absenteeism. Sometimes the cause will be very simple one which may lead to a very serious problem. Thus going into the root of the cause of degrading performance is important which may be the real reason for the related absenteeism due to the other disorders as given below:

- Physical ailments like undiagnosed sleep disorders, anemia, impaired vision or hearing, others
- Emotional disorders like depression, anxiety and even eating disorders.
- Learning disabilities/developmental disabilities like dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and
- Substance abuse, which some of our children may be experimenting with alcohol

or drugs.(American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003)

Therefore, before we react rudely against our kids on the problems, it is important that we understand, where our children exactly is. Thus finding out the above mentioned disorders are mandatory for any parents or teachers. I am optimistic of the fact that if teachers and parents are careful with the above mentioned disorders we will have already solved ninety five percent of the absenteeism situation in the school.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research which I have carried out in my school on the absenteeism of children in school is a very small quest involving very few participants of Wangchu Middle Secondary School. I had to limit my quest to this small area because of my duty as principal. I cannot leave station and during free time children are not in school thus I thought the scenario in any other day school may be almost same. But I am confident that to great extent the environment of a urban or semi urban school like ours present or go through almost same situations. Thus I have very limited recommendations even:

- Finding the perspective of teachers of Wangchu MSS and aligning on assumption that all the other teachers of other schools face and feel almost same on the attitude of teachers which we need to change as required by the system. As per some teachers there is dire need of curriculum thinning and proper selection of topics so that the children donot feel the burden and enjoy reading and coming to school. Thereby reducing absenteeism.
- Finding the perspective of students about the reasons for absenteeism in Wangchu MSS and relate to any other school and the selection of teachers at the first place in College of Education should be done on attitude and aptitude not on marks obtained by individuals
- Finding the perspective of the parents in the locality and globally change the present attitude and behavior so that the children are loved, cared and reared the way they should be and further place ample avenues for young parents to get enough awareness program which should train them in psychology and values of

proper upbringing of their children so that they refrain from being absent from school and learn all the aspect of education.

7. LIMITATIONS

Firstly, the audience or participants are not varied as I took only my school which was very accessible to me at any point of my research. Thus the view may be very limited in extent and coverage. Assumption is prime in this research. References are also very limited. Further the experience on the part of the researcher also is limited. Finally there can be enormous reasons for the absenteeism in children but I have dealt with very few situation of my teachers and students and few of the parents.

8. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Dwelling in this small research, I have gained huge amount of knowledge and information. This is surely going to bear a long lasting effect in my life. This small research has given a wide perspective of teachers and parents through the eyes of children, our future leaders. Our dealing is going to affect their future and our leaders. Through this small research, I am confident, that the hidden message is open to all teachers and parents alike to see as to what kind of teachers are wanted by our digital natives and what kind of parents are they looking in their daily life so that they learn the best style possible. I will feel blessed if all the important stakeholders read the perspectives fully that I have gathered from different individuals, understands the need of the hour and changes for better would I feel that I have achieved my goal. This would be the essence and significance of my research.

I am confident that the findings and recommendations will be viewed by all the teachers and parents seriously. The research has tried presenting the real life situation prevailing in the schools of Bhutan. I am sure that the teachers after reading through the findings will reflect on their characteristics while dealing with the children. The parents also need to rewind their roles as parents and validate their actions on the issue of their child's behaviors. Check in the responsibility and do the needful if we want our children and our students become a trustworthy son, student and future leaders. I am optimistic that the result is worthwhile for me and for the entire concerned individual. Finally understand that there is great connection between absence and learning of students as indicated by Marburger, D.R [11] where he

clearly mentioned in his study that: "a significant link exists between absenteeism and learning. Students who were absent during a class period were 9 to 14 percent more likely to respond incorrectly to a question pertaining to material covered in their absence than students who were present."

CONSENT

The research would not become reliable if it is not validated thus to validate the accuracy of my findings I used the member checking method of Creswell [10] Thus I revisited and consulted my participants again and again and confirmed the interpretation of my data before going for finalizing my research. The approval of all the participants were obtained consent.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The ethical considerations in the research work are very important and accordingly I tried my best to meet all the obligation in respect to the participants as put forward by stake [12]:

"Interviewing-whether it is highly structured with predetermined questions or semi structured and pen-ended-carries with it both risks and benefits to the informants. Respondents may feel their privacy has been invaded, they may be embarrassed by certain questions, and they may tell things they had never intended to reveal" (p.214 1994)

I was very careful in framing the questions even. I got the permission from the Chief Dzongkhag Education Officer of Chhukha Dzongkhag as I was going to use only the teachers, students and parents of the student of our school. I ensured that the matter of confidentiality was given prime importance for which I did not name any one of my participants in the write-ups. I even gave my participants the right to object the interpretations of data before the final copy was made. I was even very careful from the beginning in making my participants to participate voluntarily.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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Annexure 1

QUESTIONNAIRES

To Teachers

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What is your view about absence of children in school?
3. Do you think it has some bearing in the performance of the children?
4. Who is to be blamed mostly in the absence of the child?
5. Do you think parents play some part in the absence of the children in school?
6. What about the curriculum? Is this affecting?
7. What about the peer pressure?
8. Do you think public ridicule is serious offence?
9. Will this affect add to the absenteeism of a child?

To Students

1. Your name?
2. Are you willing to participate in my research?
3. Do you love your teacher? Why?
4. Any teacher whom you hate? Why?
5. Do your teacher use the latest methods of teaching?
6. What kind of teacher do you prefer who should be teaching you?
7. What kind of atmosphere do you have in your school?
8. Do you get all the facilities required in your school?
9. Do you have enough facilities in your school?
10. What do your parents do after duty?
11. How caring are your parents?
12. Do you have any information about drugs? Is it available?
13. Do you think the attitude of a teacher is important and it will affect your performance?
14. Do you think that absence is going to affect your performance?

To Parents

1. Name?
2. What is your occupation?
3. Do you have children? How many?
4. Do they miss school sometimes?
5. Have you seen children missing school often?
6. What kind of students normally miss school?
7. Can you give some reason for the absence of the child?
8. Do you feel parents are equally responsible for the absence of the child?
9. What is the role of the teacher?

Annexue II



འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་
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ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN
WANGCHHU MIDDLE SECONDARY SCHOOL
CHHUKHA DZONGKHAG



Ref. No. WMSS/CDEO-33/2015/ NIL

Dated: 30.6.2015

To
The Chief Dzongkhag Education Officer
Dzongkhag Administration
Chhukha Dzongkhag

Sub: Permission to conduct a study in Wangchu MSS.

Sir,

On my own interest, curiosity and to present the reality of absenteeism to all, I would like to conduct a small study for my small research on “ Absenteeism: Its causes and effect in Bhutanese context”

This study requires the involvement of some teachers and students from Wangchu MSS. They will be picked up after getting the verbal consent from the participants. I will be completing and adhering to all the requirement of ethical consideration.

I want to assure you that I will not be disturbing the school timing. All the survey and questionnaires will be used during off hours. As per my plan, I want to start the work from 1st of July till 31st July, 2015.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

(Dhan Singh Tamang)
Principal

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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
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