

**IMPLEMENTATION OF SUGGESTION SYSTEM
TO OVERCOME THE PROBLEM OF
STUDENTS' ABSENTEEISM**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Students' absenteeism is one of the critical problems in secondary schools of Malaysia. People have tried to solve this problem in several ways. In this study, suggestion system, which is a vehicle through which employees can channel their ideas for workplace improvement has been adopted to overcome the problem. Suggestions have been gathered from teachers and students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Ibrahim, in the district of Kuala Muda, Kedah. Having gathered, suggestions are evaluated using absolute measurement of Analytic Hierarchy Process, a popular multiple criteria decision making tool. The top ranked suggestions are proposed for implementation.

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APPROVAL PAGE

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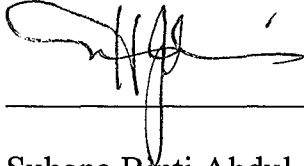


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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project paper is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by reference notes and a bibliography is appended.

Date : 22 December 2000

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all the teachers that have
Taught me the importance and the meaning of education.

To my family, the spirit to go on striving is resulted from
All of you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Absenteeism has been a common problem faced by many schools in Malaysia whether they are urban or rural. It is also considered as a disciplinary problem that has been going on for years. In a study conducted on the 10 most frequent disciplinary problems faced by secondary schools in Malaysia, absenteeism has emerged as one of the disciplinary problems with the highest number of students involved. 32,472 students were absent from schools in 1986 and it is believed that the number has increased through the years.

The study that was done in 1987 which covered all schools in Malaysia has found out that absenteeism is at the second place of the list, if both primary and secondary schools' disciplinary problems are combined (Rohaty,1991). It is therefore important for schools to find the remedy for this problem before it gets worse.

To overcome the problem of absenteeism in schools, teachers can play their roles besides being purely academicians in schools. If absenteeism is a school

problem, teachers should also be involved directly in the process of solving the problem. To overcome the problem, one of the methods that can be used is suggestion system.

Suggestion system is any vehicle through which employees can channel their ideas for workplace improvement (Goetsch and Davis, 2000). As this study will focus on student absenteeism, to overcome such problem, it would be appropriate if suggestions come from teachers and students who are directly involved with school environment. This study will focus on gathering suggestions from teachers and students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Ibrahim in the district of Kuala Muda, Kedah Darulaman and evaluating them in order to overcome the problem of absenteeism.

It is important for teachers and students to be involved in giving their ideas on how to overcome the problem as teachers are the people who are directly involved with the students during school hours. Students on the other hand, also feel more comfortable to voice their problems to teachers rather than to administrators and since the problem of absenteeism involve students, it is good if we could listen to what they want to say.

Suggestions that will be collected from teachers will be evaluated and later listed according to their level of applicability. Five suggestions that are given highest ranking will be recommended to the school for implementation.

1.1 The Need of the Study

Since absenteeism has become one of the major disciplinary problems in Malaysian schools, there is a need to conduct a study on how the problem of absenteeism among secondary school students can be overcome. Teachers, who deal with students during school hours, can be a good source to collect suggestions to overcome this problem. On the other hand, students, should also be involved in giving their suggestions to overcome this problem.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to identify the suggestions that can be used to overcome the problem of student absenteeism in schools. As mentioned earlier, absenteeism has become a major problem in schools, it is important to find out how the problem could be overcome. Students who are frequently absent in schools may have the tendency to perform similar misconduct during their working life. This definitely can create another problem in future concerning productivity and self-

discipline. This study will also look at how the suggestions will be evaluated in the process of coming up with the best five suggestions.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The major objectives to conduct this study are:

1. to collect suggestions from teachers and studies regarding how to overcome the problem of student absenteeism.
2. to evaluate suggestions in order to find out their level of applicability.
3. to determine which suggestions are to be chosen for implementation.

1.4 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the suggestions that will be given by teachers and students?
2. How can suggestions be used to overcome the problem of absenteeism?
3. How can the suggestions suggested by teachers and students be evaluated?
4. Which suggestions would be chosen for implementation?

1.5 **Significance of the Study**

Student absenteeism has been a major problem faced by many schools either primary or secondary. Suggestions collected from teachers and students on how to overcome this problem will be of great help. The suggestions will be evaluated to identify their level of effectiveness and this study will also suggest some practical suggestions to be implemented in schools. It is also hoped that some form of actions are taken to overcome the problem. Teachers can put their efforts to improve students' performance rather than spending their time in settling the absenteeism problem.

1.6 **Definitions**

This study is conducted to implement the suggestion system in overcoming student absenteeism problem. Therefore, it is important to define a few terms which will be used throughout this paper.

Suggestion system

A suggestion system is a vehicle through which employees can channel their ideas for workplace improvement. Suggestions can be simple, easy-to-implement or elaborate ideas that involve detailed studies prior to implementation.

Absenteeism

For the purpose of this study, absenteeism is defined as an act student committed when he or she is not in school during scheduled school hours without any medical excuse, holiday or vacation time given.

Schools

Since this study focuses on secondary schools, it is important to note that the term “school” that will be used throughout this paper refers to secondary schools with students aged between thirteen and nineteen studying in form one to form six.

Analytic Hierarchy Process

The suggestions gathered from teachers and students will be evaluated and ranked according to their levels of importance and practicality. Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) is a decision making technique selected in the process which produce ranking with respect to some specific criterion.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

A good amount of literature has been used to give the evidence that the problem of absenteeism is not to be ignored. Students who remain absent do not only give problems to teachers but also indirectly involve their peers and parents into the problem. It is important to note that, if this problem is intended to be overcome, necessary action should be taken. Teachers are not the only ones to think about the solution to this problem, parents should also play their roles as students tend to spend more of their time at home rather than in schools.

2.1 Absenteeism

In a report published by the Discipline Unit, School Division, Ministry of Education (1994), absenteeism is the top disciplinary problem in schools. The report which was intended to provide guidelines for teachers and administrators reported that the number of students who were absent from schools was increasing from year to year. Even though the percentage for absenteeism is relatively small,

the problem might expand and become more severe in future if nothing is done to curb it. The data reported that from 2,004,979 students taken as sample in the survey, 32,092 students were involved in this problem. Even if the percentage is relatively low (1.6%), absenteeism problem still is the top disciplinary problem in schools throughout Malaysia. This has been going on for decades and it is hoped that the suggestions derived from teachers and students in this study will assist the process of overcoming the problem.

Absenteeism is not only a problem in Malaysia, it is also a problem in many developed countries like the United States of America, United Kingdom, etc. In fact, it is a universal problem. To explain the situation, the literature uses the terms 'truancy' and 'absenteeism' interchangeably. Both the terms are similar in connotation. The term 'truant' is derived from the Gaelic 'truaghan' which means wretch and was first used to describe poor Victorian pupils who absconded from schools (Carlon, Gleeson and Wardhaugh, 1992).

Carlen, Gleeson and Wardhaugh (1992) concluded that there was a relationship between truancy and delinquency. Even though there are some questions arose from the findings, the reality of truancy-delinquency relationship has been widely accepted. It is very important that the problem of truancy or absenteeism should be solved before more students are involved in delinquency.

The writers also point out that truancy that equates poor standards of discipline and behavior at home and school with other forms of social and economic malaise, principally those linked with economic growth, rising crime and anti-authority attitudes among the young. With such findings, it is important that the cure for this problem is to be found before it gets worsen. It is very important to find the remedy of this problem because truancy or absenteeism has now become so widespread as to confirm yet another 'crisis' of schooling (Carlen, Gleeson and Wardhaugh, 1992). If it is confirmed that it is a crisis, then, it is already largely agreed that the problem should not be overlooked by every party which is either involved directly or indirectly.

It is believed that a classroom is a small society where students first learn how to live with other people and adapt to their environment before actually starting to live as an adult. Classrooms, which are undisciplined, obviously lack morality (Carlen, Gleeson and Wardhaugh, 1992) and therefore need some remedy to cure the problem. Suggestion system, as used in this study is hoped to fulfill the need.

Ben Whitney (1994), has written that many times 'truancy' is often ill-defined. To solve the problem, he comes up with at least four concepts, which he believes that none of the concepts can be used in isolation. The four concepts are unauthorized absence, truancy, school refusal, and condoned absence. As

mentioned earlier, each of the four concepts is to be used together with others to provide a meaningful solution to the situation of actual truancy.

Unauthorized absence is an absence which has not been authorized by the school, for example 'leave' has not been given or no other valid explanation has been provided. Truancy, the second concept, focuses around action taken by children (students) who opt not to participate in the school day. The author also emphasizes that truancy can happen even if the child never actually leaves the school premises. This happens when a student skips some classes.

Truancy is a behavior within the child's control. It is primarily a disciplinary issue, nor a matter of law enforcement. It is quite common for students to commit truancy during their school days. It is believed that there is a lot, which can be done by schools and the ministry to detect and prevent it. Truancy can also be seen as an entirely normal reaction to something which the child finds boring and unpleasant, a rational avoidance. As one student finds it intolerable to go through Mathematics lesson, which he could not figure out even a single formula, he chooses to be out of the class during the period.

The third concept is school refusal, which is quite different and much more difficult to deal with, compared to truancy. The students involved in school refusal do not just truant; they refuse school for weeks and sometimes for months in

a row. They are not persuaded by all the efforts of parents, teachers and agencies, or they will only return to school after long and arduous attempts to change their minds. School refusal is also known as 'school phobic'. Students take absenteeism as the way to express themselves. The present study is meant to find suggestions that can help this type of absenteeism.

Condoned absence, the fourth concept is not as critical as the other three concepts explained earlier. It happens when the students are absent from school because of failure of their parents to fulfill their legal duty. These students work in the family business, move around the country, look after a sick relative, exploit their parents' lack of interest in education .

The book also explains a number of other types of truancy for example , telic truancy, paratelic truancy, conformist truancy, negativistic truancy, opportunistic truancy, subsistence truancy, habitual truancy, and retreatist truancy. Knowledge about these various forms of truancy is important in order to tackle the problem correctly. Telic truancy, for example occurs when a student finds the school experience and environment over-arousing. This feeling normally leads the student to avoid the stress of school by not attending. Conformist truancy is committed by students who truant because others do it; they are responding to some group or peer pressure. Some students will be conforming to the pressure from their

parents when the parents are dependant on them for practical help or household tasks and seek to persuade the child to remain at home.

Opportunistic truancy refers to the occasional truants who just take time off when they feel like it. These students skip school when there is some thing more fun to do, but otherwise they attend regularly. In Malaysian school scenario, habitual truancy happens quite frequently. This truancy covers students whose behavior has become more than just an occasional escape. They have developed a way of life which includes regular time away from school. This might be the regular on-off pattern over a number of weeks or months. The students, who are involved in this type of truancy ignore school for a significant amount of time, though they may not have much else to do.

Retreatist truancy refers to students, who have given up school and there is little or no prospect for their returning. Some may seek intense or even sexual commitment to one person and see themselves as too 'grown-up' for school. Even though various definitions are given to refer to various types of trancies, the main thing is the same; students are missing school for a number of reasons. It is very important for teachers, parents and others who are directly or indirectly involved with this problem to contribute to overcome the problem.