

REFERRAL SYSTEM ON TRUANCY AMONG TOURISM STUDENTS OF LYCEUM OF THE PHILIPPINES UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Referral System of Counseling and Testing Center in LPU aimed to reduce truants and dropouts in class. Referral system involves coordination between teachers, guidance counsellors and parents whenever a student has academic problems. To know the effectiveness of this system, researcher tabulated the actions of the concerned person and its effects on the students' performance at the end of the semester. The data utilized were analyzed using frequency distribution and percentile ranks. Based from the related literature, several factors affect the class performance and willingness of the students to attend their class. 59 referred students were monitored and evaluated after the action was taken and the result showed that 83.33% of the referred students who had undergone counselling got a passing grade in their subjects. Meanwhile, 71.18% of the referred students whose parent/ guardian had been informed got a passing grade also. With the continuous guidance of the counselors, teachers and parents, students can have a better academic performance. It can be gleaned that the purpose of the Referral system had been attained. With this result, strengthening of the use of Referral system should continuously be practiced by teachers to minimize the truancy and help the students improve their academic performance.

Keywords - Truancy, Referral System, Guidance, Counselling, Tourism Students

INTRODUCTION

In an era of declining enrolment, it is vital to identify potential causes of truancy and implement strategies for reducing it. Frequent absence from college is associated with failing grades, poor performance, disciplinary problems and long term social difficulties. In every institution, decreasing the rate of truancy has been the continuing goal throughout the year. A matrix of plan on how to maintain the retention of the students is usually the concern of the institution.

School attendance is an important factor to improve school per-

formance among youth. Studies show that higher attendance is related to higher achievement for students of all backgrounds. Those students who attend school regularly secure higher grade on achievement test than their peers who are frequently absent. Chronic truancy is a predictor of undesirable outcomes in adolescence including academic failure and school dropout (Epstein and Sheldon, 2002).

School truancy is an alarming problem for administrators, teachers, parents, and the society, in general, as well as for the students, in particular. Buccat and Cuntapay (2006) defined absenteeism in an educational institution as a perennial problem. According to them, there is a need to gauge the students' consciousness on absenteeism. Clores (2009) stated that truancy may indicate low performance of teachers, students' dissatisfaction of the school service, or lack of or poor academic and non-academic structures or policies that address the problems or factors influencing or reinforcing this behaviour. Parents are financially burdened for having their children to stay longer in the school, having to re-enrol them in subjects where they fail due to excessive absences. Missing school is serious business, and its impact on student achievement and drop-out rates has been vastly underestimated, according to a recent report from Johns Hopkins University.

In a study on Absenteeism of the Students of LPU- Batangas, it disclosed several reasons on absenteeism such as health reasons, financial concern, transportation difficulties, peer pressure and no assignments. Students who are from nearby towns take public transportation in going to school experience difficulties in arriving to their classes on time, hence became late/ tardy (Counseling & Testing Center LPU-Batangas, 2008).

The study estimates that the national rate of chronic absenteeism is 10 percent, though researchers suspect the rate is closer to 15 percent. That's 5 million to 7.5 million students who are absent from 18 to 20 days of the school year. The six reporting states (Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Nebraska, Oregon and Rhode Island) show absentee rates from 6 to 23 percent. In high-poverty urban areas, up to one-third of the students are chronically missing from school; in poor rural areas, one-quarter of them are chronically absent.

To deal with the issue of truancy in Lyceum of the Philippines University, the management come up with the referral system. The main goal of this system or process is to prevent absences of the students and to improve their academic performance. In this system, those students who incurred absences should be reported by the teachers to their respective guidance counsellor. In response to this referral, guidance counsellor should inform student's parent/ guardian in order for them to

be aware of the student's performance in school. All referred students should report to Counseling and Testing Center office to undergo counselling.

Chronic truancy and absence often start early. Nauer, White, and Yerneni (2008), for instance, reported that 20 percent of elementary school students (90,000) in New York City schools missed at least a month of school during the 2007–08 school year. There were five districts where 30 percent of more of the elementary school students were chronically absent. Data from the Baltimore Education Research Project showed that more than one third of the first grade cohort was chronically absent (that is, missed one or more months of schooling in one year) during at least one of the first five years in school (Balfanz et al., 2008). An analysis by the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) found that more than 11 percent of kindergarteners and almost 9 percent of first graders were chronically absent, rates that are likely conservative given reporting patterns among schools (Chang and Romero, 2008).

This early pattern lays the groundwork for the poor graduation rates from high school: "Recent research in Chicago and Philadelphia has documented that poor attendance is a primary driver of course failure in the secondary grades, and that course failure is at the root of high dropout rates" (Balfanz et al., 2008). In a study that examined the risk factors for school dropout, Hammond, Smink, and Drew (2007) identified school performance (low achievement, retention/overage for grade) and school engagement (poor attendance, low educational expectations, lack of effort, low commitment to school, no extracurricular participation) as individual domain factors. More specifically, low achievement, retention/overage for grade, and poor attendance were found to significantly impact dropout rates at all school levels.

Since the researcher is the guidance counsellor of the Tourism students in LPU- Batangas, she came up with this study to find out if this referral system is really an effective method in reducing the truants and the drop-outs among her students. The researcher would like to know if an open communication with teachers, guidance counsellor and parent/guardian could enhance the academic performance of the students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research is aimed to know the effectiveness of referral system towards the academic performance of the Tourism students. Specifically, it aims to determine the profile of the Tourism students, identify the reasons that may contribute to students' truancy and describe how the guidance counsellors, teachers and parents respond to the problems of the students. Also, it aims to propose an intervention on how to minimize the rate of truancy.

METHOD

The researcher used the descriptive –survey in which the present condition of the respondents has been evaluated. The respondents were composed of 59 referred students to the CATC due to truancy from first year to third year level of Bachelor of Science in International Tourism and Management. Fourth year students were not included in the study for there were no records of truancy were reported to the office.

The data utilized for the study were based on the referral slips forwarded by the instructors to the Counseling and Testing Center (CATC) and from the admission slip recorded in the student logbook, from November 2010- March 2011. The identified reasons for truancy were written in the admission slips issued to the referred students which were properly documented in the CATC. The data that were taken from the referral and admission slips such as the profile of the truants were analyzed using frequency distribution and percentile ranks to determine the reasons for truancy. The effectiveness of the action taken by the counsellors has been measured through the class standing of the students after the whole semester. It has been tabulated and ranked based on its percentile. Frequency count and percentage were the statistical tools utilized in the study to interpret and analyze the data gathered.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Profile of Respondents with respect to Year Level, Sex and Reasons of Truancy

Profile	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Year Level			
First Year	51	86.44	1
Second Year	6	10.17	2
Third Year	2	3.39	3
Sex			
Female	33	55.93	1
Male	26	44.07	2
Reasons			
Health Reasons	18	30.51	1
Family Matter	11	18.64	2
Personal Matter	10	16.95	3
Late/ Tardiness	7	11.86	4.5
Feeling Sluggish or Lazy	7	11.86	4.5
Financial Concern	3	5.08	6.5
School Related Matter	3	5.08	6.5

Table 1 shows that most of the absentees among BSITTM students are from First Year level which consists of 86.44 percent of the

total population of respondents. It can be noted that based on the result, students from higher level has lesser percentage of absentees while those new students in college have the large number of absenteeism. It can be noted that the first year students are still in the adjustment period where absences can occur. Those who are in higher level are reminded yearly by the guidance counsellors and teachers regarding the different policies of the institution specifically in their class attendance that if the student incur more than 8 absences, he/ she will be automatically graded un- officially dropped in class. However, those who are new in the college are not that much aware of the policy which lead to non-compliance.

It can be seen that 55 percent female respondents fall in the rank 1. It can be noted that majority of students who are taking up BSITTM are female.

It also shows in Table 1 the different reasons why students commit absences. It can be gleaned that the highest contributory factor to student's absences is Health Reasons with 30.51 percent followed by Family Matter with 18.64 percent. However School related matters and Financial concerns are least ranked with 5.08 percent. The result implies that due to health reasons students decided not to attend their class. There are also family occasions which they need to attend to. However, result shows that only few students were unable to attend their classes due to financial problem. It can also be understood that they know and abide school policies because school related matters such as not wearing proper uniform and school id ranked last among reasons of their absences.

Table 2. LPU's Response to Truancy

Action Taken	F	%
Counseled Referred Students	48	81.36
Informed Parents Thru Phone	24	40.68
Informed Parents Thru Letter	35	59.32

In Table 2 shows two actions done by the Guidance Counselor in response to the referrals of the teachers. The first action is counselling in which 81.36 percent of the absentees have undergone the process.

Another action taken is giving the information to the parents or guardian of the absentees. There were 40.68 percent of the absentees' parents had been informed thru Phone Call while 59.32 percent of them had been informed thru sending letter. Based from the result, majority of the referred students had undergone counselling by the Guidance Counsellors. They explained the reasons of their absences and they were given a chance to understand better the consequences of their actions.

Meanwhile, parents/ guardians were informed about the class performance of their children through telephone calls and letters. It can be seen that majority of the parents were informed through the letter from the Guidance Counsellor. Limited access of the contact number of the parents is relevant. However, for those students who were not informed thru phone calls, the Guidance Counsellor sent letters to their parents.

Table 3. Evaluation of Referral System based from the Academic Rank of the Referred Students

AR	(Counseled)		(Not Counseled)		(Coordinated with Parent/Guardian)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Incomplete	3	6.25%	6	54.54%	9	15.25%
Officially Dropped	5	10.42%	3	27.27%	8	13.56%
Passed	40	83.33%	2	18.18%	42	71.18%

Table 3 illustrated the class status of truants who had undergone counselling. The result shows that 83.33 percent of the counselled absentees got a passing grade while 6.25 percent of them got an incomplete grade. In Table 3 can be seen that 11 out of 59 absentees or 18.64 percent didn't experience counselling session. With those un-counselled absentees, 54.54 percent got an incomplete mark or failing grades while only 18.18 percent passed the subjects.

It is clearly shown that counselled students had a great impact on their performance in class. Since most of the absentees had undergone counselling, consequences of their actions had been explained to them. They were reminded of what are the possible effects of what they are doing. Also, knowing the root cause of their absences like understanding their problem is quite an advantage to avoid re-incurring absences. On the other hand, there are few students who didn't pass the subjects despite of the undergone counselling. This is due to unavoidable reasons like health and family problems. Meanwhile, most of those students who were not able to undergo counselling were not really attending their class from the very start of the semester. They just enrolled but didn't come to their classes. As a result, most of them didn't pass their subjects and got an officially dropped or incomplete grade and failed mark.

Table 3 also illustrates the academic rank of absentees whose parents are informed. Result shows that 71.18 percent of the total number of referred students got a passing grade at the end of the semester. It only exemplifies that having communication with parents/ guardian of referred students has a good effect in solving the problem of absentee-

ism. Result shows that majority of the students whose parents are informed thru phone call and letter passed their subjects. It only elucidate that if parents/ guardians are aware of students' performance, they can give guidance to them in school related matters which may lead to have a better result. Parents of those students can also give an extended supervision to their child through having a constant communication with the Guidance Counsellors and teachers.

Proposed Plan of Action

Key Results Area	Activities/ Strategies	Person(s) / Offices In-charge	Target Date
1. To minimize truancy of the Tourism students.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen students' services specifically with regards to Health services. 	Continuous coordination with School Medical Clinic about the health concerns of the students. Advising of students to go to clinic and ask for the Doctor's advice and assistance if the health problem is the main reason of absenteeism.	CATC, School Medical Clinic	Continuous year round activity – as need arises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help the students in handling challenges/ difficulties in life. 	Conduct of seminars/ workshops focusing on proper handling of life's struggles and seeking for the right path to success.	CATC, OOSA, CITHM	Every First Semester of the School Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the students' awareness of all the university's policies for them to avoid committing violations. 	Continuous inclusion of the reminders on the policies of the institution to all students especially the freshmen and transferees in the programme of the FTPO.	Student Services Department, CITHM, CATC	Every June for the First Semester and November for the Second Semester

Key Results Area	Activities/ Strategies	Person(s) / Of- fices In-charge	Target Date
2. To improve academic performance of the students.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous coordination with the teachers about the class performance of the students. 	Strengthening of the Referral System through continuous encouragement to Faculty Members to use of referral and admission slips.	CATC, Dean, Faculty Members	Continuous year round activity
Follow-up of teachers about the class performance of their students. Have a monthly check with them if they are able to refer their students who incurred absences and who have academic problems		CATC, Faculty Member	Continuous year round activity

CONCLUSIONS

It can be assessed that as to the profile of the referred students, majority of the truants are from first year level. Meanwhile, on the issues that contribute to truancy, most of the students incurred absences due to health reasons and family problem. However, some of them incurred absences due to personal matter, late/ tardiness, feeling sluggish, financial concern and school related matter.

In response to truancy, majority of the referred students have undergone counselling while parents of all referred students were informed through letter and telephone call. Referral system of Counseling and Testing Center in LPU- Batangas is an effective method in minimizing the rate of truancy and improving the academic performance of the students.

An intervention plan of action to minimize the rate of truancy. Strengthening implementation of the student's services such as Refer-

ral System can help to lessen the rate of students' problems specifically truancy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since majority of referred students came from first year level, Tourism Department in cooperation with teachers and every student services should continuously implement the information service such as school polices specifically in monitoring the students' attendance. Health personnel should strengthen the services provided to the students since health problem is the usual reason of the absentees.

Counselling and Testing Center should deepen the services to the students specifically the counselling. Parents and Guardians should be continuously informed about the class standing and performance of their children.

Intensify the Referral system of Counseling and Testing Center. Continuously encourage faculty members to use referral and admission slips for those students who incurred truancy.

The proposed intervention plan of action may be implemented and evaluated thereafter. More follow- up studies using other variables maybe done as basis for continuous improvement.

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