

MODULE 4

DECLINE OF ABSENTEEISM IN HIGH AND SECONDARY COASTLINE SCHOOLS OF GOA

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IN COLLABORATION WITH



Decline of Absenteeism in High and Secondary Coastline Schools of Goa

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INTRODUCTION

This module deals with the programs and practices that *enhanced regular attendance* and *reduced absenteeism* in coastline high and higher secondary schools. It identifies common features that led to success in improving school attendance rates and also recognized features or strategies that worked in particular environments or with particular groups (for example, strategies for habitual absentees, for young students, for local and migrant students and for students from low socio-economic backgrounds). Family issues and parent's apathy were some of the reasons that were shared by school leaders of low attendance schools. Leaders of low attendance coastline secondary and higher secondary schools applied pluralistic approaches (those of improving, supporting as well as of controlling/punitive character) while responding to the lower levels of attendance. There were a number of activities carried out to ameliorate the effects of factors that lead to low attendance levels of students. To improve levels of attendance, wide range of activities were undertaken. There was a strong focus on the factors beyond the schools that contributed to low attendance. However, many of the schools within which these school leaders worked, made significant efforts to ameliorate the effects of these factors.

KEY WORDS

Absenteeism: Within this framework, absenteeism is defined in terms of students' motivation not to attend school. For example, if the environment in the school is as hostile or associated with failure, students may 'choose' not to attend school.

Truancy: Truancy is defined as being absent without permission. An example of truancy is when you skip out on going to school for no reason.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF ABSENTEEISM AND NEED TO SUPPORT STUDENT'S TO ENHANCE REGULAR ATTENDANCE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

This section will enable School Heads:

- 1) To know the root cause of truancy that can vary substantially.
- 2) To know the causes for low academic achievements of students.
- 3) To know the pluralistic approaches and strategies to deal with absenteeism in schools.
- 4) To know the role and responsibility of a school leader to overcome the challenge of absenteeism

FACTORS INFLUENCING LOW ATTENDANCE LEVELS AMONGST STUDENTS

Kamat(1993) in his study elucidates tourism in Goa. He mentions, Goa the former Portuguese colony is the most colourful state in its land and people. Situated on the West Central coast of India, it spreads over an area of 3702kms. The coastline of Goa covers a length of 106 kms of which 65kms consists of extensive sandy beaches. Generally the tourists are attracted because the coastline presents a variety of features. From Chapora fort to Baga village, the terrain rises for sandy bays bounded by hills such as Vagator and Anjuna beaches. The coast to the south is hilly with a few pockets of sandy bays. Given such a magnificent coastline, bays and beaches; sun and sand; tourism in Goa was destined to flourish. Today tourism of Goa has emerged as Goa's major industry, contributing directly and indirectly through trade and commerce. It is estimated that about 20-25% of Goans earn their livelihood through tourism (Kamat 1993). Many young students drop out to earn an income to fulfil their temporary materialistic needs with or without the permission of their elders in the family.

The causes of student absenteeism are complex and multi-faceted. The factors associated with absenteeism can be classified into three fundamental areas: individual, family and schools (McCluskey, Bynum & Patch, 2004; Eastman et al., 2007; Clark, 2008, Robinson, 2009). With specific reference to the state of Goa, tourism is an added attraction for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Being absent from schools and earning an income gradually becomes their priority and they drop out of schools at or sometimes after Grade 10. Studies have also proved the link between truancy and drinking problems as well as non-

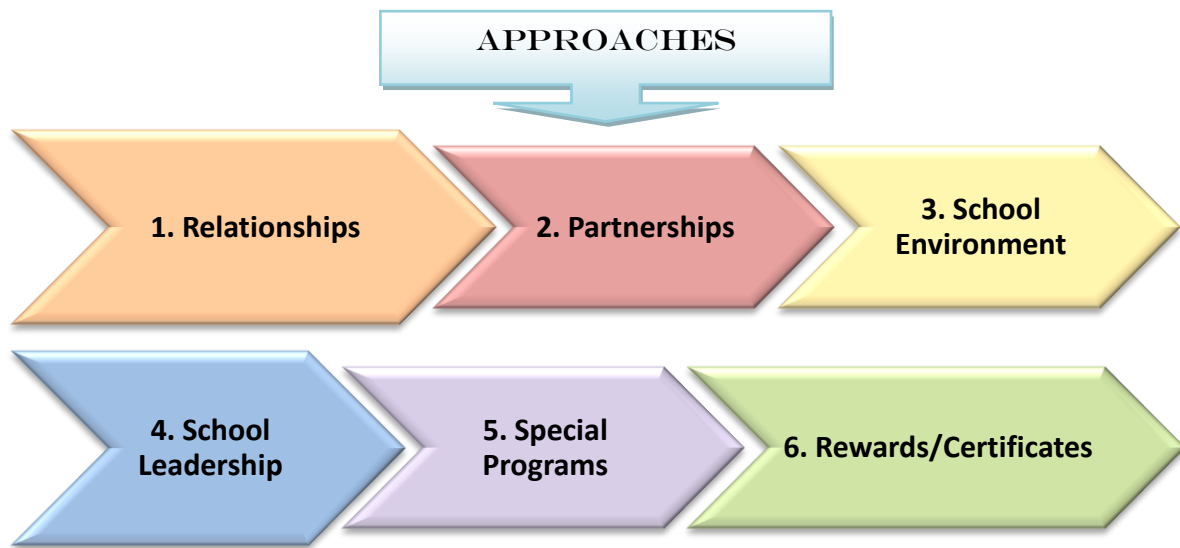
violent crimes. Historically, students have been held responsible for their own absences from school or their parent/guardians have been blamed for lacking the willingness to ensure their children attend school regularly. In an attempt to identify which factors can be attributed as the causes of a particular student's absenteeism, it was found that there are often multi-causal and interlinked factors.

Veena Priya S (2013) through her study explains that several educational books and school of thoughts emphasize that education is the most powerful instrument for social mobility, equality and empowerment. People who are deprived of educational opportunities have undergone various forms of exploitation and servitude for ages. The absence of adequate education leads a society to more vulnerable and to bondage of poverty and ignorance. Education is a process of developing the human personality in its all dimensions intellectual, physical, social, moral and spiritual. It is perceived as an empowering influence as a way to break all the bondage of poverty and ignorance. It is an excellent tool for bringing about behavioural change in one's life and also a source to earn the means of living to a large majority of people. Education enhances our competitiveness and self-esteem. It enables us to distinguish right from wrong and brings us to the zenith of civilization. Education is just as important as the primary basic needs. It enhances one's knowledge, gives one a broader view of the world around us and how things work, reduces the social and economic disparity thus propagating equality and it also raises one's self esteem. Education is regarded not only as one of the most important human basic need but also as a means for meeting other needs and as one of human development and human resource formation. It is also one of the methods of eliminating poverty since it creates independence of thought.

APPROACHES ADOPTED TO ENHANCE ATTENDANCE

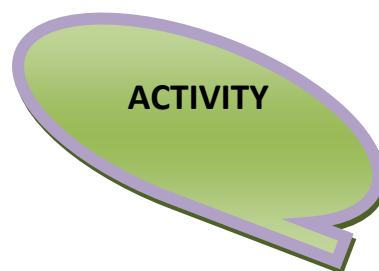
Coastline schools that were part of the study have adopted strategies that improve attendance based on three important criteria: - consistent terminology, comprehensiveness and concern with high quality pedagogy and curriculum. In general, all coastline schools should use terminology and definitions that are acceptable to the stakeholders (e.g. parents, academicians and society) and to those who approach the issues from different perspectives (e.g. psychology, sociology, and education). Strategies which were developed in different schools are very context specific and could be replicated with the same effects. To understand their student's particular circumstances, schools developed strategies that worked closely with

parents, they worked at building bridges between school and home, addressed the various barriers that prevented some students from attending schools regularly, applied individual case management, used culturally appropriate practices, tried enhancing the quality of school environment and the relationships with them, presented awards and celebrations for high attendance and applied appropriate sanctions for non-attendance. Specific approaches that were applicable are detailed subsequently.



1. **Relationships:-** The creation of cordial/friendly relationships between the teacher, students and parents have proved to enhance the possibilities for reducing misunderstandings, for addressing specific students needs and for ensuring that parents/guardians stay connected to the school. Initiatives and activities should be planned in such a way that enhances these relationships. In some schools these relationships have also been developed through outreach activities and home visits as well as encouraging parents to visit the school by implying compulsorily attendance for the extra-curricular activities.
2. **Partnerships:-** Schools can find innovative and appropriate ways to strengthen their partnerships with the community. This helps develop relationship with the SMC members as students are units from the community. Increasing community involvement in addition to parent engagement has resulted in student's academic progress and regular monitoring of learning amongst these students.

3. **School Environment:-** Although parents bear most of the responsibility and decision making for ensuring that their children attend school during the primary stage, there is evidence to suggest that students in secondary and higher secondary schooling make sophisticated/worldly decisions about whether to attend school or not. Hence attention to school environment, curriculum and pedagogy are required. Creating a school environment where students feel safe, respected and valued appear to be critical to making students want to come to school.
4. **School Leadership:-** In these schools the School Leaders have developed one quality and that is being 'empathetic'. Curriculum and pedagogical practices that match the needs and interests of students without reducing the intellectual rigour of the curriculum were developed to keep the students engaged and build their curiosity for gaining knowledge.
5. **Special Programs:-** Some schools have introduced special programs to keep 'at risk' students engaged. Student centred programs that were implemented improved the attendance gradually. These included sports which focussed on discipline and other values that a sportsman should have. It also included daily calls to parents, organising classes that addressed moral issues. Counselling sessions for those who required and games were organised.
6. **Rewards/Certificates:-** Many schools have adopted rewards/certificates systems to encourage attendance.



1. Individual Exercise:

- 1.1 Reflect on your school student's attendance and review if you have noticed chronic absenteeism among any of your students even at a lower grade.
- 1.2 Interact with them and find out the reasons for the same.
- 1.3 Formulate list of tasks that can be done to address the issue even if it is for a single student.

2. Group Exercise:

View the below mentioned videos along with parents those children displaying chronic absenteeism and through discussion, plan ways to reduce absenteeism.

Video Links:-

<https://youtu.be/s1lsrkFamVI>

<https://youtu.be/odFvX8wXLQE?t=56>

CONCLUSION:

There is no doubt that ensuring high attendance levels for all students is of the utmost importance. Significant evidence exists to suggest that in order to cumulatively build knowledge, skills, intellectual capacity and academic success, regular school attendance is essential for every student. It can be stated that while the benefits of improving poor attendance are evident, they are not as prominent as might be hoped. However, attendance alone will not solve educational inequities. It must be noted that there is a clear relationship between attendance and academic achievement.

Researchers have argued that given factors within the student, the student's family and the school are interrelated and a solution that targets a single factor for treatment is unlikely to be effective. Success in addressing the problem is possible only if parents, students and school personnel jointly share the task of identifying the problem and strategize to address it. There is evidence to suggest that there is a need to acquire a better understanding of the young person's perception of the problem. As this would help to generate a better understanding of the contribution and interplay of the self, family and school that leads to absenteeism. It is also suggested that the school should be taking the lead on addressing the issue as student dissatisfaction with the school was the most important single variable marking a difference between attendees and non-attendees.

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WEB LINKS:-

<http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2016.62.4>

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