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Ability School Engagement Program (Australia)

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Abstract

For the longest time, law enforcement has been on the forefront when it comes to combating crime. In the long run, this has brought out conflict between law enforcers and the youths who are involved in crime. Truancy is one of the reasons why youths between the ages of 13 to 18 years engage in crime, creating the animosity between the police and them due to their rebellious teenage nature. As a result, programs have been developed to help improve the relationship between the two groups while increasing their safety in the long run. Ability School Engagement Program (ASEP) is a police- school program that decreases the absenteeism behavior among the youths by increasing their desire to attend school through catering for their mental health needs. Other agendas for this program is to assist in improving the relationship between law enforcement and the youths and to reduce truancy, which in the long run, reduces the level of criminal activities among the youth.

Ability School Engagement Program (Australia)

Adolescence is one of the significant advancements in human life, and this is also the stage where a teenager can become whoever they want to be based on the decisions they make. Due to their rebellious nature, youths tend to make irrational decisions without knowing their full consequences, and this is why most of them engage in crime as an outlet. Peer pressure is also real at this age. With the advancement in technology, this phenomenon has gotten worse since students are ditching school to maintain their social status outside school resulting in truancy. At this stage, the mental capacity of teenagers is still developing hence the poor choices. According to Mazerolle et al. (2019), these choices are detrimental to the development of the youths resulting in a life of crime up to adulthood. The paper will discuss ⁴Ability School Engagement Program (ASEP), which is a program that is available to law enforcement and the youths that focus on ensuring youth safety in society.

Students who decide to skip school do so for various reasons. One of the reasons could be that they are being bullied. Bullying in school is a serious matter as it has serious consequences such as mental health issues caused by anxiety if the bullied student does not speak out to get help. Bullying increases fear among the victims, and that is why they resort to skipping school for their safety since being in school is not safe for them anymore (Mazerolle et al., 2019). Another reason why truancy takes place is lack of parental commitment. Parents have a responsibility when it comes to overseeing their children's education. A dedicated parent cannot let their child stay home unless they are sick, but a parent who is not fully committed to the child's education will not follow up on why their child is at home instead of school. The third reason could be that the child has no interest in school or learning since they cannot grasp what is being taught, so they decide it is best to stay home (Fryer et al., 2018). The fourth reason is peer

pressure and bad company. As mentioned earlier, the teenage mind is not fully developed hence the poor choices. Such bad companies are the same reasons why these youths engage in crime and substance abuse after skipping school since they have nothing better to do. Lastly, teenagers decide to skip school because of self-esteem issues or lack of social skills, and they find it hard to socialize with their age mates resulting in social anxiety (Fryer et al., 2018).

⁵ Ability School Engagement Program (ASEP) is a type of program whereby the police and the school work together ¹³ to reduce truancy and to increase the desire to attend school among the youth (Crimesolutions.gov, 2017). It was developed in Queensland, Australia, by Lorraine Mazerolle, a professor at the University of Queensland. The program encourages the community, parents, the police, and the school to empower the youth rather than punishing them. It targets those who are in the age bracket between ages 10 to 16 years, and it is not gender-specific as it supports both genders.

The objectives of ASEP are to empower the youths to go back to school willingly, to raise awareness on the laws regarding truancy, and lastly, to promote an understanding of the law. In turn, this program intends to reduce absenteeism among the youth, increasing their safety while protecting them from a life of crime. ASEP uses a third party policing approach (TPP) to structure its policies. The TPP has also partnered with the police and schools alike to use legal procedures when it comes to tackling crime and truancy. In TPP, parents are considered to have the power over the truants, so they are urged with law enforcement to take specific measures to minimize the likelihood that a crime may take place, especially if their children are involved in skipping schools. The same case applies to ASEP, but the program operates using three approaches (Crimesolutions.gov, 2017).

The first approach, which is the intervention stage, is the school-police engagement involving the parents or guardians of the truanting youths ³ in a Family Group Conference (FGC) whereby the laws regarding truancy were passed on to the teens, and an action plan was discussed and developed. The plan of action discussed above could involve referring students who tend to skip school to agencies like social support to help in addressing any psychological problem they might be going through. Secondly, the other plan of action could involve the creation of home routines that sought to help support the students. The second approach consists of law enforcement; in this case, the police monitor the progress of the discussed plan of action, which takes up to six months (Crimesolutions.gov, 2017). During the six months, police would monitor the involved parties via phone calls, checking attendance during school hours in person, and home visits. The third approach in the ASEP program is an exit interview with the parent and the youth, which is conducted by police officers.

According to Crimesolutions.gov (2017), the research was undertaken ¹² to test the effectiveness of the ASEP program. The study wanted to see how the ASEP program will affect the youths in truancy when it comes to embracing the willingness to attending school. Thus, it involved 102 truant students with their parents or guardians and selected trained facilitators to conduct the study. The participants were put into two groups randomly, the experimental group and the control group. Notably, use of three-step approach mentioned earlier was utilized as their backbone for the research. The students were selected from 11 schools in both high schools and primary schools from Brisbane, Australia. According to the study, this area was chosen because it had the largest population when it comes to truancy. Secondly, ³ it was an area that had police officers and schools which were willing to participate in the study to help reduce the truancy issue. The students had between the ages of 10 to 16 years and had to have consent from their

parents or guardians when they surpass the stated requirements, such as low school attendance from 85% and below. In the beginning stage of the study, the facilitator of the group requested all participants to introduce themselves and to outline their way conduct. It was mandatory so that the facilitator can get information on why they missed schools and the inspiration behind that behavior. Secondly, the facilitator requested the participants to explain how the youth's behavior ⁵ affected them. Thirdly, the facilitator asked for the representative of the school to explain the consequences of truancy as stipulated by the law and how the truancy behavior can affect the youth on a personal level. Using the FGC method mentioned earlier, the police officers kept track of the student, school, and the parent to ensure they are following the stipulated plan of action using the methods mentioned earlier for the six months (Crimesolutions.gov, 2017).

After the six months, police officers were able to conduct an exit interview as a way of ending the ASEP program. The interview involved all the participants from the initial stage; in this meeting, they also discussed and reflected on the action plan. The results showed that students from the experimental group were willing to attend school and were less likely to behave in an anti-social manner. The collaboration between police officers, schools, students, and the parents proved to be an effective way when it comes to reducing truancy among the youths. According to Crimesolutions.gov (2017), the Crime Solution database rated the ASEP program as promising, given its successful results.

Energized in the inspiration of Jesus Christ, we hold in regards all individuals' remarkable abilities, considering their gratification, and we aspire to pursue one's responsibility towards greatness in all our endeavors. The quality of our people's work depends on the accords plus a decent variety of our friends, and getting the hang of living, and working amicably. We look for connections and build relationships with people in our community. We divide our

success by participating in community- based activities as a means of giving back to society, and we respect and treat others kindly with compassion and understanding.

In summation, having discussed ⁴Ability School Engagement Program (ASEP), which is a program available to law enforcement and the youths focusing on ensuring youth safety in society, based on the results, it is clear that the program is successful, it is clear that helps to safeguard the youths from truancy, which is punishable by law. As mentioned earlier, youths skip school due to various reasons, and it is the responsibility of the parent, law enforcement, or the community at large to ensure that they stay in school at all costs due to the consequences. The youths who engage in truancy should not be punished; instead, they should be communicated to and be informed on the implications of skipping school early enough to prevent them from committing that action. Also, parents should be more vigilant with their children and should be more open so that when their children experience a rough day at school, they can talk to them without fear of being pushed away.

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