

Social problems and social policy assignment essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Imagine that you are a member of a leading policy think tank who has been asked by the Government to propose policy solutions to a specific social problem facing the UK. Your 'solution' will be presented in a report which you are trying to convince the government that they should adopt your proposal. The specific social problem that I have chosen to look at is truancy. Truancy is a problem all over the UK and applies to the whole community, not just within schools. Many possible solutions have been endeavoured by the Government for many years, yet truancy is still an ongoing problem throughout the UK.

Studies show that truancy has a high correlation with problems within work later on in life. Low attendance in jobs and losing jobs is in correlation with truants, and at a higher rate than that of high attenders at school. It is clear that the knowledge learnt in school is essential for all children and must be compulsory. Also, studies see a high correlation with truants and day time crimes. Education is essential to keeping crime rates down with young juveniles to adults. Low education creates criminals and so there must be new truancy laws put into action immediately.

There are many reasons why children take unauthorised absences from school. Truancy cannot simply refer to the child, as parents must accept their responsibility to the child. The main reason for absence is simply due to illness. This is a good faith absence in which can be accepted by the school with a note from the child's' parents. However, past Government anti-truancy schemes have encouraged the requirement of a doctor's note for ongoing absences. Another reason for a child's truancy from school is known

as parental withdrawal. This means that a parent can take a child away from school for their own purposes.

An example of this would be to help out the family if having money problems, or to help out with a family business. This does not excuse the disobeying of the law, and so this is one of the main problems that must be addressed. One possible solution was to take away the child benefit payment from the parents. But this idea was rejected by the Prime Minister as it was not seen as a solution, rather an additional problem, creating the family more poverty and more reason to keep the child away from school. One abstract reason for absence from school is that of a 'school phobia'.

There are many causes for this and it has many psychological explanations. A 'school phobia' is when a child is afraid of going to school, or in some cases of leaving the home. Parents may encourage children to go to school and be anxious for them to go regularly. Truancy as a psychological problem is often ignored and there is little understanding as to how to resolve truancy in this type of situation. Some Psychologists argue that a fear of school is actually a fear of separation from the parents. A Freudian perspective states that the child in the mothers absence realises his hostile wishes towards her.

A similar explanation is that there is a conflict with the parents. Children are responding to the mothers hidden wishes of dependency, whilst telling the child to be independent and go to school. The main reason that people assume children truant is simply the child having a disliking to school. A child leaves school by their own free will without parental consent. There are many reasons why children take a disliking to school, whether it be bullying,

a dislike to a teacher or a lesson, or merely a dislike for learning. There are solutions to this social problem, although there is not one inclusive answer.

Every child has specific problems and needs and so a variety of solutions should be set up by the Government to conquer every possibility. Before suggesting the solutions that should take effect in UK laws the idea of labelling is significant to demonstrate. If a professional person decides a child is a truant, due to observations, statistical data and family environment etc, it is difficult for a child to shake this label. Truancy is not inherited and indicates troubles with the child. A label can discourage a child from trying harder as labelling is hard to dispose of.

Truancy is complex and so it must be considered before creating a solution for their actions, how the solution will affect the child. A study by Galloway & Miller (1978) took one boy who was anxious of undressing for games and showering with the other boys and was regularly truanting from school because of this. They asked him to relax and to visualise situations that made him feel anxious. After a few sessions, the boy put his visualisations into practise finding that his fears were unnecessary. An improvement in attendance followed.

This could be one possible solution to truancy. To understand a child's fears of school and to help them to overcome them would cure a great number of truants. Taking this into account, my first solution would be to hire psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and welfare officers to work with truants in schools around the country to help to solve the problems that children face before they become regular truants and miss out on an

education that they deserve. Even the mere presence of this type of help within a school can improve pupil's enthusiasm and attendance.

Another solution that would be a valuable treatment of school refusal would be to grant awards for good attendance. A school in the UK recently gave weekly rewards of £15 to those students that were regular one hundred percent attenders. There has been a mixed response to this. It may encourage some children to attend school more regularly, but those bad attenders may feel that they will never reach this goal and it does not solve the underlying anguishes that cause truancy. I suggest that a better, whilst similar solution to this is put into action.

Our main aim is to get truants back into school immediately and it is the school's primary task to ensure the continuous education of the child. It is vital that the child receives the appropriate treatment. I think that individual rewards that have been designated to truants would work better than an overall class reward. This stops children being in competition with each other and gives specific encouragement to those who are struggling to achieve attendance. So, previously agreed awards will persuade and support improvements in attendance.

Another solution would be to add some kind of support into the national curriculum which helps children to understand their problems by talking to their peers and to be able to receive help they need. Perhaps classes in psychology and sociology teaching children how to deal with social situations such as school and with the encouragement from their peers to stay in school this may make regular truants actually enjoy school. It is important

that the curriculum suits the children's needs and often a regular truant's needs are not being fulfilled. One generality between truants is family problems.

This can be quite varied. It can be that the parents do not encourage their child enough, although expect a miraculous perfection on the child's behalf, or it can be a weak relationship between the child and the parents. Another possibility is that it is a power struggle between the parents and the child (Weinburger et al 1973). Possible treatments to this type of truancy can be to support the parents rather than blaming them for the problem. Yes they should take some responsibility for their child's behaviour but they need guidance in how to help.

Parents may need to triumph in a confrontation with their child to reassert their authority. Whilst this may seem a little naive it may be appropriate to some pupils and should be encouraged by the Government in specific cases. Perhaps counsellors working with the parents to teach them how to encourage their child within the educational system may improve the child's attitude towards school. This type of solution would work more efficiently on younger children who rely upon their parents to higher extent than secondary school teenagers.

The aim of this treatment would be purely to improve the relationship between parents and child. Another problem that must be addressed in improving truancy is that of the statistics and the evidence being collected to ensure early detection of truanting. For example, the school registers in schools are taken twice a day, once in the morning and once in the

afternoon. It would be easy for the truants to avoid lessons and attend just in registration. This would be a way that detection of truancy could be prolonged. A solution to this is making it compulsory to have electronic registers in all schools.

This means that every lesson can be monitored and teachers can see the attendance throughout the whole day. So, the moment a child does not attend without an excuse, the situation can be brought to attention. A secondary solution that follows the electronic registers is to give pagers to the parents. This would make it possible for the parents and the teachers to be immediately aware of the child's absence and would not only discourage the child from truanting in the future, but can find the cause for the child's actions at the time that the situation occurs rather than days later.

The more likely it is that the child will get caught truanting, the less likely it is that the act will continue. In most cases of non-attendance all that can be needed is a watchful eye of an authority figure on the situation. In coherence with the above solutions it would be of great advantage to have police patrols in and around schools. This may be an expensive task and may not be possible. So, a similar solution to this would be if the Government brought in volunteers who may not be in the police force but were given the same power over truants i. e. o take them back to school or to take them to their parents, then this may help to reduce the number of truants in the UK.

By having a number of associated solutions the pupils will feel they have no other option but to stay in school and abide by the law. One of the most usual acts to punish truants is exclusion from school. This method is

insufficient. This does not solve the problem of why the child is truanting and only moves the problem on to a different school. The child will also truant from a different school if the child's issues are not focussed on.

On the other hand this can be the remedy in some cases. To move a child away from the parents or into a special school where there are less pressures and the stress of education is taking away, this can improve a child's attendance and get to the bottom of their crisis. Whilst I would not suggest this as usual practise it should become available to children with a set criteria into how a child can be helped by the displacement of the child and moving the child away from the parents. The courts can provide a punishment or a warning to the child and the parents of the consequences of low attendance.

In 2002 a mother was imprisoned for 28 days for not ensuring her daughters attendance in school. An interview with the mother later revealed that the punishment had worked in that the mother would make sure the children attended school and the children wanted to go as did not want further punishment of their mother. This solution can be used in extreme circumstances when all else has failed but the example shows that the court can play a successful role in preventing truancy and is a warning to other parents of the possible penalties that occur.

In conclusion, there are many solutions that need to be put into action to solve the ongoing problem of truancy. Whilst many of the current solution put in place are helping, there is still much more that can be done and improvements that can be made. The hiring of professionals such as

psychologists, social workers and counsellors can be expensive and requires a lot of training, but this almost always is successful in comparison to past research.

If this solution was put into place by the Government there would instantly be a vast improvement in attendance. The solution of awards decided beforehand and agreed upon with pupils of low attendance would make a large improvement. It would provide pupils with an incentive to go to school, an incentive that the school and the curriculum does not provide already. A reward could consist of many things, whether it be a trip or an item or something academic such as less homework.

Making the experience of education less stressful and more appealing can encourage children to not only go to school but also to be successful. Overall, to keep children in school, the children must feel they have no other option. The help must be provided within the school grounds if possible. If the children feel that by leaving school they will get into trouble, and always get caught then the incentive to leave school will be reduced and so will be the UK's statistics on truancy.

Monitoring is another simple solution that can be put into place allowing quick action and prevention. Also, allowing the parents to take more responsibility, not just the school. But truancy is the responsibility of everyone, included society and within individual neighbourhoods. This is why truancy is a social problem. All the solutions illustrated can be easily put into place, and whilst some are more expensive than others, the expense is much less than that of a society with an uneducated future.