

Truancy Trends in the Pacific: Exploring Truancy from Students' Perspectives

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Abstract : Truancy - unexcused absences from school and class - continues to challenge educators throughout the world, including in Oceania. Traditionally, the focus of attendance issues has been on students, parents, and social factors. While these factors obviously contribute to truancy, research suggests that most truants are rational decision-makers who claim to be bored and intellectually unfulfilled, choosing to avoid specific classes and teachers. For this study, 2,536 Junior and senior high school students were surveyed from six high schools in the following island nations: Tonga, Samoa, Kiribati, and Fiji. From these data, patterns and characteristics emerged which seem to influence truancy from the truant's perspective, and which may enlighten teachers in their practice. For lasting solutions to an age-old challenge, the 21st century educational community should consider sharing the responsibility for truancy by focusing on pedagogy practices as a possible explanation for truancy. Specific ideas are suggested to inform teacher effectiveness and therefore keep our students in school and class. This research does not focus on the effectiveness of Teacher Education Programs from which teachers arrive in their careers or the potential cultural, linguistic, and political trends and policies that may or may not influence truancy. While these are critical topics to be researched, this research focuses on students' opinions and perspectives of why they choose to truant from entire days of school or from specific classes.

Keywords : truancy, student engagement, effective pedagogy, student perspectives

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