



RESEARCH PAPER

Strategy to Tackle at Risk Students due to Absenteeism and Indiscipline

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ABSTRACT

The study was descriptive in nature and survey method was adopted to collect data. All the three thousand six hundred and one (3601) Headmasters and all the nineteen thousand two hundred sixty-five (19265) secondary school teacher working in Govt. Boys Secondary Schools of Punjab were the population of the study. By applying multi stage sampling technique three divisions were selected randomly (Rawalpindi from Northern Punjab, Faisalabad from Central Punjab and Bahawalpur from Southern Punjab) in first stage. In 2nd stage, the researcher selected Eighty-one headmasters and 324 secondary school teachers by using simple random sampling technique. Two questionnaires were developed for headmasters and secondary school teachers. It was found that absenteeism and indiscipline were the main causes of the students to be at risk. Fair assessment, punctuality, proper instructions, and activity based learning may be recommended to make students disciplined for effective learning of at risk students

Introduction

In schools, all students have not same characteristics but there have individual differences. These differences might be age, gender, colour, social status, economic condition, attitude, aptitude, interest, mental level etc. due to these differences some students are very active and willing to learn. They take interest in study and get good scores in examination. Parents, teachers and other people love them. In contrast to these students, another stream of students also present in the schools. These students remain passive and do not take interest in study. These are called at risk students.

At-risk students do not show reasonable achievement in an educational institution. Generally, they include in poor academic achievers who show low self-worth. They cannot maintain test scores, attendance or discipline. They have higher probability of showing poor result or dropping out of school. A number of people supports the query for the use of word "at-risk" proving that it influence the approach of educators, education officers and fellows to view the learner however all are wiling that these learners require particular concentration and help (Vallikkat, 2012). Singh applies the term "at-risk students" to learners who are insufficiently served through societal service or instructive systems and who have poor performance in the school because of deficiency of services, pessimistic life events or corporeal or psychological challenges, among others. The term at-risk is generally referred to depict learners or groups of learners who have been judged to have maximum chances of being unsuccessful educationally or leaving educational institute. The word at-risk is also used for learners who have situation which might put in danger their capability to fail, These situations are lack of shelter, imprisonment, poor physical fitness, home aggression, prevailing circumstances or it may pass on to educational difficulties, poor marks, corrective trouble, position maintenance or some more educational-concerning things that might badly influence the academic achievement of a few learners (Singh, 2010).

At-riskiness is commonly marked by low educational and societal approaches that develop a normal disengagement with the institute civilization. At risk learners are learners who do not show reasonable academic achievement and there is possibility of their failure. Generally, these students have poor performance in the class and demonstrate poor sense of worth. Normally they belong to poor people. At risk student do not willingly participate in learning events. These students keep least identification with the institute. It is difficult for them to fallow rules and regulations. Absenteeism becomes their habit which badly affects their learning. They display impetuous behavior and they have company of problematic students. They do not succeed and drop with their company. Institute proves an unconstructive atmosphere that supports to their poor personality (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

The strategy is a proposed effort or set of collective procedures, systems, methods, doings, policy and scheme etc. to achieve the long term aims. Shah (2012) articulates strategy as an expert arrangement of a scheme that enable a person to attain targets easily. It is a sketch of working intended to reach the goal on the whole. It is the comprehensive plan of task, impressive aim, arrangement of efforts, detailed proposal, a course of action, act, systematic plan, intention, line of action, a technique of dealing with a situation and a sketch for proceeding etc.

At risk student apt not to contribute in school activities and have a least identification with the school. They have discipline and absenteeism problem. They are problematic and face failure or drop out. Parents, teachers and head teachers are much worried about them. Such characteristics of at risk students provide a base to conduct a study, to develop a strategy, to tackle at risk students.

Review of Literature

At-risk Students

A group of students, who have faced complications and failed in learning, are considered at-risk students. Kayler and Sherman (2009) said that dropout students are liable to be recognized as at-risk students and they waste their time in irrelevant activities. Ma'ayan, (2010) comments, educators consider different kinds of students in the class in every day routine. Some learners follow the whole lot, asked by the educator and some students refuse to do any of the tasks put by the teacher. They become at-risk students. Xu (2006) has defined at-risk students, the students who have ordinary learning capability but poor inspiration for learning and poor educational attainment. Aimait (2001) has referred at-risk students as the students who require taking more periods and spending a big set of efforts as compared to mediocre learners in study, so far they hardly get command on information given by the educators in the learning environment. According to National Centre for Education Statistics (2012), non-attendance is too a quality of at-risk learners, as they lose maximum time than their class fellows who have good academic achievement. Ignoring educational institution might influence education, as learners are incapable to remain in contact with their lessons and frequently be deficient in the inspiration to complete learning activity. According to Québec (2007) the term "at-risk student" means the students at the playgroup, middle and high stages who show specific weakness elements that might influence education or performance of students, and who might be at risk, particularly failing educationally or communally, until corrective action is not taken with in time. Baditoi (2005) defines Students at-risk as the students whose academic achievement is influenced by environmental, communal, financial, political and instructive factors. Seeing above definitions, it can be concluded that all those students who are not regular in their studies and having chance of failure or drop out are the students to be at-risk.

Factors of at-risk Students

At-risk students do not become at once but have been trying in various lines for an extended period. Thus, it is significant to consider the aspects that develop learners to be at-risk (Wentzel, 2013). Previous studies indicate that there are a lot of elements of at-risk students. Common elements are mostly absenteeism, financial problems, family, learning difficulty, language barrier, motivation, and teachers' attitudes (Peth, 2008). Morris (2000) explained risk-reasons like low results, behaviour troubles, low attendance and poor socio-economic position. MacMath et al.(2009) described difficulties in the way of at-risk students which do not enable them to complete education. These are poor behaviours at educational institute, poor performance, absenteeism and incapability to adjust with the atmosphere of educational institution. Menzer& Hampel (2009) commented that mostly at-risk learners are referred as struck off. A struck off student is a student who has been

discharged from school due to absenteeism or other reasons. Among these factors, absenteeism and indiscipline are two major factors of riskiness of students.

Students' Absenteeism

The first and foremost factor of at-risk students is absenteeism. Results of many previous studies are proof of this statement. Some of studies are mentioned here for example Messersmith and Schulenberg (2008) articulated that students who dropped out of secondary school frequently remaining absent from learning centre, smoking habit and addicted cannabis. Finn (2006) defines at-risk students have a high possibility of academic failure due to socioeconomic position of learners and their parents, parent education accomplishment, family income and the locality in which they reside. Rumberger and Lim (2008) comments that mostly risk factor are due to the reason of individual, social, family and school. Malnarich (2005) identifies at-risk students as low experiences, poor command on English, maximum absences, bodily challenged students and emotionally disturbed students. Zsvoch (2006) says that negative effect of at-risk teenage students is dropping out of school. The risk elements for dropping out are poor academic achievement, low social development in school, general deviance, deviant association, and low household socioeconomic position. Altinay and Paraskevas (2007) pointed out that at risk students rarely come for debates but truancy is major reason. Trotter and Roberts (2006) cleared that at risk students failed due to variety of reasons like student behaviour i.e absenteeism or subject choice. Fitzgibbon & Prior (2003) commented that maximum face-to-face attendance is very important for the success of students. Rothman (2001), comments that academic achievement of students is influenced by high student absenteeism rate. Sollitto, & Robert (2012), poor attendance and truancy are main causes of at risk students. The greater truancy enhances possibility of at-risk student. The poor attendance also makes the students at risk. Suh & Suh (2007) identified 16 risk indicators responsible for at-risk students like low socioeconomic status (SES), poor grade point average (GPA), absenteeism, suspensions, family range, urban culture, quarrels in class, fear insecurity, behavioural troubles, general atmosphere, learners' hope to continue educational institute, peak risk, shared interest to go to institution and step parents at the home. Zamudio (2004) declared that attendance is a good linkage with academic achievement of students in each and every subject area of students. Good attendance results in wonderful academic achievement of students. Contrary to it, poor attendance creates at risk students.

Indiscipline

Indiscipline is second major factor of at-risk students. Literature is witness that riskiness is caused by indiscipline. Zubaida (2009) indicates different types of indiscipline in high school learners like staying away from class, unpunctuality, commitment, illegal use of medicine, disrespectful, theft, violence, and several further societal actions. Ngwokabuenui (2015) Students depict various types of indiscipline behaviour which consist of steps like missing of classes, watching movies, lying, fighting, dishonesty, disobedience, bad actions, use of drugs,

damaging property, unpunctuality, irresponsibility, illegal use of medicine, disrespectful, beating, theft, violence.

In the views of Sekyere (2009), a school that has a high figure of deviants or indiscipline students is possibly encompass its rules of discipline destroyed and be involved into catastrophe. A school entangled into a situation of disorder is not in a position to educate students. Students often fail in such school and overall presentation of school remains substandard.

Types of At-Risk Students

At-risk students can be categorised into four types on the basis of common characteristics, attributes and habits which are as;

Lackadaisical

Lackadaisical is the first type. These are lazy students in the classes and only pass their classes. College is out of their future plans (Menzer & Hampel, 2009). As a result, their demand in the market remains low and they can only small scale jobs. There are many reasons of their laziness. Some reasons are bad health, lack of interest, inherent problem, and mental disorder etc. Sleepless in night, hunger, and parents' conflicts are also minor cause of laziness. To tackle, such students, the teacher must know the cause of laziness in any students and then teacher should try to remove the cause. When the cause will be removed, such students may become active. For example if a student is lazy due to hunger, he or she can be provided breakfast and surely he or she will become active in study. Therefore, the teacher must have researcher's mind to investigate the situation and finding solution for remedial measures (Zsvoch, 2006).

Overwhelmed

The second type is identified as 'overwhelmed'. These students are of the view that survival is more imperative than academic achievement. They want to present in the school and performance in study is not important to them (Menzer and Hampel, 2009). Their parents also involve in it. They only send their children in school but do not care about their progress in studies. By applying different motivational techniques such students can be handled. Reinforcement is best technique for these students (Malnarich, 2005).

Strugglers

The third type of students is strugglers. These students are eager to get education but remain their education incomplete. It might be due to non-cooperation of parents, and low mental of student. Parents are non-cooperative due to certain reasons. Some of these reasons are poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, and unemployment etc (Menzer &Hampel, 2009). Researches show that almost 20 % students in normal class are slow learner having IQ less than 90. These students

have to work very hard to get passing marks. To tackle these students, it is recommended by the researchers to get cooperation from parents, incentives for students, and extra care and professional commitment of teachers (King, 2004).

Surprised Students

The last type is surprised students who suffered failure once and become pessimistic. They lose hope and confidence as a result; they are at-risk in schools (Menzer & Hampel, 2009). Their failure might be due to health problem, domestic problems, or psychological problem of students. Very active and efficient teacher can develop their confidence and these students can become active in learning. Parents' cooperation is also helpful to tackle these students (Zsvoch, 2006).

Material and Methods

The study was descriptive in nature and survey method was adopted to collect data. All the three thousand six hundred and one (3601) Headmasters and all the nineteen thousand two hundred sixty five (19265) secondary school teacher working in Govt. Boys Secondary Schools of Punjab were the population of the study. Three divisions were selected randomly (Rawalpindi from northern Punjab, Faisalabad from central Punjab and Bahawalpur from southern Punjab). The researcher selected Eighty one headmasters and 324 secondary school teachers by using simple random sampling technique. Two questionnaires were developed for headmasters and secondary school teachers. Five point Likert scale was used for getting the responses. The instruments were validated from the experts of the field. The reliability of the instrument was measured by Cornbach's alpha. The data were collected personally from approachable areas as well as by prepaid mail from headmasters and SSTs in distant areas. The data collected were tabulated, analysed by using mean and chi square test.

Development of Strategy

Strategy was proposed by findings and conclusions of the conducted research. Experts' opinion about the proposed strategy was taken by education experts. In the light of experts' opinion the proposed strategy was improved.

Table 1
Analysis of headmasters' responses about absenteeism

S. No.	Statements	x
1	Students are absent due to insecurity	3.74
2	Students are absent due to illness	3.89
3	Students are absent due to severe punishment	3.73
4	Parents try to eliminate absenteeism of their children	3.59
5	Teachers try to stop absenteeism of students	4.28
6	Training of teachers is necessary to prevent students from absenteeism	4.09

7	Provision of security reduces absentee of students	3.88
8	Health instructions save students from illness	4.28
9	Positive behavior of teacher encourages students to study in class	4.27

Table 1 shows the mean scores of headmasters regarding absenteeism of students. The table indicated that the highest mean values of the statements were “teachers try to stop absenteeism of students” 4.28 and “health instructions save students from illness” 4.28. The mean values clearly indicated that the absenteeism of the students was one of the factors that the principals of schools felt that the students are on risk.

Table 2
Analysis of secondary school teachers’ responses about absenteeism

S. No.	Statements	x
1	Students are absent due to insecurity	3.78
2	Students are absent due to Illness	4.18
3	Students are absent due to Severe punishment	3.93
4	Parents try to eliminate absenteeism of their children	4.00
5	Teachers try to stop absenteeism of students	4.27
6	Training of teachers is necessary to prevent students from absenteeism	4.15
7	Provision of security reduces absentee of students	4.03
8	Health instructions save students from illness	4.27
9	Positive behavior of teacher encourages students to study in class	4.46

Table 2 is about the perception of teachers regarding absenteeism of students. Mean values of all nine statements are above 3 which indicates that teachers are in favour of these statement. Mean value 4.8 indicates that mostly students remain absent from school due to illness such as typhoid, malaria, flu, fever and cough etc. The second reason of students’ absenteeism is fear of punishment in the schools as mean value 3.93 shows. The third reason of absenteeism is feeling of insecurity in schools. Mean value 3.73 tells that parents reluctant to send the children in schools due to security problem especially parents do not send their daughters in such schools. Mean value 4.00 and 4.15 show that parents and teachers try to stop the behaviour of absenteeism. Furthermore, security, and teachers behaviour improve the attendance of students. It is also suggested by the teachers that training of teacher is necessary to remove truant behaviour of students.

Table 3
Analysis of headmasters’ responses about indiscipline

S. No.	Statements	x
1.	Student fail in examination due to Cheating	3.83
2.	Student fail in examination due to non-punctuality	4.00
3.	Student fail in examination due to Disobedience	3.72

4.	Student fail in examination due to Lack of interest	4.17
5.	Parents maintain their children's discipline	3.42
6.	Teachers build up the habit of discipline in their students	3.99
7.	Teachers' training is necessary to keep the students disciplined	4.04
8.	Fair assessment improves learning of students	4.19
9.	Punctuality makes students disciplined	4.30
10.	Proper instructions in the class makes students obedient	4.06
11.	Activity based learning enhances interest of students	4.31

Table 3 is the opinions of head teachers about indiscipline. Mean value 4.00 indicates that students fail in examination due to non-punctuality. Cheating ($x=3.83$), lack of interest ($x=4.17$) and disobedience ($x=3.72$) are also causes of failure. Table also shows that parents ($x=3.42$) and teachers ($x=3.99$) try to build up the discipline in students. Fair assessment ($x=4.19$), punctuality ($x=4.30$), proper instruction ($x=4.06$) and activity base learning ($x=4.31$) make students disciplined. Teachers training ($x=4.04$) is proposed to develop habit of discipline in students.

Table 4
Analysis of secondary school teachers' responses about indiscipline

S. No.	Statements	x
1.	Student fail in examination due to Cheating	3.79
2.	Student fail in examination due to Non punctuality	4.19
3.	Student fail in examination due to disobedience	4.15
4.	Student fail in examination due to Lack of interest	4.49
5.	Parents maintain their children's discipline	4.10
6.	Teachers build up the habit of discipline in their students	4.34
7.	Teachers' training is necessary to keep the students disciplined	4.28
8.	Fair assessment improves learning of students	4.38
9.	Punctuality makes students disciplined	4.41
10.	Proper instructions in the class make students obedient	4.41
11.	Activity based learning enhances interest of students	4.41

Table 4 is the opinions of teachers about indiscipline. Mean value 4.19 indicates that students fail in examination due to non-punctuality. Disobedience ($x=4.15$), lack of interest ($x=4.49$) and cheating ($x=3.72$) are also causes of failure. Table also shows that parents ($x=4.10$) and teachers ($x=4.34$) try to build up the discipline in students. Fair assessment ($x=4.38$), punctuality ($x=4.31$), proper instruction ($x=4.31$) and activity base learning ($x=4.31$) make students disciplined. Teachers training ($x=4.28$) is proposed to develop habit of discipline in students.

Findings

Findings related to Absenteeism

It was found that students were absent due to insecurity, illness and severe punishment. The positive effect was found on provision of security, health instructions and positive behavior of teacher. Training of teachers was thought necessary to prevent students from absenteeism (Table 1).

Findings related to Indiscipline

Both respondents believed that students failed in examination due to cheating, non punctuality, disobedience and lack of interest. Parents and teachers were found building up habit of discipline in their students. Training of teachers to develop discipline in students was found very important. Fair assessment, punctuality, proper instructions and activity based learning was also favoured to make students disciplined.

Discussion

Genteroy (2016) recognized the negative effects of chronic absenteeism on academic achievement. Regular absent students remain unaware about school activities and deprived to get benefit from school. Absenteeism leads the students towards at risk students. Chang & Romero (2008) declares that absenteeism is negatively connected with student's educational life. It affects performance of students. It makes the students at risk. Kearney (2008) connects chronic absenteeism with dropout rates. Apple, Duncan and Ellis (2016) explain identifications of at-risk students as students who show poor academic achievement but his teachers wanted good academic achievement at school. These students have ability to perform well at any stage and meet any academic challenge: in school, Strategic efforts with reference to success of such students may be used to make at risk good achievers.

Flanagan, & Murray, (2002) has described that students who are late for school and have short attendance or miss classes. They forgo their chances for learning. They too disturb other students' to study by making them tardy, absent or troublesome. Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Dropout Prevention Resource Guide, (2003) justifies that students get less benefit when they become tardy or absent in the long run.

Applegate, (2003) has considered student attendance and academic achievement are correlative. Zamudio, (2004) concentrates on the preference of attendance of students and its influence on academic achievement. It is found that students' attendance clearly affects the academic achievement.

Office of Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention, (n.d) points out that student absenteeism may influence all sides of a school organization. The student who is

continually absent or absentee may remain behind, get low grades, and at risk of dropping out. Eastman, Cooney, O'Connor & Small, (2007) found absenteeism in school badly influences education of student. Absenteeism diminishes the success because students lose their learning time. It proves harmful to students' time as teachers compensate it in additional time, which directs to wastage teaching time of all learners.

Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of the study, following conclusions were drawn;

1. Absenteeism is the main cause of the students to be at risk. Insecurity, illness and severe punishment are its main reasons.
2. Indiscipline is the significant reason for the students to be at risk. Elements of indiscipline are cheating, non-punctuality, disobedience and lack of interest.

Recommendations

Following recommendations were made on the basis of conclusions:

1. Provision of security, instructions about health and positive behavior of teachers may be recommended to tackle at risk students due to absenteeism.
2. Fair assessment, punctuality, proper instructions, and activity based learning may be recommended to make students disciplined for effective learning of at risk students.

Strategy for At Risk Students

Concept of At-Risk Students

At-risk students are those students who cannot maintain test scores, attendance or discipline. They have higher probability of showing poor result or dropping out of school. They have main risk factors like absenteeism and indiscipline.

Objectives

- 1) To prevent students from absenteeism
- 2) To develop discipline in students
- 3) To tackle at risk students due to absenteeism and indiscipline

Identification of at Risk Students

Absenteeism

Students are absent due to

- insecurity
- illness
- severe punishment

Indiscipline

Students fail in examination due to

- cheating
- non punctuality
- disobedience
- lack of interest

Remedy of at Risk Students

Absenteeism

Provision of security, health instructions and positive behaviour of teachers may be recommended to tackle at risk students due to absenteeism.

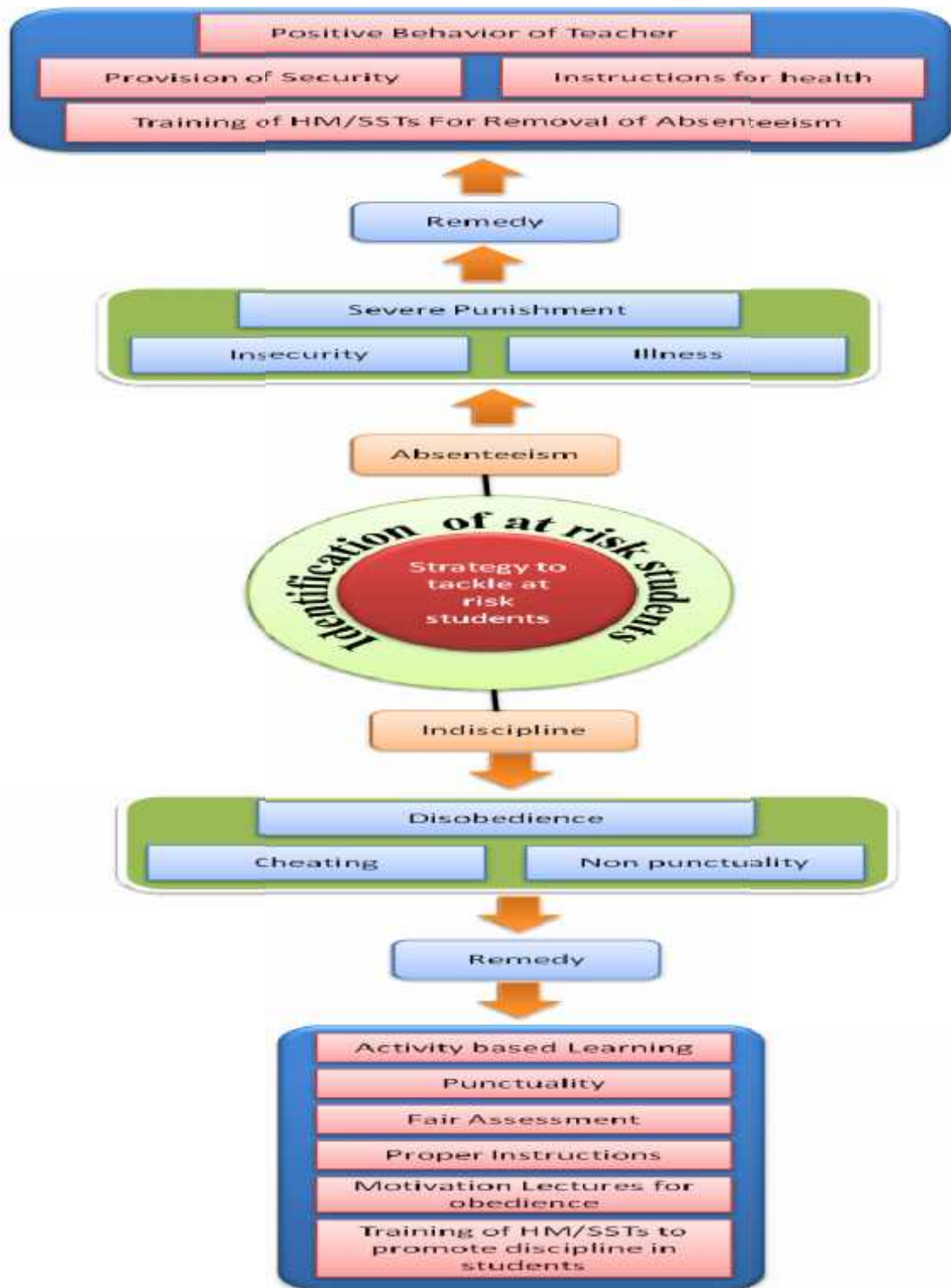
Indiscipline

Fair assessment, punctuality, proper instructions, motivation lectures by teachers and activity based learning may be recommended to make students disciplined for effective learning of at risk students.

Training of Headmasters and Teachers

Training of headmasters and teachers to maintenance of attendance and discipline may be recommended to tackle at risk students.

Flow Chart of Strategy to Tackle at Risk Students



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