An Assessment of Teacher Absenteeism on Quality Teaching and Learning in Public Primary Schools in Northern Ghana

by
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At TAP Peer Review Workshop
Washington, DC

23rd March, 2010
Organisation of Presentation

- Introduction
- Objectives of the study
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Introduction

• IBIS and NNED with support from Results for Development Institute (R4D) intend to deepen their work in the area of promoting accountability in the management of teachers in public schools.

• One way of doing this is to carry out an empirical study that is devoted to knowing teacher absenteeism and the extent to which it affects quality teaching and learning.

• The execution of the study was based on a partnership between IBIS and NNED.
Study Purpose

• To assess the effects of teacher absenteeism on quality teaching and learning in public primary schools in Northern Ghana with the aim of teasing out issues and strategies for advocacy.
Definition of concepts

- **Teacher absenteeism** is defined as teachers not available in school at the time of visits by the team. This includes teachers who have reported for work and have left for whatever reason before the arrival of the team and teachers yet to report to school.
- **Endowed Schools** is defined in terms of number of teachers, easy accessibility (location) and school infrastructure (toilet facilities, urinal pits, borehole/standpipes, office, good roofs, etc).
- **Accountability** is a formal or informal mechanism put in place to ensure transparency and improved relationship between community members and teachers.
- **Time-on-task** is the actual amount of time spent on teaching or any other school activity (e.g. physical education) per day.
Methodology

• Planning meetings *(Consensus building meeting and training of DEFATs, 2 Supervisors etc)*

• 5 districts: TK, EG, GD, Builsa and Bongo

• PRA tools: fgds *(pupils & parents)*, semi structured questionnaires *(HTs & Teachers)* and discussions and interviews

• In all, 5 District Directorate of education, 93 teachers, 30 head teachers, over 240 community members, and 320 pupils drawn from the schools were interviewed.
Socio-demographic characteristics of sampled teachers

• 76% of the teachers fall within the age group of 18 to 35 years
• Married = 62%; single = 38%
• 49% of sampled teachers have attained Senior Secondary education
• Professionally trained from training colleges: 40%
• 4 types of teachers: permanent teachers, those on contract or part time teachers, community education teaching assistants (CETAs) and volunteers.
• On average, 60% of the sampled teachers are described as permanent.
• About 27% of sampled teachers are Community Education Teaching Assistants (CETA).
• HND & University graduates very few (3 & 2 respectively)
• Using an exchange rate of USD 1=GHC 1.50,
• 47% of the permanent teachers have their salaries above USD 10
• Contract and voluntary teachers net salary per month: USD 10
• CETAs salaries is not more than USD 6.
• Very few female teachers in rural schools (eg only 2 in one of the districts)
• 13% of the schools have met the required teacher-pupil ratio of 1:35.
• 2 of the sampled schools have PTR as high as 1:69 and 1:135
TA and Nature of Absenteeism

• an average of 30% of teachers were absent during at least four visits of the research team
• TA is higher at the end of the week (60% on Fridays) compared to the beginning of the week (20% on Mondays).
• Absenteeism on Thursdays and especially Fridays) is becoming more or less ‘normal’ for the teachers.
• The average number of days per week an absentee teacher absents him/herself from school is three (3) days.
• some head teachers are not regular thereby making it difficult for them to serve as effective supervisors or mentors to newly recruited teachers.
• TA is high in schools during the last two (2) weeks to vacation.
Lateness and early departure

• The average number of days per week a teacher falls victim of lateness and early departure is 2 days.

• Again this problem was found to be happening most on Thursdays and Fridays.

• Lateness and early departure from school by teachers, are very common among teachers who live outside the school community.

• There was no reported instance when pupils were made to go home because of either absenteeism or lateness.

• Teacher absenting himself/herself for a week or more was rare (less than 1%), except for sick leave, study leave, maternity etc.
Gender and absenteeism

• Male teachers (49%) recorded higher levels of absenteeism compared to the female teachers (38%).

Reasons:

• Male teachers absent: economic, technical and other administrative duties
• female teachers absent: maternity and childcare, domestic chores and fragility in terms of acceptance and commitment to postings into the hinterlands.
Teacher Qualification and Absenteeism

- Teachers with high level of qualification exhibited low rate of absenteeism.
- Whereas 70% of professional teachers were present in their classrooms at least once in the week as low as 30% of the non-professional teachers were present in school during the same period.
Length of service and Absenteeism

• The relationship b/t length of service and absenteeism is negative.
• This is understandable because long serving teachers (more than 10 years) assume responsible positions (head masters or mistresses) thereby enticing them to be available almost all the time.
• Their positions sometimes compel them to live in the school communities.
Ethnicity and Absenteeism

• Native teachers have a higher tendency of absenting themselves from school than non-natives.

• A parent says:

• “The teachers who are not our own people, I mean non-Dagombas are very committed because they always stay with us in the community. An example is Mr. Joe. He is very punctual, hardworking and committed. His wife is in Tamale but he has never absented himself from school since he was brought here. He stays with us in the community. However, as for the people of our tribe they do not want to stay with us in the community. They like living in Tamale and are either late to school or absent”. 
Causes of TA

- Health: 48%
- Economic: 11%
- Social: 11%
- Infrastructure: 26%
- Other: 4%
• “Accommodation for teachers in our district is a major challenge that most often than not leads to teachers being late to school, and departing early to ask for lift (transport) back home. Even at the district level a number of schools still leave without teacher quarters and teachers most at times do not find comfortable accommodation. All these lead to poor quality teaching and learning.”

• Source: Field Discussions with DDE
Other causes of TA

- Religion: e.g., Fridays.
- Drunkenness: In places like the Builsa district
- Administrative lapses (Poor supervision and leadership):
  - Teacher transfer without immediate replacement.
  - Lack of teacher mentorship programmes in schools
  - Poor time management by teachers
- Technical challenge: The findings reveal that some teachers do not prepare lesson plans for several reasons including no motivation (23%), busy housework schedule (21%), have difficulty in preparing lesson plans (30%) and limited time and laziness (19%). About 40% of CETAs can not prepare lesson plans.
Time-on-task

- time-on-task is generally low (55%) in sampled schools.

- Causes:
  - administrative duties,
  - unfavorable weather conditions (such as high class temperature)
  - personal reasons (e.g., phone calls, nature calls, etc).
Effects of TA on teaching and learning

- Inability to cover syllabus
- Poor pupils’ performance
- Poor child centered methodologies
- Poor continuous assessment of pupils
- Reduced attendance and retention
- Poor maintenance of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs)
Pupils’ performance

• “Most of our children cannot read and write though the children are regular in school. It is normal to see students failing. This is due to poor foundation given to them at the primary level where most of their teachers are associated with absenteeism, lateness and early departure from school. We are not happy about that because it has made most of our children to become indiscipline. The teachers are not mostly available to mentor pupils on the values of society. This is unfortunate.”

• By a parent
A primary six pupil narrated how she suffers from the hands of teachers who rush in teaching as follows:

“There is one master in this school who is always late or absent. When he comes to teach he is always rushing to finish and get back to Tamale. Although another master stays in Tamale and gets to school around 10:00am, he comes to school every day and stays until school close. As for the former he is always rushing and when he is teaching I am just writing without understanding. When you want to say something sometimes he tells you to do it fast because he wants to get to Tamale. Sir (field researcher) if you want you can find out more about him from my friends. They will tell you the same thing.”
Mandatory and Non-mandatory supervisory policy mechanisms

• Generally, the Ministry of Education has put in place mechanisms to guide teaching and the conduct of teachers.

• Disciplinary measures against teachers who fall victims of absenteeism: advice, warning, embargo on salary, transfer of teachers and recommending disengagement to the director general.

• Salary embargo is the commonest measure to ensure discipline among teachers.

• The regulations and other standards established serve as the basis for the Directorates supervision and monitoring of teachers in their respective districts.
Non-mandatory supervisory policies

• Weak in the communities

• Poor in the districts.
Effectiveness of mandatory and non-mandatory supervisory policies

- Both the mandatory and non-mandatory supervisory mechanisms are ineffective.
- Slightly over half of sampled teachers (53%) (including head teachers) know about the GES’ regulations.
- 63% of absentee teachers did not receive any of the above measures as sanctions in the last 12 months.
- Logistics and finance remain greater challenges
- More so parents and SMC/PTAs at the grass root level lack the capacity and adequate understanding of the essence of the supervision and monitoring of teachers.
- Unfortunately, some head teachers, community members and pupils consciously shield teachers who happen to have fallen victims of absenteeism. This situation is due to solidarity, ignorance and cultural traits.
Unannounced visits;
• No pre-information was given to the schools that were visited
• Visits to schools were done simultaneously in each districts so that the message was not passed to teachers who were absent
• The District Education For All Teams (DEFATs) of NNED were used in the data gathering
• Notification letter from the District Director of Education
Challenges

• Selection of districts *(rural and endowed)* *(gave the option to the DDEs and DEFATs to decide based on GES definition/criteria)*

• Rainy season and unmotorable roads *(used motor bikes)*

• Head teachers lobbying the team for cover up so that their DDEs do not see them as non performing *(Head Teachers were however assured that names of absentee teachers would not be mentioned and that the purpose was to help improve the system)*
Key Advocacy Issues

• Establishment of Teacher Mentoring Programmes in various districts
• Build head teachers capacity in leadership, career development and supervision and monitoring in schools
• Enhanced Teamwork amongst Teachers that is owned by the school
• Strengthened Honesty and Communication in schools
• Education as a right for all children must be encouraged
• Increased Teacher motivation
• Dissemination of the MOE regulations on absenteeism is necessary for increased teacher commitment
• Community participation in education must be authentic
• Accountability of teachers to parents should be promoted
• Proper management on the part of education authorities in the district is essential for teacher performance
• Promote community engagement with the DA
Conclusion

• Advocacy is a complex issue, particularly when it has to do with social transformation or behavioural change in terms of teachers conduct.

• The advocacy must be sustainable.

• Strategies for sustaining the advocacy are:
•Thank You!!!