

# TEACHERS ABSENTEEISM AND STUDENTS AT THE UPPER PRIMARY AND LOWER PRIMARY STAGES

## INTRODUCTION

Teacher absenteeism is considered a major obstacle in achieving the goals of universalisation of elementary education (UEE). It is realized that a primary school in a remote village with a non-resident parents and children fail to relate to such an institution leading to a high dropout rate.

School is a fundamental educational establishment where practical educational activities are carried out systematically. Although in most cases teachers work alone in classrooms, they are members of a group, which works together to develop what could be called a school culture. We can hardly expect high-quality school education without good leadership on the part of the headmaster and active co-operation of teachers in school management.

Quality of learning in the classroom has to be ensured with the total involvement of teachers administrative structures and intervention can only be supportive and facilitative. In order to provide education of satisfactory quality an important requirement is that teachers teach whatever they are supposed to teach and students remain in the class when teaching is going on. If teachers are not present on all the working days and no teaching takes place because of the absence of teachers, either the prescribed course of any given class will not be completed or will be completed in unsatisfactory manner. Thus teacher absence affects the quality of education.

The meaning of the term quality of education depends upon the perspective one holds or the conceptual framework one uses to define what education is.

A Report to UNESCO: Education throughout life as based upon four pillars:

- Learning to know acknowledges that learners build their own knowledge daily, combining indigenous and 'external' elements.
- Learning to do focuses on the practical application of what is learned.
- Learning to live together addresses the critical skills for a life free from discrimination, where all have equal opportunity to develop themselves, their families and their communities.
- Learning to be emphasizes the skills needed for individuals to develop their full potential.

This way of conceptualization of education provides an integrated and comprehensive view of learning and, therefore, according to the report constitutes quality of education.

But a major problem forwards achieving quality education is the chronic absenteeism among school children and teachers. This study presents representative data on students' and teachers' absence from unannounced visits to the primary and upper primary schools in the four districts of Meghalaya. The absence data presented in the study is from attendance logbooks and direct physical verification of the teachers' presence, rather than interview with the head teacher. A teacher is considered to be absent if the investigator could not find the teacher in the school during regular working hours.

**OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of the study will be

1. To assess the number and percentage of teacher-days lost due to teachers remaining absent from school;
2. To find out the average number of teachers present on a typical working day in relation to the number of teachers posted in school and number of teachers required according to the norms;
3. To find out the difference between absence rate of male and female teachers, regular teachers and para-teachers, primary and upper primary stage teachers, and teachers belonging to different social in primary and upper primary schools;
4. To find out the reasons of absence of teachers from school in addition to above objectives, and assessment of students' attendance rate will also be made.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Design of the study**

- (a) Collection of secondary data from records of the sample schools.
- (b) Collection of primary data from sample schools through, planned but unannounced schools visit, observations of school organizational work and interview

### **Sampling procedure**

The study was confined to four districts of the state. The sample districts identified for the study were West Khasi Hills, West Garo Hills, South Garo Hills and Ri Bhoi.

The target populations were all teachers in government, local body, and private aided primary and upper primary schools. The recent database of DISE was used as sampling frame for the purpose of selection of schools. Schools were stratified into Rural and Urban. Within each stratum, schools were further stratified into primary schools and upper primary schools. Selection of schools for each substratum was undertaken by using circular systematic sampling.

### **Tools for Data Collection**

Information from teachers and attendance of students was using the following schedule.

Ts1 – School Schedule

Ts2 – Teacher questionnaire

Ts3 – Schedule for recording teachers and students attendance

### **Data Collection**

By using the above tools data collection was with the help of faculty members of DIETs (as District Co-ordinators and Supervisors) and CRC Co-ordinators as (Field Investigators). The District Co-ordinator and Supervisors were provided training which was organized at the Directorate of Educational Research and Training, Shillong.

Collection of data from the schools was being done by the investigators all field investigators were being supervised by the Lecturer's of DIETs

The private unaided schools, has been excluded. Such schools were replaced by a government/private aided school in the vicinity.

All the sampled primary/upper primary schools were visited three times within a period of about three months by a team of two investigators. Each visit will be an unannounced visit. The gap between two visits is 3 to 4 weeks. All teams will collect data by enumerating students; teachers found to be absent and were scrutinized by the investigators for complete and consistent information.

Further, the information collected during each visit was sent to the state Head Quarters for data entry immediately after collection of data and definitely before the next visit is undertaken.

The sample size for the study in Meghalaya is given below:-

<b>Sample Size</b>		
<b>Lower Primary</b>	<b>Upper Primary</b>	<b>Total</b>
258	59	317

## FINDINGS AND RECOMENDATIONS

1. In the category of schools managed by the government, rural schools were found to be significantly more than the urban schools and primary schools more as compared to upper primary schools more as compared to upper primary schools. In the category of private aided schools also the same trend was observed.
2. As far as rooms and verandahs are concerned every school whether rural or urban, primary or upper primary was found to have three rooms on an average.
3. It was found that the total teachers posted in schools at present which was 908 exceeds the total teacher required according to state norms which was 752.
4. The total enrolment in rural setting in primary schools was 9705 and in upper primary schools was 4101.
5. The total enrolment in an urban setting in primary schools was 2385 and in upper primary schools were 282.
6. In the overall enrolment in the primary schools the enrolment for boys was 6155 which was higher than the girls which is 5915.
7. In the overall enrolment in the upper primary section, the enrolment of boys was 1687 which was lower than the enrolment of girls which was 3776.
8. The average attendance in the primary section 86.62% and the average attendance in the upper primary section was 84.88%.
9. The average attendance of the girls was found to be higher than the average attendance of the boys when all the three visits of the investigator are polled together.
10. The overall attendance was found to increase in the second and third visit made by the investigator.
11. In the social group wise enrolment largest number of enrolment was found highest scheduled tribe category which was 12240. in the primary and 3699 in the upper primary.
12. On the first visit made by the investigator, the attendance was found to 100% for other backward class students.
13. On the first visit made by the investigator, the percentage attendance scheduled tribe students, the percentage attendance was found to be higher in the primary section with 77.22% and lower in the upper primary section at 74.91%.

14. The enrolment for scheduled caste and other backward class is found to be very less compared to scheduled tribe students and there was no enrolment in the others and Muslim category.
15. Percentage of teachers posted according to the social group status, the percentage of scheduled tribe teachers was found to be highest in primary, upper primary and government schools at 92.46%.
16. On an average, gender wise male teacher are found to be slightly higher at 51.47%.
17. The average age of teachers was found to be 36.99%.
18. The average percentage of teachers according to academic qualification both in the primary and upper primary with high school was 46.8%, with higher secondary was 44.9%, graduate was 21.9% and post graduate was 4.0%.
19. It was also found that the percentage of untrained teachers in both primary and upper primary was 51.4%.
20. The percentage of teachers having Junior Basic Training (JBT) was found to be highest at 32.2% than B.Ed trained teachers which was 1.3% or Nursery trained teachers which was 10.0%.
21. The average number of working days for both primary and upper primary was 361.1 and the average number of teaching days lost is 20.5 which constitutes 11.3% of the total number of working days.
22. According to reasons recorded in the attendance register during 2007-2008, the average of the total working days was on training/meeting recorded at 10.9%.
23. Male teachers are found to be more involved in training/meeting with an average number of days of 13.2% than the female teachers with an average number of days of 8.8.
24. It was found that the percentage of female teachers in primary school is slighter higher than male teachers. Teachers reported more leave days in urban schools and upper primary schools during the first two hour of school starting.
25. After two hour of school starting female teachers spent fewer days on duty away from schools. Very few teachers of rural schools were found present in school and doing administrative work.
26. During the third unannounced school visit that is last two hours of school, the attendance status of teachers were found to have increased as compared to the first and second visit. 2.2% of male teachers were absent from school and 5.8% of community teachers have

taken leave on the third visit. None of the teachers in all the visit were found absent from school without intimation.

27. In primary schools teachers spent only 2.9 days in attending training and meeting during vacation. Urban teachers spent 6.2 days in these programmes. Female teachers spent 4.1 days in such programmes on working days. It was found that none of the community teachers in upper primary schools and urban schools have attended any programmes on working days.
28. Upper primary school teachers were found to have spend more hours on administrative work as compared to primary schools teachers.
29. Family problems, health of teachers were common reasons for teachers being absent. Residence far away and posting not of teacher liking was a common problem in rural schools. Few teachers participated in political and social activities.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **School Infrastructure:** One of the main reasons for student and teachers remaining absent is inadequate school infrastructures. Teachers and student absence is considerably lower in schools with better infrastructure, as shown in the Table 5 to 8, here urban school have slightly higher attendance than rural schools. The infrastructure should include toilets for teachers and students, separate classrooms for each class, separate room for head teachers and a teachers' common room.
2. **School facilities:** There should be facilities for games and sports, drinking water, electricity connection and a school library with significant member of text books, story books and other reference reading – learning materials. Relevant teaching materials and teaching aids to both primary and upper primary schools should be equipped.
3. **Training of teachers:** Teachers training, for example is aimed in part at reinforcing teachers' professional motivation, and therefore might be hoped to improve attendance.
4. **Provision of Mid-day Meal:** Mid-day meal Programme supplied to children in the primary schools should be regular feature so as to encourage regular attendance especially those who come from poor families.
5. **Evaluation:** Continuous and comprehensive evaluation should be followed both at the primary and primary level to motivate the students to be more regular in their classes.
6. **Data Base of Teachers:** Maintaining data base of all teachers helps to avoid deputing the same teachers to same type of training and also serves as an objective monitoring to all the records of the teachers.
7. **Service Rules:** These should be more stringent ways of regulating and enforcing service rules relating to absenteeism of teachers.

8. **Objective monitoring linked to clear credible incentives:** Incentives can play a big role in addressing the problem of absenteeism among teachers. There should be frequent inspection for schools with more problems of teacher's absenteeism. Given credible incentives to attend school, teachers are likely to improve their attendance.
9. **Enrolment of local Communities:** Local communities should be more involved to the extent that they would potentially provide an alternative source of monitoring.
10. **Formation of Parent Teachers Associations:** Parents should be allowed to take an active role in the education of children. Their active participation is possible through formation of parent-teachers Associations (PTA), by way of which they can strengthen the ties between schools and local communities and hence reduce absence among teachers.
11. **Randomized Evaluations:** Rigorous randomized evaluations should be put in place such evaluations should monitor a range of educational outcomes to ensure that these reforms not only increase the educational input of teacher attendance, but also the fundamental objective of student learning.
12. **Teachers in remote rural areas should be incentivised:** In addition/capacity building must be provide to the local teachers, especially intensive training in English, Math and Science teaching, so that they can best serve the interest of the students. A certain level of competency and permanence to desired from teachers in these areas.
13. **School management bodies:** Although punitive measure practiced by school management bodies have helped checked teachers absenteeism, it is equally important to recognize and reward performing teachers to boost morale, create incentives and role models amongst school teachers.
14. **Upgrading the quality of teachers:**
  - The level of pre-service education of teachers, which is carried out at elementary level should be raised to higher education level. In case of many industrially developed countries, which have created teachers' colleges and universities. In some of those countries, graduate courses are offered in teacher education.
  - Teachers' certificates should indicate whether they are for primary school, technical or vocational education, teaching the handicapped etc. according to the pre-service education.
  - Recruitment and placement of teachers should reflect an equitable balance between the various subject-areas, experienced and less-experienced teachers, urban and rural areas, etc.

- In-service training is strongly recommended as life long education of all those engaged in the teaching profession to upgrade teaching capacities both in theory and practice.
- Working conditions of teachers – such as class size, working hours/days and supporting facilities – should be considered.
- Teachers' salaries should be high enough to attract promising young people to the teaching profession and a reasonable balance achieved between their salaries and those of other civil servants.