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Teacher Absenteeism and its Impact on Quality Education: A Case Study of the Public Schools in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality

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Abstract:

This study is a case study that reveals that teacher absenteeism in the Abesim circuit was as a result of most teachers commuting long distances to their respective schools. Some of the teachers who were on the Distance Education programmes often left for their Study Centres in Sunyani, Kumasi, Accra, Cape Coast on Fridays thereby absenting themselves from school. A sample size of 50 was used for the study and the main sampling techniques was the simple random and purposive sampling methods. The circuit is made up of ten public basic schools in 3villages. The main tools for gathering data were questionnaires, interviews and observations. The statistical tool used in the analysis of the data included percentages derived from frequencies and these were presented in tables. Conclusions drawn were that teacher absenteeism in the Abesim circuit led to the teachers' inability to complete syllabi, there were poor examination results and also excessive pressure on substitute teachers, etc. Some of the recommendations made are: school authorities should use regular attendance to school as one of the basis for promoting teachers, avoid paying teachers for those days they did not work, empower Heads of Basic Schools to be able to sanction absentee teachers.

Key words: Teacher, Circuit, Absenteeism, Public Schools

1. Introduction

Adequate educational attainment, especially at the basic education level is perceived as one of the main vehicles for spurring economic growth and improving living standards in the developing countries. However, educational attainment in the developing countries is at a standstill because of certain factors, of which absenteeism is a contributor. Research tells us that when a teacher is absent from the classroom, students learning is sometimes disrupted. (Obeng-Denteh. W et al 2010)

According to Thomas Jetterson (2009), children by virtue of their own efforts, completely guided, can hope to attain mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives thereby serving not only their own interest but also the progress of society itself. Effective basic education is fundamental to achieving the literacy and numeracy levels required for sustainable economic growth. However, the present basic education system is characterized by absenteeism, poor teaching, inadequate management and insufficient community participation, among others with the result that children learn little hence their performance at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E) level is low.

It has also been established that teachers do absent themselves as a result of wanting to leave the profession they are engaged in when it becomes unattractive to them (Lensand De Jesus 1999). Dorward (2000) states that teacher absenteeism has a direct impact on student achievement. Current trends of teacher absenteeism in the country seriously disrupt the learning environment of the classroom.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

A report by the World Bank (2008) on Ghana's education has indicated a high rate of teacher absenteeism, which is one of the key inefficiencies in the education sector. It is more common in the rural and semi-urban schools. The average teacher absentee rate, in a survey conducted by the Centre for Democratic Development (2008) indicated that it was 27%. According to the report, teachers in Tunisia and Morocco missed 11.6 days and 13.4 days a year, respectively, while teachers in Ghana miss forty-three days (43). The World Bank report further revealed that in Ghana less than a third of Primary school children reached proficiency levels in English or in Mathematics according to the National Education Assessment test for 2005, 2007 and 2009.

The Brong-Ahafo Regional Director of Education, Doctor George Adjei-Henne speaking at the 2012/2013 matriculation ceremony of the St. Ambrose College of Education at Dormaa-Akwamu in the Dormaa East District of the Brong Ahafo Region, attributed the mass failure at the B.E.C.E in the country to teacher absenteeism. He said within a period of three years (2009-2011) about five hundred thousand (500,000) out of a total of one million, one hundred (1.1 million) candidates failed the B.E.C.E. The situation, he said, was worrisome and needed to be addressed with all seriousness.

In spite of the fact that the government has introduced some interventions such as the Capitation Grant and the School Feeding Programmes which almost all the Basic Schools in the Abesim Circuit have been enjoying, the B.E.C.E results, have not seen any remarkable improvement. This could be attributed to the teacher absenteeism. The aforementioned problem has made it necessary for this research to be undertaken to identify and discuss the causes, effects and solutions to this problem.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study are therefore looking at:

- What constitutes teacher absenteeism
- The causes of teacher absenteeism
- The effect of teacher absenteeism
- The possible solutions to the problem

1.3. Research Questions

- Where do many of these teachers stay?
- Why do teachers absent themselves from classes?
- What are the consequences of teacher absenteeism?
- What measures should be put in place to minimize teacher absenteeism?

1.4. The Study Area

Abesim is located on the Sunyani- Kumasi trunk road. It is about 10km from Sunyani, in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana. The communities that constitute Abesim Circuit are Abesim, Nkrankrom and Yaw Mmiri. The Circuit has in all ten Public Basic Schools.

1.5. Research Methodology

The qualitative and the quantitative research methods were employed in this study. The qualitative research methodology was chosen for this study because in qualitative research, the researcher has the natural setting of the source of data, with the researcher being one of the key sources of data through observation. Apart from being descriptive, it is also explanatory and starts from a single premise and ends with a universal instance. It is open-ended and moves from a concrete thinking to a generalized one (Kwabia, 2006). By using the quantitative research method, on the other hand, the researcher may not be able to influence the research outcome with this method; the statistical technique would be used to understand the causality within the phenomenon. By virtue of this method a fraction of the population or a sample can be studied to generate results that can be applied to the entire population.

1.6. Population, Sample and Sampling Technique.

The targeted population of the study consists of the teachers in Abesim Circuit and opinion leaders. The opinion leaders include Assemblymen and women, the Parent Teacher Association and the School Management Committee.

The sample design was a simple random sampling without replacement that is each element within the population was once considered. This was to eliminate content errors. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select the opinion leaders in the Abesim Circuit. The researcher used this sampling technique because they are stakeholders so far as education is concerned, and as a result, they are the people who might have more knowledge on the topic. They would also be able to give the researcher, more information about absenteeism of teachers in their communities.

1.7. Instrumentation and Data collection Procedures

The main instruments used for the collection of data were the questionnaire and interview schedule. An introductory letter to the various schools and some opinion leaders in the Abesim Circuit to inform them about the study was obtained from the appropriate authority. The schools were consulted to know the date and time that was convenient to them for the data collection. The questionnaire was distributed under the supervision of the assistants to ensure that the right persons got them. The respondents who needed help were assisted to fill the questionnaire. Questionnaires were collected at the end of the period to check back on missed-out questions and incomplete responses. The interview, on the other hand, was administered according to the interview schedule. The structural questions were asked. However, during the encounter with the respondents, some unstructured questions emerged. The interviews were conducted in the local language. Responses were immediately recorded.

1.8. Demographic information on Respondents.

This area covers the gender status of the respondents, the number of years they have been teaching and where they stay and commute daily to work as teachers.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	22	44
Female	28	56
Total	50	100

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Table 1 above depicts that out of the total of 50 respondents covered by the study, 22 (44%) were males while the rest numbering 28 (56%) were also females. This was actually in line with what the researcher observed during the field work as most of the teachers in Abesim Circuit are females.

No. of years	Frequency	Percentage
0-5	14	28
6-10	12	24
11-15	8	16
16+	16	32
Total	50	100

Table 2: Respondents Number of years in Teaching

When Table 3 is taken into consideration, one can observe that out of the 50 respondents covered, 14 of them have taught from 0-5 years, while 12 (24%) have also taught between 6-10 years. It can further be deduced that 8 (16%) teachers fell within the range of 11-15 years, while those who have the teaching experience of 16 years or more were 16.32%. This indicates that the bulk of the respondents have a lot of teaching experience and for that matter are well versed in the profession.

2. Literature Review

2.1. General Definition of Absenteeism

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia on en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absenteeism appropriated the term to mean:

"a habitual pattern of absence from duty or obligation". This ultimately holds good for various fields of professional pursuits.

What strikingly reveals the negativity of the term is perhaps seen in the use of the phrase habitual pattern. Ordinarily, the word habitual connotes a behavior pattern associated with certain individuals and which have been accumulated over a long period of time. If this is anything to go by, then it suggests that people involved in absenteeism must have been indulging in the act for a long period of time. This is what comes as a source of worry since absenteeism may never be thought of, as an accidental act.

The word habitual may also be equated to another behavioral expression Attitude.

Indeed, many psychological theories believe that attitude involves all the elements identified by early researchers: affective, cognitive and psychomotor. According to this tricomponent theory, an attitude is:

- an affective feeling of like and dislike based on.
- beliefs which
- leads to readiness to behave in a certain manner (Breckler 1984, Smith 1948)

Commenting on the term 'Absenteeism' from the business point of view Alessandro Iannuzzi in 2013 says "the problem with defining Absenteeism is about deciding what is authorized and what an unauthorized leave is". He goes further to say that "Organizations and employers generally expect employees to take time off from work for valid reasons like vacation and sickness. Such reasons are considered authorized leave. Companies are not worried about such cases. What is a matter of serious concern however is employees who habitually stay away from work for invalid reasons" (source: blog.mbaco.com/what-is-absenteeism)

The South African Labour Guide also opines that Absenteeism does not only mean not being at work.

It actually include:

- arriving late for work
- leaving the workplace early
- having extended tea or lunch breaks
- attending to private business during working hours
- not attending to assigned roles in respect of employment contract terms even though one is at the workplace
- extended toilet breaks
- feigned illness
- undue length of time in fetching water
- other unexplained absences from the workstation or from the premises.

(Source: www.labourguide.co.za/general/absenteeism)

The Labour Guide further raises two other legal concepts which include the fact that;

- an employee has a number of obligations under COMMON LAW to provide the employer with his/her labour.(NB: Common Laws are those that have not been legislated by Parliament, but arise from Court Judgments and general practice and precedence. They are laws that have developed over the years and are

- what people have come to accept as recognized norms and standards, and which are enforced by the courts). To do this, the employee must not only come to work, but also on time and equally be at the work station during the agreed hours even if the employer has no work for him/her. It continues by saying “if the employee was paid for only work done, then it will invariably permit the employee to leave the workstation if, there was no work to be done”. Such a situation would have juxtaposed perfectly in the position of Mr. Patrick Burton, the Director for Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention in South Africa who asserted in April, 2013 that “Teacher Absenteeism was a catalyst for violence in South Africa.”
- Another legal concept which the Guide raises is that “nobody may be enriched at the expense of the other. That is, if the employee does not provide his services, then it is unfair to the employee to benefit by way of being paid any remuneration. Put differently, it means: No work, No pay.

Jim Riley (2010) puts it in a simple perspective, saying “Absenteeism concerns employees who don’t turn up for work and who don’t have a legitimate reason”. In other words Absenteeism is largely about unauthorized absence from work.

Jim enriches the discussion further by postulating a useful theory for calculating Absenteeism rates, which will ultimately form the basis for comparing trends from different parts of the world.

His formula states: “Absenteeism Rate is equal to the Number of days taken off for unauthorized absence divided by the total days worked by workforce during the period and multiplied by hundred”

(Source: www.tutor2u.net/blog/index.php/business-studies/comments/qa)

2.2. Meaning of Teacher Absenteeism

“Teacher Absenteeism can be explained as the percentage of contractual days that permanent teachers were absent from the classroom for their personal reasons” www.paprofiles.ed.state.pa.us)

In the above definition, the emphasis needs to be placed on two important phrases, contractual days and permanent teachers. A teacher’s contractual days refer to those days when he/she is bound by law to be with his/her students either for teaching and learning or for co-curricular activities.

It is for the sake of these contractual days that teachers are even paid salaries whenever schools are on holidays. Averagely, Basic School Teachers in Ghana are bound to spend between 195-205 days yearly for their contractual responsibilities. Compared with their counterparts in other civil services who spend between 125-135 days as a rest day, teachers in Ghana have the advantage of about 30 days more for the rest! It is, however strange why absentee teachers would still attempt to spend part of the contractual days for their personal needs. On the other hand, the mention of permanent teachers in the definition literally implies the presence of temporal /substitute teachers too. Since the expression “Permanent” and “Temporal teachers” do not readily apply in our parts of the world, we would be right in equating the two terms to trained professional teachers and non professional teachers respectively. Trained professional teachers are preferred and often highlighted. Bennett (1997) says the use of substitute (non professional) teachers is an unfortunate dilemma and practice, but a necessary practice in today’s educational environment. Indeed the argument against substitute (non professional) teachers is firmly supported by literature. Darling-Hammond 1995; St Michel 1995 says ‘substitute teachers do not always measure up to the regular classroom teacher’s routine and methods to stimulate students to learn’. The literature review also points to another research that found substitute teachers (non professional teachers) significantly less effective than regular classroom teachers (Elliotte & Manlove 1977). It suggests that there is a breakdown in organizational structure and that the absence of clear expectation such as performance feedback, leadership style, classroom management and disciplinary skills further weaken the effectiveness of substitute (non –professional) teachers (Donpolo Tutorial Services: searchwarp.com)

2.3. Forms of Absenteeism

In an Article titled “Guidelines for Absenteeism Control John Vanderweerd, 2013 defines two forms of absenteeism that is:

- Innocent Absenteeism - which refers to employees who are absent from work for reasons beyond their control. For example injury. Such cases cannot be remedied by disciplinary measures.
- Culpable Absenteeism – refers to employees who absent themselves without authorization for reasons which are within their control.

(Source: www.benefits.org/optimize/risk-sharing/attendance-management)

Johnny Johnson 2007 also suggests two forms of absenteeism including;

- Planned Absenteeism – consisting of Annual Leaves, Study leaves, Paternity and Maternity leaves, etc.
- Unplanned Absenteeism – consisting of sick leaves, family responsibilities, Absence without leave, etc.

Storage.cloversites.com also prefer to view Absenteeism as a form of

- Physical Absenteeism – where one is absent from work in “body and flesh”
- Emotional Absenteeism - where one is present at work in “body and flesh” but not in soul.
- Spiritual Absenteeism – where one is absent in spirit from the workplace.

The significance of this way of categorizing absenteeism implies that the worker is not only required to be physically present at work, but that he/she should be fully represented in all aspects of the human makeup that is body, mind and soul. Anything short of this could mean that the employee may either not be performed at all or at a less optimum level, which businesses, industries and organizations do not necessarily desire.

2.4. Teacher Absenteeism in Other Parts of Africa

In Tanzania, a study conducted by UWEZO, an educational lobby group showed the following results:

- Absenteeism among primary school teachers is relatively lower compared to secondary school teachers.
- Mere physical presence of teachers does not guarantee that they will fulfill all of their duties as educators. Despite being at school, one in ten teachers did not teach all of the scheduled classes.
- Out of the 209 school children in public schools who were interviewed for the study, one taught by their class teacher for a day. The survey sees absenteeism as a factor contributing to poor academic performance and is reported to be particularly rampant in the Dar es Salaam region (Badilisha Lughu, 2012-Tanzania; ippmeadia).

In Kenya, Perter Kamuri (2013) quotes a report by the Education and Health Services in Kenya-Data for Results and Accountability as saying; “although the average absence in schools is relatively low at 16%, a fifth of schools surveyed had a school absence rate of between 20 and 40%, and for a tenth of school, it is above 40%.

Also a new Service Delivery Indicators for Kenya shows that for every 100 Public school teachers, only 55, wherein class teaching and 27 were at school but not teaching. This translates into an average teaching time of only 2 hours and 40 minutes in Public schools out of a 5 hours and 40 minutes an official teaching day. The report further says for teachers in public schools who were also better educated, and more experienced are more likely to be absent from class. This also applies to those who come from districts where they teach. Again excluding Headteachers and Principals, a male teacher with a permanent contract is 64% more likely to be absent from classroom compared to a female teacher with no permanent contract whose is 33%

Angie Motshekaga, the South African Minister for Basic Education reported to the South African Parliament that average teacher absence for 2012 in the country was 19 days per year per teacher. She was particularly worried because according to her other Southern African Development community countries had average teacher absence of 9 days per teacher per year. In her frustration she proposes plans to introduce an electronic clock-in system to replace manual attendance registers.

Another study in South Africa suggests that “schools pose a considerable risk of violence for Children across the country” – (khulekani & Phetane, 2013). The study conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) showed that one in five secondary school students has experienced some form of violence while at school as a result of teacher absenteeism. Incidentally the report was launched a day after a 16 year old school girl was stabbed in the neck by a fellow student at the Df Malan High School in Pretoria.

2.5. Teacher Absenteeism in Ghana

As a third world nation, Ghana has not been spared the menace of Teacher Absenteeism. Reported cases of Teacher Absenteeism in Ghana dates back to many centuries ago. Many World Bank reports have persistently lamented the phenomenon. In 2008 for instance, both the Centre For Democratic Development in Ghana and the World Bank reported a national average of 27% in Teacher Absenteeism rate. In the ensuing table, Helena Abadzi (2007) highlighted a stunning revelation from the World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4376 under the Heading: “Absenteeism and Beyond: Instruction Time Loss and Consequences. In this study, Helena compares Ghana with Tunisia, Brazil and Morocco for the purposes of contrasting conditions in the countries mentioned

	VARIABLE	GHANA	MOROCCO	TUNISIA	BRAZIL
1.	School days stipulated Yearly	197	204	190	200
2.	Teacher Absentees (in days)	43.01	13.36	11.55	12.76
3.	Teacher delays	39.75	6.94	1.27	5.50
4.	Early class dismisses	2.43	6.68	1.22	2.31
5.	No of days that school operated	108.6	175.6	170.8	174.65
6.	% of time in a year made available	55.1%	86.1%	89.9%	87.3%
7.	School days spent in learning	76.3	145.1	148.1	125.9
8.	Time spent on learning tasks	38.7%	71.1%	77.9%	63.0%

Table 3: Ghana's Teacher Efficiency rate, using Tunisia, Morocco and Brazil as Basis for Comparison
(Source eggmagazine.net/ez/en/posts/absenteeism-the-ins-and-out-of-school)

From the table, it would be seen that pupils in Ghana are engaged in learning only 38.7% of the approved time. Translated into a number of days effectively available for learning, only 76.3 days were spent on learning out of a total of 197 officially stipulated available days. A Ghanaian pupil's instructional efficiency, therefore stood at 30.5%. The main factors that shape these statistics are teacher absences and delays. Such is the foundation of Ghana's Educational System.

(Source: eggmagazine.net/ez/en/posts/absenteeism-the-ins-and-outs-of-school)

Obeng-Denteh et al (2011) conducted an Exploratory Research in the Kumasi Sub-metro to find out whether the student and teacher absenteeism affected the performance of students in the BECE. The model below was used:

Mean Score of Students = 442.552-195.098log (teacher absenteeism rate).

A regression analysis was subsequently performed on the relevant data. Their conclusion was that student absenteeism is of no significance to the performance of students in the BECE. The outcome rather indicated that teacher absenteeism has great impact on the performance of a student in the BECE. (Obeng et al, Continental J. Education Researcher 4, page 7-17, 2011)

In Ghana absenteeism rates differ from one community to the other or from one region to the other. For instance, a study conducted in the Talensi and Nabdam districts of the Upper East Region of Ghana indicates that about 90% of teachers in the area absented themselves from school without permission in 2012 and 2013. The study gave a further breakdown as follows: 296 trained teachers topped in absenteeism by recording 2,366 full days absence, 195 pupil teachers were 1,803 days absent within

the same period, 54 National Service Teachers missed 576 work without permission, 132 National Youth Employment programme (NYEP) teachers and community based teachers missed 2,096 full days without permission. In addition written permission for absenteeism were 729, verbal permission totaled 2,066 and no permission was 6,678.

Another study led by the Northern Network for Educational Development (N N ED) in 2013, says average teacher absenteeism within the same jurisdiction stood at 30%, but yet this figure was significantly higher in rural areas and changed with the time of the week or the academic year.

Emmanuel Acquaye, (2013) writes on egg magazine net that absenteeism in Ghana, lack of actual engagement in interactive classroom tasks and lateness to school/classroom are serious problems at the Basic level. Yet given this realization there is little or no data detailing the pervasiveness or the extent of this problem. This shortfall is most manifested at the school level, where attendance records are poorly maintained and managed. Most data, that speak to the pervasiveness of the problem is at best anecdotal. It cannot be used in any meaningful way to provide solutions to the problem of absenteeism.

Emmanuel Acquaye again contends that teacher absenteeism in Ghana could be attributed to the following lapses in the educational delivery system:

- Lack of effective supervision and management of instructional time by Headmasters, Directors of Education, Circuit supervisors, etc.
- Lack of Stakeholders/Local Community interest in the school system.
- Lack of appropriate/timely sanctions for offending teachers.
- Lack of teacher duty-post accommodation.

2.6. Causes of Teacher Absenteeism

- Wikipedia (via en.wikipedia.org) quotes Nelson & Quick 2008 as saying “people who are dissatisfied with their jobs are absent more frequently”.
- Wikipedia further acknowledges that some employers use statistical approaches such as the BRADFORD FACTOR which does not distinguish between genuine illness and absence for inappropriate reasons. Consequently, many employees feel obliged to come to work while ill, and transmit communicable diseases to their co-workers. This leads to even greater absenteeism and reduce productivity, among other workers who try to work.

An Article published by the Northern Network for Educational Development (A civil Society Group based in the Northern Region of Ghana) in April, 2013 also advances the following reasons as being the causes of school absenteeism:

- Cultural or Religious responsibilities eg. Some teachers may go to mosque on Fridays or attend funerals or weddings.
- Lack of accommodation for teachers within the school communities which result in teachers traveling long distances to and fro school. This ultimately results in teachers either arriving late to school or leaving school early to be able to reach home in good time.
- Health challenges.

A USAID paper filed by Christine Harris – Van Keuren under the topic ‘Teacher Absenteeism and Teacher Accountability in 2009 initially attributed the cause of the phenomenon to:

- Lack of professionalism on the part of teachers.
- It also cites fragile and conflict stricken zones as another cause.
- Again, it cites poor working conditions as one of the reasons that account for why absenteeism is more prevalent in rural settings and poor regions of the world.
- Finally the report mentions an outrageous factor as being connivance between some individuals to keep some ghost names, and make the teacher numbers swell up when such teachers are actually not on the ground working. The report states
- “in countries where the teacher incentive system exists, attendance rates are manipulated by the local administration in order for teachers to receive bonuses. Also in countries with attractive Pension Plans, “ghost teachers” are officially kept on the payroll of the school, but the salary of the “ghost teacher” is distributed among those teachers that fill in the teaching load. This practice enables the “ghost teacher” to have uninterrupted years of Public Service (which is an eligibility requirement for the Pension Plan) and in the best case scenario, return to the teaching profession at later stages in life”. (Source: www. academia. edu)

www.forbes. com.also puts forward some eight causes of absenteeism.

- Bullying and Harassment - employees who are bullied or harassed by co-workers and/ or bosses are more likely to call in sick to avoid the situation.
- Burnout, stress and low morale, heavy workloads, stressful meetings, and feeling of being unappreciated can cause employees to avoid going to work. Personal stress can also lead to absenteeism.
- Childcare and elder care
- Depression – According to the National Institute of Mental Health in the United States of America leading cause of Absenteeism in that country is depression.
- Illness
- Injuries
- Job Hunting – this happens when employees attempt to seek for jobs elsewhere or even go for promotional interviews.
- Partial shift – this involves arriving late for work, leaving early and taking longer breaks, than allowed.

Source: (www.forbes.com/sites/investopedia/2013/07/10/the-causes-and -costs-of-absenteeism)

2.7. Effects of Teacher Absenteeism

A publication of the Northern Network for Education Development in Ghana in April, 2013 gives the following as the effects of Teacher Absenteeism.

- Merging of classes, which leads to high Pupil-Teacher ratios as well as chaotic classroom situations.
- Inability to complete syllabi, spending of less time on learning tasks, teacher rushing to catch up on lost time, thereby preventing pupils from asking questions they need to properly comprehend learning ideas and materials.
- Khulekani & Phetan (April, 2013) quotes Mr. Patrick Burton, the Director of Centre for Justices and Crime Prevention in South Africa as saying "Teacher Absenteeism was a catalyst for violence among children in the classroom".

Source:www.bdlive.co.za/national/education/2013/04/18/teacher-absenteeism)

Johnny Jonson, the CEO of Absenteeism Management based in Kenya describes the effects of Absenteeism under:

- Direct cost and
- Indirect Cost

Direct Cost – This involves monies used for paying absentee teachers for no work done.

Indirect Cost – This includes monies paid for replacing absentee teachers, monies spent on incentive packages to attract teachers to work all the time as well as getting them to perform their assigned roles after reporting to school.

The report adds "We estimate that the Indirect Cost of absenteeism is at least 200% of the direct cost of absenteeism at normal absenteeism levels. This factor will be different for various industry types and will also increase when the absenteeism rate increases." (Source:www.bdlive.co.za/national/education/2013/04/18/teacher-absenteeism).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Research Question One

Where do many of these teachers stay?

Item questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the questionnaire were used to answer this question.

The analysis which follows shows the residence status of teachers in the Circuit.

- Item 3 of Questionnaire

Residence Status	Frequency	Percentage
In Community	23	46
Outside Community	27	54
Total	50	100

Table 4: Respondents Opinion about Teacher Absenteeism

Table 4 shows the responses to item 4 of the questionnaire which sought views of respondents on Teacher Absenteeism and its impact. Data in Table 4 indicates that 8 (16%) claimed that Teacher Absenteeism in normal and there is nothing wrong with this. This, people have the notion that as humans one cannot go to work every day and for that matter when a teacher does not go to school every day it is normal and there is nothing wrong with it.

The respondents, out of the total of 50, 20 (40%) were of the opinion that teacher absenteeism is bad, while 22 representing 44% were of the opinion that Teacher Absenteeism is very bad and every effort should be made to discourage it. This view was confirmed by the field interviews the researcher had with the opinion leaders in the area. They claimed that Teacher Absenteeism is not good and it should not be encouraged at all in all schools as a result of its impact on teaching and learning in the Country.

- Item 4 of Questionnaire

Residence Status	Frequency	Percentage
In Community	23	46
Outside Community	27	54
Total	50	100

Table 5: Residence Status Of Respondents

Table 5 represents the responses of respondents regarding their residence status. The researcher wanted to find out whether they reside in the communities where they teach or otherwise. From the Table, 23 (46%) reside in the community where they teach, while 27 (54%) live outside the community. This means that the majority of the respondents do not stay in the communities where they teach, rather they commute from long distance every day to school. They stay far away from the communities where they teach.

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Accommodation Problem	17	34
Lack of Social Amenities	6	12
Hostile nature of community members	1	2
Preference to stay in Sunyani Township	26	52
Total	50	100

Table 6: Reasons Why Some Teachers Stay Outside Their Workplace.

Table 6 shows the responses to item 5 of the questionnaire concerning why teacher prefers to stay outside the community where they teach. From the Table, 17 (34%) responded that most teachers prefer to stay outside the communities because of accommodation problem, 26 (52%) responded that some teachers prefer to stay at Sunyani and commute daily to their workplace. On the question of lack of social amenities, 6 (12%) considered that as a reason and only 1 (2%) responded that the hostile nature of community members might be a motivating factor.

According to the analysis above, one can deduce that majority of the respondents claimed that preference to stay in Sunyani Township is the compelling factor. In Abesim Circuit, many teachers prefer to stay either in Sunyani Township or Communities very close to Sunyani. Most teachers feel proud to stay in Sunyani despite the fact that the rent in the semi-urban communities such as Abesim, Tanoso and Susanso are comparatively cheaper. As a result of this, many teachers travel long distances before they get to their various schools.

This view supports that of Acquaye Emmanuel (2010). According to him, there are many teachers who prefer, for their own convenience, to stay kilometers away from school. These schools are usually located in Districts close to a Metropolis or a Municipality.

- Item 6 of Questionnaire

Mode	Frequency	Percentage
Walking	4	8
Motor bike	1	2
Private Car	3	6
Public Transport	42	84
Total	50	100

Table 7: Teachers Mode of Transport to School

Table 7 shows the responses to item 6 of the questionnaire which sought views of respondents about the means through which teachers in their respective school come to work. From the table, 4(8%) responded that they come to school by walking, while 1 (2%) said that it was through the use of motor bike. As regards private car, 3 (%) responded that it was the means these teachers come to school while 42 (84%) responded that public transport was the popular means through which they do come to school.

From the analysis, the majority of the respondents claim that teachers go to their respective school at Abesim Circuit through public transport. This has actually confirmed the interview that the researcher had with the opinion leaders during the field work. It was revealed that because the majority of teachers in this area stay far away from the schools, they sometimes get to school late and also do leave before the closing time more especially the female couples.

3.2. Research Question Two

Why do teachers absent themselves from classes?

In an attempt to answer the second research question, the researcher formulated items 7,8,9,and 10 to elicit information about what causes teacher absenteeism in the area and the category of teachers who normally do absent themselves.

- Item 7 of Questionnaire

Reasons why teachers absent themselves from school	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Sandwich /Distance Course	42	84	8	16	50	100
Poor Supervision	30	60	20	40	50	100
Funeral	28	56	22	44	50	100
Other Economic Activities	26	52	24	48	50	100
Financial Problem	25	50	25	50	50	100
Illness	20	40	30	60	50	100
Collection of salary	18		32	64	50	100

Table 8: Why Teachers Absent Themselves From School?

Table 8 indicates the response to item 7 of the questionnaire which sought the views of respondents on the causes of Teacher Absenteeism in Abesim Circuit. Respondents were expected to indicate whether they agree or disagree with a particular factor raised. From the Table, 42 (84%) responded that they agreed with the view that Sandwich /Distance Education was the main cause of teacher absenteeism in schools these days, while 8 (16%) disagreed. Thirty (60%) responded that poor supervision in schools also contributes to teacher absenteeism while 20 (40%) disagreed. Twenty eight (56%) were of the opinion that attendance to funeral during week days is a cause to teacher absenteeism while 22 (44%) disagreed.

Touching on other economic activities that teachers engage in besides their main occupation, 26 (52%) agreed that it is the main reason that leads to teacher absenteeism ,while 24 (48%) disagreed. Those who agreed that the financial difficulties of teachers was one of the factors were 25 (50%) while those who disagreed were 25 (50%). As for illness of teachers, 20 (40%) did agree that it is one of the factors while 30 (60%) disagreed. When one considers a collection of salary, 18 (36%) of the respondents did agree that it is one of the effects while 32 (64%) of the respondents did not agree.

From the analysis, the majority of the respondents, 42 representing 84% did agree that sandwich/distance learning is one of the main causes of teacher absenteeism in Abesim Circuit. During the interview, the Heads of Basic Schools confirmed this. They claimed that most of the teachers on their staff had enrolled either in the sandwich programme or the Distance learning programme. They went further to say that these teachers leave the school from June to August for the various campuses to pursue further studies. Others also seek frequent permission to write either quiz or examination. During these periods, most of the classes are empty and it affects teaching and learning and it also makes class control difficult.

A similar study was conducted in the Kwazulu Natal Province of South Africa by Mkhwanazi, Bhengkose Bhekizenzo (1997). He was of the opinion that the three most common causes of teacher absenteeism appear to be the attendance of funerals, part-time studies and long distance teachers travel between homes and schools.

- Item 8 of Questionnaire

Category	Frequency	Percentage
From the Community	1	2
Nursing mothers	10	20
Staying outside the Community	24	48
Young Teachers	15	30
Total	50	100

Table 9: Category of Teachers Who Normally Absent Themselves from School

Table 9 shows the responses to item 8 of the questionnaire concerning the category of teachers who normally absent themselves from school. From the total, (2%) responded that it is the teachers in the community who usually absent themselves, 10 (20%) responded that it is the nursing mothers who do absent themselves, while 15 (30%) responded that the worst offenders of absenteeism in schools are the young teachers. This could be true as most of these young teachers are involved either in the sandwich programme or distance learning. On the question of teachers who stay outside the community where they teach, 24 (48%) consider them as offenders. According to the analysis, one can deduce that the worst offenders of teacher absenteeism in schools are those who stay far away and commute to school daily. These groups of teachers may at times do not attend school and even do not bother to seek permission from the school heads.

This view was shared by a similar study that was conducted in Iganga District of Uganda by the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against child abuse and neglect (ANPPCAN) in 2010. According to the study, transport was cited as a problem partly responsible for higher teacher Absenteeism. The majority of the sample teachers in the study area, reside in the urban centres within a radius of between 2-5 kilometers. These teachers walk long distances and get tired and may sometimes not report on Monday, especially, when they left the school late on Fridays.

- Item 9 of questionnaire

Day	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	4	8
Tuesday	2	4
Wednesday	14	28
Thursday	3	6
Friday	27	54
Total	50	100

Table 10: Day Teachers Absent Themselves from the School

Table 10 shows the responses to item 9 of the questionnaire. Here, respondents were expected to assign one particular day that teachers usually absent themselves from school in Abesim Circuit. Table 10 further indicates that 4 of the respondents, representing 8% identified Monday, 2 of them (4%) responded that Tuesday is the particular day, while 14 (28%) said that it was Wednesday, which is the market day of Sunyani. Three of the respondents (6%) considered Thursday to be the day while 27 (54%) indicated that it was Friday. Data from the analysis indicated that the majority of the respondents 27, representing 54% claimed that many teachers do not go to school on Friday. According to the interview conducted by the researcher, it came to light that in the Sunyani Traditional Area, funerals are normally performed on Fridays. It could be possible that these teachers might attend funerals on Fridays at the expense of their classroom work or travel outside the community to visit family and friends. However, Northern Network for Education Development (2013) claimed that cultural or religious responsibilities also encourage absenteeism, with some teachers going to the Mosque on Fridays or attending funerals or weddings on the same day.

- Item 10 of Questionnaire

Week	Frequency	Percentage
1 st Week	14	28
2 nd Week	1	2
3 rd Week	3	6
4 th Week	32	56
Total	50	100

Table 11: Period of the Month Teacher Absents Themselves from School

Table 11 shows the period of the month in which many teachers usually do not go to school. The table depicts that 14 (28%) of the respondents claimed that many teachers do not come to school during the first week, 1 (2%) said it was during the second week, while 3 (6%) respondents were of the opinion that it was the third week of the month. Thirty-two respondents, representing 56% indicated that it was during the fourth week of the month. In the light of the above, one can say that the absenteeism of teachers usually occurs during the fourth week of the month. This might be due to financial problem on the part of the teachers as a greater number of them commute daily with public transport to school. With the high cost of transportation these days, teachers find it difficult to go to their places of work during this period of the month.

3.3. Research Question Three

The analysis which follows shows some of the effects of teacher absenteeism. It concerns item 11 of the questionnaire. The data collected are presented in Tables 12 and analyzed below.

Effects of teacher Absenteeism	Of importance		Of no importance		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Prescribe courses cannot be completed	41	82	9	18	50	100
Violence among children in class room	33	66	17	34	50	100
Declining image of teachers	30	60	20	40	50	100
Rushing to catch up on lost time	26	52	24	48	50	100
Combining classes	24	48	26	52	50	100

Table 12: Effects of Teacher Absenteeism

Table 12 above shows the responses to item 11 of the questionnaire. Respondents were expected to indicate the order of importance of each factor raised as regards to the effect of teacher absenteeism. The analysis from the Table indicates that 41(82%) of the respondents are of the view that the main effect of teacher absenteeism is that prescribe courses for the pupils cannot be completed, while 9(18%) consider this to be of no importance. As regards violence among children in classroom when the teacher is absent, 33 (66%) respondents considered this to be the most important effect, while at the same time 17 (34%) considered this to be less important effect.. On the question of declining image of teachers in the society, 30 (60) of the respondents claimed this to be the most important effect, while 20 (40%) believe it is less important. Twenty-six respondents, representing 52% believe rushing to catch up on lost time is a very important effect, while 24 (48%) considered this to be of no importance. In the case of combining classes, 24 (48%) agreed that, it is the most important effect, while 26 (52%) of the respondents, however, do not agree. From the information provided above, it is clear that the majority of the teachers interviewed in the Circuit was of the opinion that the most important effect of teacher absenteeism is the non completion of the syllabus which leads to poor academic results. This view is shared by Northern Network for Education Development (2013).In its view, absenteeism, lateness and leaving early makes it difficult among other things for the teacher to finish the syllabus. If the syllabus is not completed the end result is that many children are more likely to perform badly academically. Indeed school infrastructure in Abesim Circuit is generally good, while the overall pupils' performance is either average or below average. The none correlation between infrastructure development and pupils' performance may therefore be attributed to teacher absenteeism in the area.

3.4 Research Question 4

What measures should be put in place to minimize teacher's absenteeism?

In an attempt to answer research question, the researcher formulated item question 12 to elicit information on how best to curb teacher absenteeism in Abesim Circuit.

- Items 12 of Questionnaire

Measures	Frequency	Percentage
Regular attendance should be one of the criteria for promotion	12	24
Irregular teachers should be sanctioned	3	6
Number of absented days be deducted from salary	7	14
Position in GES be based on regularity to school	4	8
Teachers regular at school be commended	24	48
Total	50	100

Table 13: Measures to Reduce Teacher Absenteeism

From the Table 13, 12 (24%) responded that the best way to curb teacher absenteeism was that promotion should be based on regular attendance to school, 3 (6%) claimed that irregular teachers should be sanctioned,7 (14%) of the respondents also believe that in order to reduce teacher absenteeism, number of days teachers absent themselves from school should be deducted from their salary, while 4 (8%) were of the opinion that positions in Ghana Education Service be based on regularity to school. Twenty-four, representing 48% said that the best way to reduce teacher absenteeism was to commend teachers who are regular at school. From this analysis, the majority (48%) of the respondents in the study area claims that the best way to reduce teacher absenteeism is to commend the regular teachers at school. The assertion is supported by the field work conducted by the research. Most of the people interviewed in the study area were of the view that selection of best teacher award should be based on regularity of teacher

to school. Added to this, such teachers at the end of every year should be given a special award to motivate the other teachers to do the same.

4. Summary

In summary, it was established that majority of the teachers in the Circuit stay outside the area and commute long distances to school every day. They stay in Sunyani and its environs and do travel by public transport to school every day. As the result of the distance they cover each morning, sometimes they come to school late and try to leave the school before the normal closing time more especially the female couples. It came to light during the study that in school like Nkrankrom and Yamire, none of the teachers stay in these two communities. As a matter of fact, teacher absenteeism, like many parts of the Country is a reality in Abesim Circuit. It was also established during the study that there are several factors why teachers do absent themselves in the Circuit. Among the most important reasons given was the Sandwich/Distance Education course being organized for the teachers. Many of these teachers are either involved in the Sandwich or the Distance Learning Programme and many a time they leave the school for several weeks for such courses.

Besides, other teachers also from time to time obtain permission from the school authorities to write either examinations or quizzes. As many of these teachers also attend classes during the weekends, especially Saturdays and Sundays, they normally get tired in the course of the week and therefore stay away from school. Other factors that were mentioned, include poor supervision by the heads of the schools. This is due to the fact that unlike the Senior High Schools, the Basic school Heads lack the power and capacity to sanction teachers who do absent themselves from school. It also came to light that attendance at a funeral is another factor that leads to teacher absenteeism in that in Sunyani Traditional Area, funerals normally take place on Fridays. Some teachers do cut classes so as to attend the funeral. Mention was also made of other economic activities engaged in by the teachers; financial problem, illness and collection of salary are as some other factors that lead to truancy of teachers in the area. The categories of teachers who usually absent themselves from the school are the teachers who stay outside the community. Teachers who cover long distances to school are more likely to be absent from school than those who stay in the community where they teach. Usually Fridays and Wednesdays are the days most teachers do absent themselves from school. As a matter of fact Wednesday is the market days of the area while Friday is when funerals are usually performed in Sunyani area. It is also worthy of mention that absenteeism in schools usually occurs on the fourth week or the last week of the month. This is the period of the month when most of these teachers are financially handicapped. As a result, sometimes, commuting from their residence to the school becomes a problem as many of them do so by the public transport. Teacher absenteeism has become a canker that needs to be uprooted from our educational system, taking into consideration its negative impact on teaching and learning.

5. Conclusion

In drawing the conclusion of this research, it is worthy to note that truancy is against the unified code of conduct for the Personnel in the Ghana Education Service. It states in Article 4 (2) which says that "it is misconduct for any Employee to absent himself/herself from duty for one (1) or more days continuously without permission or reasonable excuse or causes". While the possible causes for teacher absence might be diverse, the effects on the pupils' learning are unquestionable and invariably disastrous. When the prescribed courses for the pupils are not completed, it would definitely lead to poor examination results. When there is teacher absenteeism students in a classroom eventually lose the desire to learn and this would easily lead to violence among children in the classroom. Again, when there is a high teacher absence, it tends to lower the morale of the remaining teachers resulting in a high teacher turnover. Other teachers tend to feel more burdened because they may have to plan for the teacher who is absent. Teacher absenteeism contributes to the declining image of the teaching profession and school reputation.

6. Recommendations

Since the effect of absentee teachers on the quality of education is drastic, every effort should be made to curb it. To address the issue of absenteeism effectively, it is important to examine the root causes and the factors that promote it. The following recommendations are therefore made:

- Teachers who are very regular at school should be commended at the end of the academic year to serve as a role model for other teachers to emulate.
- Regular attendance should be one of the criteria for promotion in the Ghana Education Service.
- Number of absented days should be deducted from the salary of teachers. This would actually serve as a disincentive for teachers to stay away from school.
- Sandwich Courses/Distance Learning should be done during the school holidays or during the vocational time. As much as we appreciate that teachers need to upgrade themselves, they should not do so at the expense of the children's instructional hours.
- The Heads of Basic schools should monitor teacher attendance and be empowered to sanction teachers who persistently miss class.
- The Parent-Teacher Association/School Management Committee should be empowered to demand accountability from the Heads of Basic schools concerning teacher absenteeism.

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8. Appendix A

Questionnaire for Teachers

Introduction

The researchers assure you that this questionnaire will be used for the purpose of research and information gathered will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Identification Data

School..... Identification No.....

Date of Research

a. Classification Data

(Circle the appropriate answer)

1. Male Female

2. How long have you been a teacher?

0-5 years ii. 6-10 years iii. 10-15 years iv. 16 years and above

The Subject Matter

3. What is your opinion about teacher absenteeism?
 - i. Normal ii bad iii very bad
4. Do you reside in the community where you teach?
 - i. yes ii No
5. Why do you think some teachers stay outside their place of work?
 - i. Accommodation problem ii. Lack of social Amenities iii. The people in the Community are hostile iv. They prefer to stay in Sunyani Town.
6. How do the teachers in your school commute from their home to the school?
 - i. By walking ii. Motor bike iii. Private car iv. Public transport.
7. Reasons why teachers absent themselves from school.

(Please tick in the box that best expresses your opinion)

Reasons why teachers absent themselves	Agree	Disagree
Illness		
Poor supervision		
Funerals		
Collecting salary from the bank		
Busy in other economic activities		
Sandwich course		
Financial problem		

8. Teachers who normally absent themselves from school are:
 - i. Those from the community
 - ii. Nursing mothers
 - iii. Young Teachers
 - iv. Teachers staying outside the community they teach
9. On which particular day do many of the teachers absent themselves from school?
 - i. Monday ii. Tuesday iii. Wednesday iv. Thursday v. Friday
10. Which part of the month do teachers usually absent themselves from school?
 - i. First Week ii. Second Week iii. Third Week iv. Forth Week.

11. Effects of teacher absenteeism.

(Please kindly rate the following factors in order of importance as they occur in your school by using the numbers 1-5)

Effects of teacher absenteeism	The order of importance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescribe course of any given class cannot be completed 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rushing to catch up on lost time 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combining classes 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to violence among children in the classroom 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline of the image of teachers 	

12. In which of the following ways do you think teacher absenteeism could be reduced in the Circuit?

- i. Regularity to school should be one of the criteria for promotion.
- ii. Irregular teachers at school should be sanctioned.
- iii. Number of days absent should be deducted from the salary.
- iv. Position given in the Ghana Education Service should be based on regularity to school.
- v. Teachers who are regular at school should be commended.
- vi. Any other (indicate).....

9. Appendix B

Interview Guide For Stakeholders

Status

Date Of Interview.....

Duration Of Interview

1. How many teachers in your school stay outside the Community?
2. Why do you think some of them prefer to stay outside the Community
3. Are the absentee teachers staying outside the Community?
4. On which particular day do many of the teachers absent themselves from school?
5. Which part of the month do you think many teachers normally do not come to school?
6. Which particular teachers usually absent themselves from school?
7. Why do you think some of these teachers are not regular at school?
8. What is the effect of teacher absenteeism on the class that he/she handles?
9. What measures should be put in place to minimize teacher absenteeism in your school?
10. What can the stakeholder, especially PTA/SMC members do to prevent teacher absenteeism in the circuit?