

## Teachers' Absenteeism in Primary Schools of Tinsukia District of Assam

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**Abstract:** In this study aimed at to determine teacher's absenteeism rate and specific reasons in government run elementary schools. The population of the present study was 10 (ten) Government Primary Schools of Kakopathar and Hapjan Educational Block of Tinsukia district of Assam. 5 schools from each block were selected for the study. The percentage was calculated to analyze the data. The paper suggest that to improve schooling quality, there is a need to increase teachers' teaching hours and there is a need to reduce suitably the duration of in-service training being imparted to teachers every year under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Qualified people from locality can be engaged in place of absent teacher.

**Key words:** Teachers, Absenteeism, Primary Schools

### I. INTRODUCTION

Teachers remain absent /are not able to attend school for a number of reasons. Teachers are deployed for certain non-professional duties such as participation in elections to local bodies, State Legislatures and Parliament, decennial population Census, disaster relief duties, polio drop campaigns, preparing voters' list, socio-economic survey, animal and bird surveys, below poverty line survey, ration card verification, generating awareness among people about health, preparing project activities to be conducted by different panchayats, literacy campaign etc.

Further teachers have to go to their Education Department for getting their leave sanctioned, GPF Advance, seeking release of their dues, annual increment, transfer, to participate in meetings and departmental functions, etc. The situation in the education department is generally so bad that teachers feel that unless they go personally, their case would not move. Teachers are also required to undergo mandatory 20 days in-service education and training every year under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Teachers are also required to participate in various awareness programmes and welcome programmes. These reasons coupled with teachers' illness, and to discharge their family responsibilities and social obligations, etc. increase teacher absence rate. Further absence rates are higher during rainy season, extreme weather conditions, festivals, towards the end of the calendar year, harvesting period, festivals, etc. Absence rates are not the same the whole year.

The teachers opined that teachers' rate of absenteeism is high on account of factors referred to above. But it is not as high as reported in the said study throughout the year. They expressed that the findings of the study are tarnishing the image of teachers. They further expressed that inadequacy of infrastructure facilities such as toilets, electricity, safe drinking water, rooms for instruction and teaching work-force affect adversely teacher motivation and increase teacher absence rate. In the light of the above situation, the investigator decided to undertake a study to determine rate of teachers in government primary/elementary schools of Tinsukia district of Assam. The present study was undertaken with the objectives specified in the next page:

### Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted to:

- To determine teacher's absenteeism rate in government run primary/ elementary schools; and
- To find out specific reasons for their absence from schools

The above objectives are also considered in the light of

- i. Settlement (rural & urban)

**Delimitation of the Study:** The present study has been delimited to:

1. Class -I to class -IV
2. Hapjan and kakopathar Education Block of Tinsukia District of Assam

**Methodology of the Study:** The methodology of the study was carried out through following steps:

**Sample:** The population of the present study was 10 (ten) Government Primary Schools of Kakopathar and Hapjan Educational Block of Tinsukia district of Assam. 5 schools from each block were selected for the study.

**Tool Used:** A questionnaire was developed to collect the requisite data for the study.

**Procedure of collection of data:** Investigator visited the schools without any information to them. They ascertained from the head-teacher the position of teaching staff and student strength in her/his school and the number of teachers and students who were not present in the school on that day. Reasons for their absence/not being present in the school were also ascertained from the head-teacher. The school record in this regard was also consulted. Investigator made only one visit to each school. It took about one month to collect the requisite data from schools.

### II. TEACHER ABSENTEEISM

This chapter presents data regarding teachers' absenteeism rate from schools. As mentioned in Chapter-I, the present study was conducted in the district of Tinsukia. Name of the district, blocks and the number of schools covered in the district are mentioned in table - 1.

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Sl. No.	Name of the State	District	Block	No. of Schools Covered	No. of Teachers Covered
1.	Assam	Tinsukia	Kakopathar	5	40
			Hapjan	5	27
			Total	10	67

Source: Primary

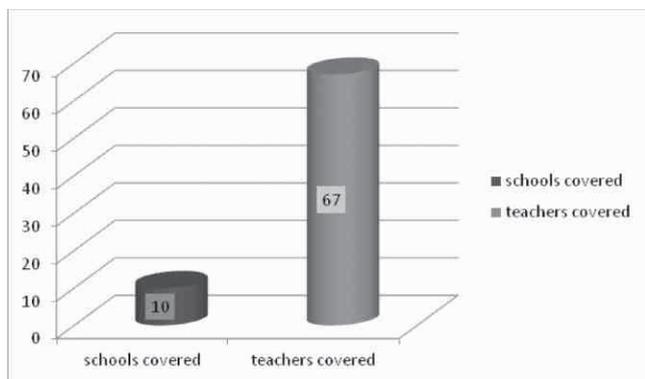


Figure - 1 Number of Schools and Teachers Covered

Investigator visited schools with a view to determining the number of teachers who were not present in the school on that day. The data in this regard are presented block-wise. The data related to teacher absenteeism in the selected blocks of the said district are presented first. The rate of teachers' absenteeism from schools in the district of Tinsukia is presented in the table – 2

Table - 2 Block-wise Number and Percentage of Teachers not Present in Schools in Tinsukia District of Assam

Sl. No.	Name of the Block	No. of Schools Covered			No. of teachers									Percentage of teachers not present in schools		
					Appointed in Schools			Present in Schools			Not present in Schools					
		R	U	T	R	U	T	R	U	T	R	U	T	R	U	T
1.	Kakopathar	5	---	5	40	---	40	35	---	35	5	---	5	12.5	---	12.5
2.	Hapjan	3	2	5	10	17	27	7	15	22	3	2	5	30	7.4	18.5

Source: Primary

R = Rural, U = Urban, T = Total

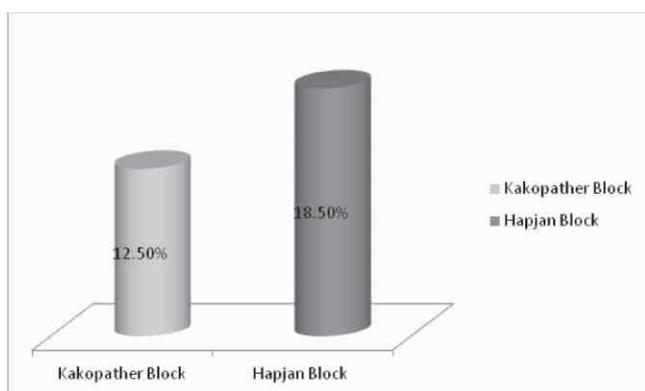


Figure - 2 Percentage of Teachers not present in schools

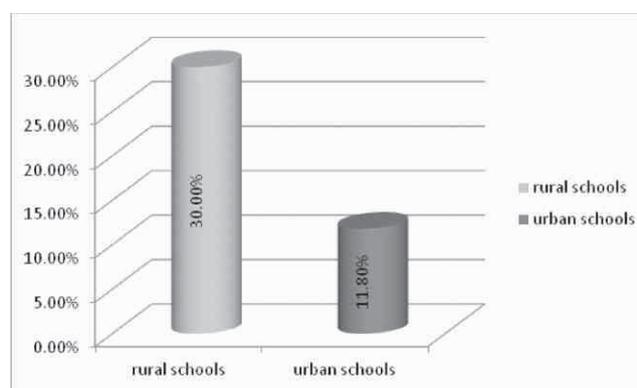


Figure - 3 Percentage of Teachers not present in rural schools of Hapjan Block

Table - 2 reveals that 12.5 per cent teachers were not present in their school in Kakopathar block. On the other hand 18.5 per cent teachers were not present in their school in Hapjan block of Tinsukia district of Assam. It is evident from table 2.2 that only two schools in the urban area were covered in Hapjan block alone. Further out of 17 appointed teachers 15 were present in their school. The percentage of teachers who were not present in urban schools is 11.8 percent in Hapjan Educational block. On an average 18.5 percent teachers were not present in their school in the Hapjan block. On the other hand out of 10 teachers 7 teachers were present in rural primary schools of Hapjan Educational block. The percentage of teachers who were not present in rural schools is 30 percent in Hapjan Education block of Tinsukia district of Assam.

The rate of teachers' absenteeism in Kakopathar block is quite low when we compare the rate of absenteeism with blocks in Kakopathar and Hapjan Education block of Tinsukia district of Assam. The teacher absenteeism rate in the primary schools of Kakopathar block is 12.5 percent and on the other hand 18.5 percent in the schools of Hapjan block. It shows that the rate of teacher absenteeism in the schools of Kakopathar block is lower as compared to the schools of Hapjan block. The rate of teacher absenteeism in rural primary schools of Kakopathar block is 12.5 percent and the rate is 30 percent in the rural schools of Hapjan block of Tinsukia district of Assam. It reveals that the rate of teachers absenteeism in primary schools of Hapjan block is quite high than that of primary schools of Kakopathar block.

The table - 2 also presents that the teacher absenteeism rate in the urban primary schools of Hapjan block is 11.8 percent and 30 percent teachers were not present in the rural primary schools of same block of Tinsukia district of Assam. It reveals that the rate of teacher absenteeism in rural primary schools Hapjan block is quite high than that of urban primary schools of same block.

### III. SPECIFIC REASONS FOR TEACHERS' ABSENCE FROM SCHOOLS

In part - II, teachers' absenteeism rate from the primary schools of Kakopathar Education Block and Hapjan Education Block has been presented. The data collected from Kakopathar Education Block reveal that 12.5 percent teachers were not present in their school; on the other hand,

18.5 percent teachers were not present in Hapjan Education Block. Overall rate of teachers' absenteeism in two Blocks are 31%.

The study conducted by Kremer et al (2004) revealed that one in four teachers was absent at a typical government run primary school in India. It also highlights that India has the second-highest average absence rate among countries.

The study conducted by Kremer et al (2004) did not, however study where were those teachers who were absent from their school when the investigator visited their school. The present study besides determining rate of teachers' absenteeism in the primary schools of Kakopather and Hapjan education block of Tinsukia district of Assam, studied specific reasons for teachers not being present in their school. It attempted to determine the percentage of teachers who were not present in their school on account of personal reasons, academic reasons and because of their engagement in non-professional work assigned to them by their authorities.

Personal reasons included illness, maternity leave, Casual leave, domestic work such participation in marriage parties, religious functions, festivals etc. Academic reasons included participation in in-service education programmes for teachers such as seminars, orientation courses and workshops. Non-professional work included election duty, preparation of voters' list, undertaking survey for different purposes such as people below poverty line, socio-economic survey, identification of dropouts from primary schools, campaign against diseases such as polio etc. Specific reasons for teachers' absence from their schools are presented in the following paragraphs. Data in this regard are presented first in respect of Tinsukia district of Assam.

The data collected from schools are presented Block wise. Table 3.1 presents data regarding number and percentage of teachers who were not present in their school due to personal reasons, academic reasons, and because of their engagement in non-professional work assigned to them.

**Table 3 Number and Percentage of Teachers not Present in Schools in Kakopather block due to Various Reasons**

District	Block	Reason for not being present in school	Total no. of teachers in Sampled Schools	No. of teachers not present in schools due to various reasons	Percentage of teachers not present in schools due to various reasons		
Tinsukia	Kakopather Block	<b>Personal</b> 1.Earned leave 2.Medical leave/Maternity leave 3.Casual leave others.....	40	2	5.0		
		<b>Academic</b> 1.Participation in Training programe 2.Seminars 3.Workshop 4.others.....				1	2.5
		<b>Non-Professional work</b> 1.Election duty 2.Preparation of voters list 3.Survey for different purposes such as people of BPL, dropout from Schools. 4.Campaign against Illiteracy, diseases, Polio etc. 5.others.....					
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12.5</b>			

Source: Primary

Table 3 reveals that out of 12.5 percent teachers from primary schools Kakopather block who were not present in their school, only 5.0 percent were not present in their school due to personal reasons. The rest i.e. 7.5 per cent were not there either due to academic reasons (2.5 %) or were engaged in nonprofessional work (5.0%) assigned to them by the authorities of the education department.

**Table 4 Number and Percentage of Teachers not Present in Schools in Hapjan block due to Various Reasons**

District	Block	Reason for not being present in school	Total no. of teachers in Sampled Schools	No. of teachers not present in schools due to various reasons	Percentage of teachers not present in schools due to various reasons		
Tinsukia	Hapjan Block	<b>Personal</b> 4.Earned leave 5.Medical leave/Maternity leave 6.Casual leave others.....	27	3	11.1		
		<b>Academic</b> 5.Participation in Training programe 6.Seminars 7.Workshop 8.others.....				1	3.7
		<b>Non-Professional work</b> 6.Election duty 7.Preparation of voters list 8.Survey for different purposes such as people of BPL, dropout from Schools. 9.Campaign against Illiteracy, diseases, Polio etc. 10.others.....					
<b>Total</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18.5</b>			

Source: Primary

Table 4 reveals that out of 18.5 percent teachers who were not present in their school, only 11.1 percent were not present in their school due to personal reasons i.e., earned leave, casual leave, maternity leave, medical leave etc. The rest i.e. 7.4 per cent were not there either due to academic reasons (3.7 %) or were engaged in nonprofessional work (3.7%) assigned to them by the authorities of the education department.

#### IV. TEACHER RELATED MAIN FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

**Main findings:** The following are the main findings emanating from the present study:

- In Kakopather educational block, 12.5 per cent teachers were not present in their school. 18.5 percent teachers were not present in their school in Hapjan educational block. On an average 15.6 percent teachers were not present in their school in two blocks of Kakopather and Hapjan of Tinsukia district of Assam.
- On an average 15.6 percent teachers were not in their school in Kakopather and Hapjan educational block. Of these, only 16.1 per cent teachers were not present on account of personal reasons. Personal reasons included illness, maternity leave, casual leave, earned leave and leave to discharge responsibilities of their family and other social obligations. Further 6.2 percent teachers were not present due to academic reasons- their participation in

training programmes, seminars, workshop etc. Besides, 8.7 percent teachers were not present as they were engaged in nonprofessional work assigned to them by their authorities. The study reveals abundantly that teachers themselves are responsible for their absence from schools to a limited extent. Their absence is primarily caused by their participation in the training programmes being organized by the authorities and also because of their involvement in non-professional assignments.

### Suggestions:

The following are the main suggestions emanating from the present study:

- Teachers' absence from their school reduces teaching hours. To improve schooling quality, there is a need to increase teachers' teaching hours. Table 3.1 and 3.2 highlights specific reasons for teachers' absence in the primary schools of Kakopather and Hapjan educational block. The table reflects that teachers' absence from school on account of personal reasons ranges from 5.0 per cent in Kakopather educational block to 11.1 per cent in Hapjan educational block. Teachers' absence from school due to academic reasons ranges from 2.5 per cent in Kakopather educational block to 3.7 percent in Hapjan educational block. To increase teachers' teaching hours, there is a need to reduce suitably the duration of in-service training being imparted to teachers every year under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. This is because hardly any substitute teacher is posted in school when a teacher is under in-service training.
- 5.0 per cent teachers in Kakopather and 3.7 per cent in Hapjan educational block were engaged in non-professional work. Teachers should not be engaged in non-professional duties. This measure would further improve teachers' teaching hours in schools.
- School Management Committee should be constituted under the norms of government.
- School Management Committee can be developed to deal with the problem.
- Qualified people from locality can be engaged in place of absent teacher.
- Some teachers are absent due to not permanent of the post and irregularity of their salary. Therefore, govt. should make their post is regular so that they can get salary in time.
- Lack of control by head of the institution over schools may sometimes be responsible for teacher absenteeism. So workshop can be organized for head of the schools for development of their leadership quality.

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