

ATTESTATION

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How Teachers' Absenteeism Mars Students Performance in Gwagwarwa Secondary School

By Abubakar Muhammad Usman

Teachers' absenteeism has continued to mar students' performance in Government Secondary School, Gwagwarwa in Nassarawa Local government Area of Kano State, this investigation has revealed.

Education is one of the most important investments a country can make in its people and its future. It is a powerful agent of change, which improves health and livelihoods, and contributes to social stability and drives longterm economic growth.

In the educational system, teachers are most integral part of the society and the important consideration is to play a crucial role in the development of the students to promote their skills.

By education we intend to bring certain desirable changes in the students. Education is a conscious effort and, as such, it has definite aims and objectives. In the light of these aims the curriculum is determined and the academic achievements of the student are measured.

The state government has declared free and compulsory education for all students in public primary and secondary school.

At the time Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje said the state government did everything necessary to improve education, among other sector in the state.

Government Secondary School Gwagwarwa is hundreds of public secondary schools in Kano State, is Gwagwarwa Secondary School, which is the most populous state Nigeria.

The school, which one of the oldest in the in Gwagwarwa ward, houses junior and senior secondary School sections and is controlled by the Kano State Ministry of Education.

The population of the students, as it has 26 teachers a principal and a vice principal that manage about 30 classes.

Each contains an average number of 90 students; and four to five teachers attend each class per day.

Even though the school is under a single administration, punctuality and general attitude to work differ from one teacher to another. While some trying to fulfill their responsibilities, others are observably negligent.

At the first day of the school's resumption on 12 September 2022, there was no security guard at the school's gate. Many excited students were outside their classes playing, while others were playing inside classrooms.

The seemingly relaxed teachers were sitting in the staff room chatting about one thing or the other, mainly unrelated to their jobs, while the students played around with nobody to attend to them.

Classes in Government Secondary School were beside themselves, as many had no furniture, the ceilings were ruined by leaking rain, the painting was faded and peeling and smeared with many writings, the blackboards were old with holes on them, and there were inadequate teaching materials.

Students lament teachers' absence, blame management

Some of the students expressed their gross dissatisfaction with the attitude of teachers in the school, especially regarding their negligence in attending classes and teaching as required by the conditions of their service.

Many of them believe that this bad attitude of teachers, who abscond from their duties, may increase the rate of crimes in school environment as well in the society, since students are only there to guide or mislead themselves.

A final year student of SS3 B in the school named Ismail Sani (not real name) said that not more than three teachers attend their class daily, and blame them for their low performance during examination. He said at times they engaged into malpractices due to lack of proper teaching.

Sani said, "Actually, the teachers who come to our class are not many. They are not more than three, and the rest do not come to school or even come to our class to teach us, that's why when it comes to exams, we find it too hard."

A student named Ibrahim (not real name) from SS3C, also a final year student, said, "Of all the teachers, it's the only IRS teacher that comes to class on time, but the rest of the them will come when the time is too late or when the exam is approaching, they will finish the whole curriculum in one week."

Kabiru Ishaq (not real name), a student of SS1 A pointed at the instability of the school management as one of the factors precipitating the attitude of teachers.

He said the teachers are mostly negligent when the principal is absent, unlike when he is around, saying since nobody to control them in the absence of the principal they do as they wish.

"The principal of the school who is very diligent keeps a close watch, that's why the teachers used to be careful, but now we resume, most of the teachers have not started going to classes, we just come and play, that's all," he said.

We don't have adequate teaching materials - Teachers

Tahir Ismail (not real name) a Physical and Health Education teacher observed that there are so many negative ways teachers' absence affects students' performance in school, especially learning.

He said it affects the teaching process by leaving the students with a lot of uncovered syllabi, as well as enabling them to engage in unwanted activities in the classrooms and outside.

He said, "Learning solely depends on instructor's presence.

"Therefore, his absent is tantamount to the following possible consequences. Teacher's absence may instill impunctuality or absenteeism in his students as a lot of them may take him as role model. It will also lead to backlogs of supposed topics coverage."

He added that this may cause the teacher to overload the students with lessons beyond their brain capacity.

He added, "It may cause the teacher to overload the students with lessons beyond their brain capacity while he aims at covering the untaught topic.

"There will be lack of discipline among the students as his presence will prevent students from engaging in wayward attitude and, his presence enables him to observe students unwanted behaviors and correct them.

"Absenteeism is an act of in discipline which can be spread among the teachers and later consume the school as not learning will take place without an instructor."

An English teacher, Yusuf Abdullahi (not real name), believed that it is the government that should be blamed instead for the negligence of teachers in carrying out their duties rightly. He said the inability of government to provide enough and essential teaching materials contributes a lot in discouraging them from doing what is right in the course of their job. He added that it is one of the major reasons teachers in public schools don't attend classes as they should.

“A teacher may not be able to teach properly due to lack of teaching equipment that should be brought by the government, but I know teachers’ absenteeism is a big problem to education.

“I, sometimes don't go to school if I don't have anything to do, but if I know I won't come, I used to combine two weeks of work into one week,” said Abdullahi.

Aisha Abdullahi Umar (not real name), a female Hausa Language teacher pointed at the difference between public and private schools, having taught at a private school before coming to Gwagwarwa secondary school.

"Here, I see teachers doing business in the school, some don't come to school but no one cares about what is happening, but when someone is coming especially from the Ministry of Education or SUBEB then you will see every teacher comes to the school.

"I don't care about what other people do, anyone who does the right thing knows, I don't have to tell anyone what to do because I’m new here," said Miss Aisha.

Teachers lack motivation, work in unattractive environment

This investigation finds out that from the government's side, there is lack of sufficient instructional materials, and the salary paid to teachers is not encouraging considering how the prices of commodities and services have rises in the country.

This may be the reason why many teachers engage in petty trading and other businesses, and at the same may be the reason why they do not have enough time to teach their students properly.

On part of the teachers, there is a lack of proper inspection of schools by the State Ministry of Education and stakeholders in the field of education. Even the principals of some schools are not closely monitoring the teacher of their school, let along assess their delivery.

When contacted, the public relations officer of the state’s ministry of education, Aliyu Yusuf, said the Kano State Secondary Schools Management Board (KSSM) is in the best position to comment on the issue.

Attempt to hear from the Kano State Secondary Schools Management Board (KSSM) was not successful, as the public relations officer of the board cannot be reached to comment on the matter.



These are some of the school images, which shows the school condition; new classrooms and fence are being built while some classes need to be repaired.