

TEACHER COMPETENCY TEST AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA: AN ASSESSMENT OF ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATION

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Abstract

The poor educational achievement among students in public primary and secondary schools across the country has raised concern as to the factors responsible. Even though some parents prefer to put their wards in expensive private primary and secondary schools as panacea to poor outcomes, a great proportion of Nigerian parents still have their children attending public schools. The advent of civilian democratic government at various levels of governance since 1999 has opened up debate on the need to remedy the situation. Consequently many governments at local, state and federal levels have directed attention in terms of improving funding to these schools as well as the welfare of teachers. But despite these efforts, performance in external examinations conducted by bodies such as the West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) and the Joint Admission and Matriculation Examination (JAMB) indicates that some other factors beside the aforementioned also require attention. Beside the fact that students who intend to become teachers do not

Usually excel while in school and that many talented students are uninterested in teaching careers because the pay and job satisfaction are low. Low pay and lack of job satisfaction also have caused many good teachers to leave the teaching profession for other well paying jobs; the depth of incompetence in the system was not obvious until one of Nigeria's fourth republic governors confronted one of the teachers who unable to read simple lines correctly. This was reinforced by similar action taken by the Kwara state government in which a teacher was unable to pass an examination she gave to her pupils. Consequently, Policy makers riding on this wave against teachers began to suggest several ways to keep incompetent teachers out of the profession, welcome a wave of the policy of competency test which was stoutly opposed by the teachers union, but adamantly pursued by some state governors, precipitating conflicts between the governors and teachers union including strikes. But payback started with the unexpected lost of election by Kayode Fayemi which pundits have attributed among others to the way he handled the teachers competency test in his state thus precipitating panic and policy of reversals. The

questions that therefore arise are, what necessitated the policy in the first place? Why are the teachers opposed to it? What are the impact on electoral politics? And what is the implication on education?

keywords: teacher, competency test, politics, nigeria, trade unionism, poor education.