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## The Effects of Competency Tests on the Practicing Teachers in Primary Schools Under Kaduna State Universal Basic Education, 2017-2023

**MATHEW YAKUBU**

Department Of History Kaduna State College of Education, Gidan Waya Kaduna State, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** The Study Investigates the Effects of Competency Tests on the Practicing Teachers in Primary Schools under Kaduna State Universal Basic Education, 2017-2023. The major objective is to examine the impact of the competency tests on teacher motivation, teacher quality, and pupils' educational outcomes. A descriptive survey design was employed, with an estimated population of 1,000 primary school teachers as respondents from the three geo-political zones. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. However, only 652 respondents completed and returned the questionnaire, representing 65.2%. A Likert rating scale was used to analyze teacher perceptions of the competency tests. The findings reveal that competency test has a significant positive effect on the teacher motivation, and professional development. However, concerns regarding test fairness and anxiety persist. The study concludes that competency test can be effective tool for enhancing teacher quality, but it is crucial to address challenges related to test fairness, anxiety, inadequate manpower training, and infrastructure deficit. Recommendations include ensuring test validity, support for teachers, sustainable funding, and addressing infrastructure gaps. The findings contribute to the global discourse on education reform and innovation.

**KEYWORDS:** Competency test, practicing teachers, Primary school, Kaduna state Universal Basic Education

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### INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

The rot in the standard of all levels of education in Nigeria and in Kaduna state primary schools in particular has climaxed to a sorry state. Primary school level is an important sector of education because of its foundational nature. Recent statistics on common entrance examination academic performance of primary school pupils within the period of study shows that there has been a down surge in the quality and standard of pupils' academic performances in the area of study (Henry, 2010). This is evident in the number of unemployed youth in the labour market which is as a result of the neglect in ensuring that the education sector is adequately equipped. This in the long-run makes room for half-baked graduates who really do not have much to offer for the development of Kaduna state and Nigeria. Ayodele (2009) states that complete education is the one that will transform the mind which will translate into good behavior and create a good society in which we would be able to compete globally. Unfortunately, primary schools in Kaduna state has since been faced with issues and challenges include: declining academic standards, crumbling infrastructure, improper implementation of policies, corruption, inadequate of manpower and brain drain, breakdown of family units, moral degradation, and so on.

Against this back-drop, several policies and strategies have been adopted by the Kaduna State Universal Basic Education (SUBEB) to give this sector a new face. One of such is the needs to conduct competency test for practicing primary school teachers in the state to:

- a) Assess teacher quality and effectiveness
- b) Identify areas for teacher professional development
- c) Improve teacher accountability and performance
- d) Enhance students learning outcomes and academic achievement
- e) Ensure teacher competence in core subjects (Nigerian Tribune, 2019). The major issue is to ensure that only competent teachers are retained for better and well-prepared products.

Akale (2006) view the term quality; as achieving the degree of excellence in value and in product, work or grade or standard against which to judge. Akale further puts it more succinctly that, "if a lawyer makes a mistake somebody may lose his liberty; but if a teacher makes a mistake, generation yet unborn suffer the consequences." This means that learning how to teach and working to become an excellent teacher requires the development of practical and complex skills as well as acquisition of specific knowledge and the promotion of certain ethical values and attitudes.

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It therefore, means that if we want sound and qualitative education, the teacher must be of good quality. It follows that if the teacher is sound, his pupils would also be sound. When reforms are introduced into a system, some may resist and some may accept it. It is against this background that this research intends to investigate:

**The Effects of Competency Tests on Primary School Practicing Teachers under Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Board, 2017-2022.** With a view to finding out the outcomes of the competency tests on the government, teachers and the pupils in general. It is also expected that conclusion and recommendations will be proffered.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM/JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

The public outcry about the poor quality of teachers and the declining quality of primary school products in Kaduna state motivated the regulatory body SUBEB to have introduced competency test for teachers with a view to ensuring only competent teachers were retained. The State Universal Basic Education Sector in the study area felt that it cannot afford to leave education to matter of chance or trial and error. The research is necessary because the competency test brought protests, fears, doubts and panic in the minds of the teachers. The problem is why these protests, fears, doubts, and panic by the teachers? These are the problems this research seeks to investigate.

### **OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE STUDY IS:**

1. To investigate the impact of competency tests on teacher motivation and job satisfaction.
2. To examine the relationship between competency tests and teacher self-efficacy and confidence in teaching
3. To assess the effectiveness of competency tests in enhancing teacher professional growth, teacher quality and student outcomes.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the objectives of the study the following research questions are posed:

1. How do the competency tests affect the teaching skills, motivation, and job satisfaction of primary school teachers in Kaduna state?
2. To what extent do primary school teachers in Kaduna state, perceive the competency test as fair, and how does this perception influence their self-efficacy and confidence in teaching?
3. What professional development and support systems are required to enhance the teaching competencies of primary school teachers in Kaduna state, and how can these be integrated into the competency tests framework?

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Education, being a contemporary issue globally, is the bedrock of any meaningful and sustainable development; without it, no meaningful invention, innovation, discovery or advancement would have been made. Education seeks to improve not only the individual but the society at large. Therefore, the need to conduct competency test became inevitable because of the public outcry about the poor quality of teachers in Kaduna state public schools particularly the primary schools. Therefore, the major reason for the test is to retain quality teachers that will upgrade the quality of education that deserves commendation locally and internationally. We should remember that learning how to teach and working to become an excellent teacher requires the development of practical and complex skills as well as acquisition of specific knowledge and the promotion of certain ethical values and attitudes. It has been generally argues that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers. It is therefore, means that if we want sound and qualitative education, the teacher must be of good quality. In recognition of the importance of quality education, the Government of Kaduna state in collaboration with SUBEB evolved different policies and programs one of which is the competency test method to promote education and develop the state's human resource.

It is against this background that this research seeks to review related literature on this challenging topic title: **The Effects of Competency Tests on Primary School Practicing Teachers under Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Board, 2017-2022.**

#### **Definition: Competency Test**

Competency test can be defined differently, competency test according to Rasmussen (2011), "is an assessment tool use to measure an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities in a specific area of profession or role." Darling-Hammond (2013) identified five key competencies assessment areas that can be used to measure teachers and students knowledge and performance: a) Content knowledge, b) Pedagogical knowledge c) Classroom management, d) Communication skills, and e) Assessment and evaluation. The test format can be multiple choice questions, essay questions, performance tasks, or observations. Darling-Hammond argues that the preparation and implementation of a reliable and valid test must be done by the experts or professionals.

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Knowledge test and Performance tests are the most suitable means of assessing teachers' performance:

- a) Knowledge test sets to evaluate individual's knowledge and understanding of a particular subject or concept and principles.
- b) Performance test is to measure an individual's ability to apply his/her knowledge and skills in a practical setting. Performance and knowledge tests are applicable to classroom teacher testing, but it depends on the specific goals and purposes of the testing

### **Teachers are 'thinking' performance**

This concept can be interpreted as meaning professional teachers have to think carefully about what they are doing in the context of their organization within the frame work of recognized body of knowledge, and they have to perform effectively in the sense of delivering advice, guidance and services that will help the organization to achieve its strategic goals. Harrison (2007) comments that the "thinking performance philosophy focuses on the ways which human resource field of activity should link to produce a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, on strategic awareness and on evidence-based practice". Harrison emphasis is on holistic thinking, on contextualization, and on best fit rather than best practice.

Continuous professional development is the process that enables the integration of learning with work in ways relevant to the learner, is self-directed and contributes to the learner's development needs. The benefit includes improving professional standing, improving performance for the organization, and the ability to help others learn and develop themselves to enhance their work performance and their organizational commitment as professionals.

### **Teaching as a profession**

A professional, if the term is used loosely is one who displays expertise in doing his work and act responsibly. Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is the body that gives members of its association exclusive rights to practice their profession. Armstrong (2009) argues that "work done by professional body usually distinguished by its reference to the professional ethics linked with experience rather than by impromptu reaction to events." Such high level of distinctive competence reflects the skillful application of specialized educational training and experience. This often accompanied by a sense of responsibility and acceptance of recognized standards. In setting competency tests for teachers, it is crucial to have a professional body involved in developing a competency test to ensure it is comprehensive, valid, and reliable. This will help maintain the integrity and credibility of the test, as well as the teaching profession as a whole.

Farnhan (2008) sees "professional ethics as the moral principles and values governing professional behavior." The ethical principles of human resource professionals imply that human resource specialists need to take account of the dignity and rights of employees when taking decisions that will affect their interest. These include having clear, fair terms and conditions of employment, healthy and safe working conditions, fair remuneration, promotion, equal opportunities and employment diversity, encouraging employees to develop their skills, and not discriminating or harassing employees. Monitoring employee performance is the managerial responsibility, they should do their best to promote ethical standards and influence changes in core value where necessary.

Teachers are expected to be committed to the highest standards of professional conduct and competency. To this end, teachers are required to exercise integrity, honesty, diligence and appropriate behavior in all their profession and related activities. They must act within the law and must not encourage, assist or act in collusion with employees or employer who may be engaged in unlawful conduct.

### **Assessing professional competency performance**

Most performance management schemes include some form of rating, which is usually carried out in form of examination. The rating indicates the quality and performance or competence achieved or display by an employee by selecting the level on a scale that most closely corresponds with the view of the assessor on how well or not well an individual has been doing. According to Guest (1997) "the distinctive feature of human resource management is its assumption that improved performance is achieved through the people in the organization".

Performance covers both what has been achieved and how it has been achieved. Organization performance can be measured in a number of different ways. The most obvious way to measure what has been achieved, and the approach used in many studies, is by reference to key performance indicators (KPIs) which usually has to do with financial results (profit ability) or productivity. Measuring the how is more difficult. It has to rely extensively on qualitative assessment of organizational capability or effectiveness. Based on the above observations, performance has a link with practice and policies as inputs and outputs variables.

In Kaduna state, the high pass mark of 75% sets a rigorous standard for teacher competency tests, which is essential for maintaining educational excellence (SUBEB, 2020). The tests results were used to identify areas where teachers required additional training or support, enabling targeted professional development. By setting professional bar, the tests demonstrate a commitment to pupils' success and well-being. However, it is important to ensure that the test is valid, reliable, and free from biases to avoid unfair disadvantages to certain groups of teachers. Additionally, considerations should be made for teachers who may not pass, such as providing support and resources for improvement rather than solely focusing on the consequences. Overall, a well-being competency test with high pass mark 75% can drive teacher growth and ultimately benefit the pupils. A standard competency test must examine

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and analyze the staff work-based, behavioral and skills attitudes to job to achieve an acceptable level of performance (Huselid, 1997).

### **Theoretical framework on human resource development**

We shall attempt to use a theory and a model that explains the practice, policies and analysis of worker(s) performance at either individual or group level:

Vroom (1964) pioneered expectancy theory which later developed by Armstrong (2009), proposes that high individual performance depends on high motivation plus possession of the necessary skills and abilities and an appropriate role and understanding of that role. This theory is relevant to this research because it links human resource management practices to processes that facilitate high individual performance. Bailey et al (2001) in support of this theory argues that “the key components of high performance are incentives and skills”.

Boxall and Purcell (2003) put forward a combination of Vroom and Bailey et al ideas. This model asserts that performance is a function of Ability + Motivation + Opportunity (AMO) to participate. The AMO model is important because it establishes a relationship of additive not multiplicative model.

A critical examination of the theory and the model above shows that human resource performance is often influenced by internal and external environment or by what happens in the organization. That human resource practices can make a direct impact on employee characteristics such as engagement, commitment, motivation and skill. That if employees have these characteristics it is probable that organizational performance in terms of productivity, quality and the delivery of high levels of customer service will improve.

### **Perceptions on competency tests**

A study by Adamu & Jibrin (2018) found that teachers in Kaduna state perceived the competency test as a threat to their job security and believed it was unfair to judge their competency based on a single test. More so, the test was not prepared by a professional body therefore the validity and reliability of the test was compromised. Another study by Mohammed and Abdullahi (2020) reveals that teachers felt the test was not a true reflection of their teaching abilities and that it did not take into account their years of experience and qualifications. That a test not developed by a professional body may over look essential aspects of teaching, such as pedagogy, classroom management, or subject-specific knowledge. To crown it all, the Governor on behalf of the state government sees the tests as a means to weed out unqualified teachers to maintain high teaching standards (El-Rufai, 2017).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Research method outlines the framework within which research is conducted, ensuring that the study is structured, rigorous, and capable of producing reliable and valid results. It involves making decisions about various aspects of the research process, such as the research design, sample/sampling techniques, data collection methods (i.e. surveys, interviews, questionnaires, experiments and so on), data analysis techniques and ethical considerations. Research method is a roadmap that guides researchers to new knowledge or understanding within their perspective fields.

**Research design:** For the sake of this study, the researcher decided to use descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research design tries to identify certain variables to establish the relationship that exist between the variables. Note that this research is concerned with people’s opinion and attitudes as well as how these attitudes relate to respondents’ behavior across time.

**Population:** The total estimated population size for this study was 29,000 teachers and SUBEB human resource unit staff.

**Sample/Sampling techniques:** Out of the total estimated population size of 29,000, only 1,000 respondents were randomly sampled from the three geo-political zones in the state. This includes the serving teachers and the SUBEB human resource staff (i.e. Zone 1=350, Zone 2= 300 and Zone 3=350) respectively.

### **RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS:**

a) **Data collection:** The researcher used structured questionnaires and semi-structured oral interviews to gather qualitative data on the respondent’s perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding competency tests. The questionnaires were subjected to content face validity by the supervisor in which his observations were included.

b) **Data analysis:** The researcher adopted Likert scale four points response to questionnaires designed to get information from the respondents; these were:

Strongly Agreed- (SA) = 4 points

Agreed- (A) = 3 points

Disagreed- (D) = 2 points

Strongly Disagreed-(SD) = 1 point

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In taking decision for responses the researcher used a mean score of 2.50 as the degree of acceptance, thus  $4+3+2+1=10 \div 4 = 2.50$ . The statistical method for analyzing the data was the simple frequency and percentage ranking. The formula for calculating simple percentage was:

$$P = \frac{F \times 100}{N}$$

Where

P = Percentage of respondents

F = Frequency of respondents

N = Total number of respondents

In administering the instruments, an official letter of permission to administer the questionnaires to the selected schools and SUBEB were given by the Registrar of the College. The administration of the questionnaires was done with the help of trained research assistant. The research questions were validated using an independent worker.

## PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter an effort was made to present, examine, and interpret the information gathered during the field work. The feedback from the survey questionnaires completed served as the foundation for this presentation. Out of the 1000 questionnaires sent out to respondents, only 652 were returned fully completed for tabulation, analysis, interpretation, and discussion of findings. Below is the distribution of a total of 652 questionnaires fully completed and returned.

### Demography of respondents

**Table 1.0 Distribution of the respondents by Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	410	62.89
Female	242	37.11
Total	652	100

Source Field work, 2024

Interpretation of table 1.0 shows the distributions of respondents by gender, 410 respondents were male representing (63%) and 242 were female representing (37%).

### Analysis and interpretation of research questions

Research question one: To what extent do you agree competency tests motivate you to improve your teaching skills?

**Table 2.0**

Rating scale	SA=4 Strongly Agreed	A=3 Agreed	D=2 Disagreed	SD=1 Strongly Disagree	Total	Mean	Level of acceptance
Responses	325	251	30	46	2,159	3.31	Accepted

Source: Field work, 2024

**Interpretation:** The item in table 2.0 reveals that 50% accepted that competency tests motivates teachers to improve in their classroom teaching skills and methodologies with a mean score of 3.31. This response agreed with the work of Boxall and Purcell, 2003) in the literature reviewed that competency tests can identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement.

**Research question two:** How confidence do you feel in your ability to pass the competency tests?

**Table 3.0**

Rating scale	4= No confident	3= Some how confident	2= Confident	1= Very Confident	Total	Mean	Level of acceptance
Responses	410	151	63	28	1,272	1.95	Rejected

Source: Field work, 2024

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**Interpretation:** The item in table 3.0 shows that 65% of the respondents had no confidence in their ability to pass the tests because of anxiety and fear of failure that may lead to job loss. The item was rejected with a mean score of 1.95 this justified the statement made by (Mohammed and Abullahi, 2018) in the literature reviewed above.

**Research question three:** Do you believe competency tests reflect your true teaching abilities?

**Table 4.0**

Rating scale	SA=4 Strongly Agreed	A=3 Agreed	D=2 Disagreed	SD=1 Strongly Disagreed	Total	Mean	Level of acceptance
Responses	32	50	230	340	1,075	1.65	Rejected

**Source: Field work, 2024**

**Interpretation:** The item in table 4.0 indicates that 53% of the respondents did not believe that competency tests kept reflecting their true teaching abilities. This aligns with the work of (Adamu and Jibrin, 2018) in the literature reviewed. This item was rejected with a mean score of 1.65.

**Research question four:** How often do you feel competent in managing classroom situation?

**Table 5.0**

Rating scale	4= Almost always	3=Often	2= Occasionally	1= Rarely	Total	Mean	Level of acceptance
Responses	16	49	522	65	1,320	2.02	Rejected

**Source: Field work, 2024**

**Interpretation:** The item in table 5.0 Shows that 80% of the respondents occasionally feel confident in managing classroom situation. This response agreed with Bailey et al (2001) in the literature review, argues that “the key components of high performance are incentives and skills”. Where these components are absent classroom control cannot be possible. This rejected with a mean score of 2.02

**Research question five:** To what extent do you believe competency tests help identify areas for professional growth?

**Table 6.0**

Rating scale	4= Extremely correct	3= Considerably correct	2= Somewhat correct	1= Not correct	Total	Mean	Level of acceptance
Responses	498	106	40	8	2,398	3.67	Accepted

**Source: Field work, 2024**

**Interpretation:** The item in table 6.0 shows that 76% agreed that competency tests help them identify areas for professional growth as stated in the literature by (Farnhan, 2008, and Armstrong, 2009). The item was accepted with a mean score of 3.67.

**Research question six:** Do you think competency tests enhance your ability to adapt to new teaching methods?

**Table 7.0**

Rating scale	SA=4 Strongly Agreed	A=3 Agreed	D=2 Disagreed	SD=1 Strongly Disagreed	Total	Mean	Level of acceptance
Responses	392	206	27	30	2,261	3.47	Accepted

**Source: Field work, 2024**

**Interpretation:** The item in table 7.0 reveals that 60% of the respondents agreed that competency tests enhances their ability to adapt to new teaching methods as discussed in the literature review by (Darling-Hammond, 2013). This item was accepted with a mean score of 3.47.

**Research question seven:** How satisfied are you with the job after the competency tests?

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**Table 8.0**

Rating scale	4= Very satisfied	3=Satisfied	2=Dissatisfied	1=Very dissatisfied	Total	Mean	Level of acceptance
Responses	29	51	513	59	1,354	2.08	Rejected

Source: Field work, 2024

**Interpretation:** The item in table 8.0 indicates that 79% of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction after series of competency tests because of the government of Kaduna state under the leadership of Governor (El-Rufai, 2017) in the literature review sees the competency tests as a means to weed the unqualified teachers to maintain high teaching standards in primary schools. This item was rejected with a mean score of 2.08.

**Research question eight:** To what extent do you feel recognized for your teaching ability through competency tests?

**Table 9.0**

Rating scale	4= Extremely correct	3= Considerably Correct	2= Somewhat Correct	1= Not at all	Total	Mean	Level of acceptance
Responses	10	10	21	601	1,303	1.10	Rejected

Source: Field work, 2024

**Interpretation:** The item in table 9.0 expressed that 92% of the respondents indicated that their teaching abilities are/were not recognized by the authority as treat to job loss continue throughout the competency tests (El-Rufai, 2017). This item was rejected with a mean score of 1.10.

**Research question ten:** Do you believe competency tests influence your decision to remain in the profession?

**Table 10.0**

Rating scale	SA=4 Strongly Agreed	A=3 Agreed	D=2 Disagreed	SD=1 Strongly Disagreed	Total	Mean	Level of acceptance
Responses	100	41	101	410	1,135	1.74	Rejected

Source: Field work, 2024

**Interpretation:** The item in table 10.0 shows that 63% of the respondents disagreed that competency tests cannot influence their decisions to remain in the profession because the tests were perceived as “one-size-fits-all” by (Yusuf and Ahmed, 2019) in this literature. Therefore, the item was rejected with a mean score of 1.74.

## DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The followings are summaries and discussion of the major findings of the study:

The study discovered that competency tests can help teachers’ identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement, motivation, job satisfaction, innovation, and professional development.

Another finding of the study is that, competency can boost teachers’ confidence, enhance their ability to adapt to new teaching methods, and subject matter expertise.

The study showed that teachers who demonstrate their competency through these tests are not recognized for their expertise since promotion and remuneration has not improved.

Finally, in spite of the positive impact, challenges persist in the following areas: inadequate infrastructure, poor attitude to teachers training, tests stress, pressure and anxiety among teachers, potentially affecting the teachers’ well-being.

However, the vision behind the competency tests is to upgrade the quality of teaching and the academic performance of pupils for quality education in the state primary schools. Therefore, the competency tests came as government new thinking or changes in an existing system or organization. Change is permanent but not easy to go by it. Social scientists like Ogionwo, W and Otite (2006) sees “change as a process by which various aspects of a society and its component groups are modified in the course of time”. Change, whatever form it may take, the end product may either be functional or dysfunctional.

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## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION**

It is crucial to clarify the goal of this study is to investigate **The Effects of Competency Tests on Primary School Practicing Teachers under Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Board, 2017-2022**. The major information gathered during the field survey are presented, analyzed, and given suitable interpretation in the previous chapters. In this chapter, summary, conclusion and recommendations in the opinion of the researcher, will help the teachers, pupils and the state government particularly SUBEB the regulatory body.

### **SUMMARY**

The study highlights the effects of primary school teachers' competency tests in Kaduna state. Competency tests positively impact teachers' identify areas of professional needs, job motivation, confidence, innovative, and subject matter expertise. In addition, teachers' has improved in the use of instructional materials and widen their knowledge of using new methods of teaching. While positive outcomes are evident, challenges such as inadequate manpower training, insufficient funding, infrastructure deficit, and stress to perform well and test anxiety need to be addressed.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that competency test can have positive and negative effects on both teachers and school administrators. First and foremost, it enhances teacher quality performance and educational outcomes. Teachers need motivation to ensure job satisfaction, that school regulatory bodies must demonstrate a high sense of commitment on things that can drive teacher growth and pupils' success and well-being. Competency test must be valid, reliable and free from biases. Therefore, professional body must be involved in developing competency test to ensure it is comprehensive devoid of negative criticism. This will help maintain the integrity and credibility of the test, as well as the teaching profession as a whole.

The success of this research depends very much on the disposition of the teachers who are the curriculum implementers, SUBEB the supervising body and the pupils who are the end product. Therefore, there is the need to identify and understand their challenges and to help them overcome such challenges for the success of the government new thinking of improving primary education sector in Kaduna state.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a) The study recommends that SUBEB in conjunction with Local Government Education Authority, provide regular training and support to teachers. Teachers' and school administrators should adopt method that will build trust on each other.
- b) For proper assessment of teachers,' SUBEB should involve professional bodies like National Teachers Institute (NTI) and Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) in the preparation, computation and implementation of teachers' competency tests.
- c) State and local government authority should address infrastructure deficit and resource gaps like human and instructional materials.
- d) Teachers who do not meet the competency tests standards could benefit from detail feedback of their performance. Constructive feedback by the management can guide them in areas that need improvement, fostering continuous professional growth.
- e) The dismissal of competent teachers by the school management might erode public trust in the education sector. Transparent communication about the reason behind such decisions and efforts to improve the evaluation process can help rebuilds trust on the management.

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