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## COMPARISON OF BIOLOGY TEACHERS' COMMITMENT TO TEACHING IN SABON-GARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KADUNA STATE

By

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### ABSTRACT

*This research compares the commitment status of Biology teachers to the teaching profession in Kaduna State in two different historical periods in Nigerian history. The study reviewed issues which borders on the commitment and official roles of teachers from the time of missionary sole control of education to post-independent era. Comparative analysis of the two periods were examined in terms of teachers' training, commitment and degree of motivation, the tendency to engage in other paid work outside teaching and the degree of communal involvement. The study adopted a survey design. The population of the study was all the serving and retired biology teachers in Sabon-Gari Local government Area, Kaduna State, from which one hundred and twenty teachers were randomly sampled from ten secondary schools in the study area. The research instrument was a Teachers' Role and Commitment Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and mean score statistical tools. Findings from the study revealed that the teachers in the first period group, 1969 - 1989, were rated higher based on their commitment, positive impacts to teaching and learning than the second period group, 1990 - 2010. Suggestions were made which included; the government at all levels should grant soft loans and award other amenities to teachers on a regular basis, and there is an urgent need to institute the "Teacher of the Year" Award; an annual competition which would be held in the state and around the country to seek out and honour the best teacher of the year. The research concludes that Effective teaching can only occur when teachers promote excellence and are motivated to perform at a high level*

**Keywords:** Biology, Commitment, Education, Teacher

### INTRODUCTION

Education in the broad sense is the entire process of socialization by which men and women learn to adapt to and where necessary, conquer their environment. It is the process of developing the cognitive, affective and psychomotor faculties of individuals and groups in order to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to survive and make

progress in the human society. Oyeleke (2012) noted that Nigeria began a foray into new civilization upon the introduction of Western education by Christian missionaries in the late 20th century. The establishment of missionary schools opened up prospects of employment in the education industry. Nigerians who were successfully trained became either teachers in the expanding education industry or

catechists in their churches; and in most cases effectively combined the two.

In this dual role, teachers exerted enormous influence in the school, church, and local communities. They served as secretaries to the local community, at times the village letter writer, and often next to the king, district head or traditional ruler. In these various roles teachers assumed many responsibilities. For instance, a child manifests deviant traits such as truancy, alcoholism, drug addiction, etc., the parents depends on the teacher to enforce disciplinary measures either in the school or in the locality. The teacher was not only regarded as an educator but also a disciplinarian, role model, and guide. Moreover, it was the duty of the teacher to ensure that members of the community lived in peace and harmony. The teacher also organized social/cultural meetings and activities for members of the community. Summarily, the teacher in a community was a "person of culture" and an expert in child rearing, Oyeleke, (2012).

The authoritarian structure of the Traditional systems of government in Nigeria during the pre- and post-colonial periods provided a bulwark for the strong authoritative voice of teachers in and outside the school. Their voices carried weight in the Community Development Association and any other gatherings in general. They constituted the first set of educated elites in Nigerian society. The colonial government's intervention aroused various perceptions about teachers and the teaching profession. Invariably, the changing perception inspired different voices. Aftermath the Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914, the then Governor General; Fredrick Lord Lugard adopted an Education Ordinance that distinguished between the missionary schools and those established by the government. This distinction led to discrimination in the awarding of grants-in-aids and differential treatment of teachers trained and working in schools established by the two competing institutions -

mission and government. This inspired and culminated into the establishment of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) founded in 1931 as an amalgamation of the Lagos Union of Teachers (established in 1925) and the Association of Headmasters of Ijebu Schools (established in 1926) (Oyekan, 2000; NUT, 2011). The Government's intervention in education and especially the formation of NUT with its bargaining power increased the profile of teachers in political circles. This period also witnessed a gradual decline in the influence of teachers in the community and the school. The decline in power led to waning commitments to the teaching profession. The trend continues for several reasons. One was the rise of other professions that motivated a higher sense of responsibility with increased respectability. Such professions include law, accounting, medicine, and banking. Educated elites were no longer limited to the teaching profession, but drawn to other areas of interest.

According to Nakpodia and Urien (2011), the teacher stands out as one the most important factors determining the quality of education and its contributions to national development. At every level, people who go to school look on the teacher for the acquisition of the necessary skills to enable them become what they want to be. Thus, students often look on the personal qualities, their educational qualities and professional competence which are rewarding to the learners. It is on this note that the role of educational administrators in assisting teachers to help students achieve the objective of instructions in their various fields of endeavor stands paramount and a challenge in the 21st century. How should the teacher present himself in order to get his message across? How can he communicate effectively in the class? Under what kind of environment can the message get across? What pedagogical approaches are effective? These among other question are of interest not only to students and teachers but also to school administrators.

Teacher commitment has been identified as one of the most critical factors for the future success of education and schools (Huberman, 1993). Teacher commitment is closely connected to teachers' work performance and their ability to innovate and to integrate new ideas into their own practice, absenteeism, staff turnover, as well as having an important influence on students' achievement in, and attitudes toward school (Firestone, 1996; Graham, 1996; Louis, 1998; Nias, 1981; Tsui & Cheng, 1999). The level of teachers' commitment is considered to be as a key factor in the success of current educational reform agenda as it heavily influences teachers' willingness to engage in cooperative, reflective and critical practice.

Akinduyo (2014) observed that developed countries would always trace their roots of success in all sectors to the quality of their teaching profession. The long chain of all other professions like medicine, law and engineering originates from the teaching profession. But the reverse is the case in Nigeria. Teaching has been seen as a mere activity, occupation and vocation for the academic losers. Some people even refer to teachers as substitutes on the bench of life, who are left with no option than to proceed and get employed into the teaching profession.

Parlak (2007) noted that biology is a continuously developing discipline which obtains information on the existence, development, modification and interrelations of the living things on earth. It also adds new information on the existing knowledge; health, diseases, marriage and family relationships. He further stated that even learning and memory can be solved only via biology education. Biology is very important subject; it has to be given more attention. It enables one to understand himself and his intermediate environment. In addition, the knowledge acquired in biology subject is applied in many fields as Medicine, Biochemistry, Pharmacy, Microbiology and Agriculture among others, hence the

imperative of the biology teacher's commitment status.

Oyeleke (2012) noted that there is a visible decline in the quality of education at the primary and secondary levels in Nigeria. Shaibu (2014) analysed the statistics of candidates' achievement in biology in Kaduna state between the years 2005-2012, and noted fluctuation in the achievement of students in biology. This development is not healthy for a nation that intends to be among the twenty economic and technologically viable nations by the year 2020. Scholars have attached various reasons to this problem. This trend is not unconnected to the negative perception of teachers who are the key players in education and the school system. This development is not healthy for a nation that intends to be among the twenty economic and technologically viable nations by the year 2020. Scholars have attached various reasons to this problem. In Nigeria, teacher's problems have always been treated with levity and foot dragging approach, a situation that is the mistaken notion of our leaders that teachers cannot constitute a formidable threat to the corporate policy. The Nigerian public had inherited from the missionaries, way back in the colonial days, the misinformed idea that teachers' reward is secured for them in heaven, a notion, which has continued to negatively shape their view of the profession. However, in a materialistic society like ours has come to be, this situation can no longer hold ground. The result has been a constant class between teachers and their employers, leading to low performance on the part of the teachers.

Husain (2005) reported that many teachers regard the profession as a 'transit job', pending when they will secure another job. What could be responsible for this worrisome attitude by teachers towards the teaching profession in Nigeria? The paramount questions to ask include what factors are responsible for this trend and what has been the

status of teachers in terms of their commitment, roles and 'status' over time in Nigerian history? There is the need to provide answers to these questions.

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study sought out to:

1. Compare the commitment of Biology teachers in Kaduna State over two historical periods;
2. Determine the representation status of Biology teachers over two historical periods in Kaduna State and;
3. Examine the changing roles of Biology teachers in Kaduna State over period under study.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. Are there any significant difference in the commitment of biology teachers to teaching between the periods of 1969 - 1989 and 1990 - 2010?
2. Are there differences in the representation status of biology teachers over the periods of 1969 - 1989 and 1990 - 2010?
3. How has the role of biology teachers in Kaduna State changed?

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs a descriptive research of a survey design, which entails studying the subject through the collection and analysis of data from a group selected from among the subject or area. The study was carried out in Sabon-Gari Local Government Area. This local government was selected because of its heterogeneity and the urban spread of schools. The population for this study included all three hundred and twenty (320) teachers in the ten (10) secondary schools in the area under study. The schools are

Government Girls Secondary School, Dagon-Bauchi (Senior); Aminu Government Secondary School; Government Secondary School, Chindit Barracks; Government Commercial College Muchiya; Government Secondary School Kwangila; Government Girls Secondary School, Samaru; Government Secondary School Samaru, Government Secondary School, Bomo and Government Secondary School, Basawa.

The sample of the study consisted ninety (90) serving and retired biology teachers selected randomly as the study sample, using stratified random sampling technique. Out of the ninety sample, thirty were in service since the 1980s; another thirty since the 1990s, while the remaining thirty were employed between 2001 to 2010. This was to ensure a broad view of teachers' opinion. The instrument used to collect data for the study was a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Teachers' Roles and Commitment Questionnaire" (TRCQ). In addition, the study employed roundtable discussions by 6 groups of teachers. This included two rounds for the group of 1969-1989, two rounds for the 1990-2010 groups, and two for the retired group.

The research instrument was subjected to face and content validity was validated by two experts in the field of test and measurement, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. A pilot study was undertaken to some selected teachers who were not part of the study, in a bid to establish the potential of the instrument to obtain the desired information. The schools used for the pilot study were Demonstration Secondary School ABU, Kongo and GGSS, Zaria. The reliability of the instrument was established through the Test-Retest method. A correlation coefficient of 0.79 obtained from the tests indicated the instrument's reliability.

The questionnaires were self-administered and collected by the researchers. In the case of the focus group discussions, prior arrangement for training and the terms of the discussion were laid out to the discussants. Three groups were drawn from the

teachers employed in the 1980's, the 2000's, and the retired group. Each discussion lasted for about one hour thirty minutes on average. A secretary was appointed for each Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to write down focal points of the discussions and individual viewpoints.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Research Question 1:** Are there any significant difference in the commitment of biology teachers to teaching between the periods of 1969 - 1989 and 1990 - 2010?

Table I below presents the teachers' response on their commitment to the teaching profession. The respondents were asked if the 1969 - 1989 group was more committed, more focused on teaching than the 1990 - 2010, and which group combined other work to their teaching profession.

**Table I:** Teachers' Response on Commitment and Focus to Teaching

Items	Agree		Disagree		Mean score
	Score	%	Score	%	
Commitment to teaching profession	60	66.67	30	33.33	3.50
Focused on teaching only	55	61.11	35	38.89	3.80
Combining with other work(s)	60	66.67	30	33.33	3.12
Total average score/%	58.33	64.817%	31.67	35.183%	3.47

From Table I, an average of 58.33 respondents (64.817%) agreed that teachers in the period 1969-1989 were more committed than those of the 1990 - 2010 periods; with an average mean score of 3.47. Although the 1969-1989 groups were more committed than the 1990-2010 groups, the individual personalities of the teachers overlapped in the two historical periods. This issue was not solely due to personality, but also reflected a spate confronting the teaching profession. History suggests that when those individuals established their own schools they were more committed to the teaching and learning outcome.

A visit to some of the government schools revealed a discouraging difference in the punctuality and commitment of teachers between the normal class and lesson periods. Teachers often displayed a lackadaisical attitude during their normal lesson period while deeply committed to the extra lesson period. This was due to the extra income earned by

teaching the extra lesson period. Although Ojo (2001) noted that the school's working conditions and salary could be responsible factors as a stimulating and supportive environment is absolutely necessary for effectiveness not only in teaching but in every profession, Oyeleke (2010) however stressed that, "a good teacher must be committed to teaching, students and the school in general. He must be committed to the goals, principles and philosophy of the school." Part of that commitment is regular and punctual classroom attendance and the performance of duties assigned by the head teacher. This finding agrees with Aluko's (2010) view that today's teachers are ineffective. He directly links teachers' commitment with teachers' effectiveness and dedication to duty. A measure of teachers' non- commitment to duty is the practice of engaging in business and other duties outside teaching especially during the school hours. This is basically viewed as unethical.

Comments that emanated from the Focus Group Discussions (FDG) with some of the teachers were:

*The teachers in 1969-1989 periods were more dedicated, committed, well respected and more disciplined. They were resourceful and goal oriented. However, teachers are not respected nowadays as before and the parents are not cooperating with the teachers in the process of disciplining their wards, which is further compounded with the abolition of corporal punishment in most schools today.*

*Teachers from the 1969-1989 period seemed to be more disciplined, resourceful, target oriented and achieving, and in wielded class control. The reverse is however the case in recent times (1990-2010). This could be attributed to financial and social challenges facing them, and which both the government and society finds difficult to resolve. Strike*

*action was uncommon with teachers before 1989. Teachers were treated well by the society. Unlike now, in order to make ends meet, teachers nowadays engage in other jobs, thereby placing teaching as a part-time job. (Focus Discussion Group Excerpt, 2015)*

The overwhelming consensus among respondents, as reflected in the above excerpt, was positively disposed to the period 1969 - 1989, and divided in terms of dedication, commitment, and discipline among other groups.

**Research Question 2:** Are there differences in the representation status of biology teachers over the periods of 1969 - 1989 and 1990 - 2010?

The following variables were presented separately in this question: the level and quality of training, job satisfaction, public recognition and respect, motivation and remuneration. It answers the question: was the 1969 - 1989 group better trained, more respected with higher job satisfaction, and better motivated and remunerated than the 1990 - 2010 groups?

**Table 2:** Respondents Perception on the Representation Status of Biology Teachers

Items	Agree		Disagree		Mean score
	Score	%	Score	%	
Training	65	72.22	25	27.78	2.80
Respectability	50	55.56	40	44.44	3.65
Job satisfaction	55	61.11	35	38.89	3.43
Motivation	60	66.67	30	33.33	3.10
Remuneration	50	55.56	40	44.44	3.45
Total average score/%	56	62.224%	34	37.776%	3.286

The average total, percentage and mean scores of the entire variables used for the

representation status of biology teachers favored the 1969 - 1989 group with an average score of 56

(62.224%, mean=3.286), while the 1990 - 2010 group scored a total average of 34 (37.776%). On the issue of respectability and remuneration, there was an even perception of the quantity of respect and remuneration of teachers between the two groups, while those who favored the 1969 - 1989 group as better respected and remunerated totaled 50 (55.56%) with 40 (44.44%) who believed that the 1990 - 2010 group was better respected and remunerated. If this is the true picture of teachers and the teaching profession, the question to pose is why the professional education standard is falling in spite of improved remuneration. Several factors could be responsible for this decline.

Firstly, the gross increase in salary is usually not proportional to the market indices and purchasing power of money. The percentage increase may also not be proportional to the rate of inflation. Secondly, the process of modernization has greatly increased the desire for luxury goods that command a high price. Generally, it may be observed that society is becoming increasingly ostentatious and materialistic.

The rise of other professions offering higher salaries and better work conditions has had a negative ripple effect on the teaching profession. For instance, teachers whose former students now work in oil companies earn salaries that are one hundred percent higher than that of the teacher. The distributive imbalance of resources in the society contributes to a view constituting a threat to teachers' image.

The data demonstrated that the 1969 - 1989 groups were better trained with detailed training skills than the 1990 - 2010 groups. An overwhelming majority, 65 respondent or 72.22% of the study

sample agreed that 1969 - 1989 groups was better trained, while 25 respondents or 27.78% favored the 1990 - 2010 group as better trained with higher public recognition.

Oyekan in Oyeleke (2015) noted, "a functional teacher education program is statutorily expected to inculcate a system of virtues in contemporary trained teachers". Apata (2007) opined, "Teaching is a profession and for every profession, training as well as aptitude is necessary... and those who are not born teachers can cultivate through training". Koleoso (2003), when commenting on National Policy on Education observed that research recommends that a teacher should be academically and professionally qualified. The overwhelming consensus of the respondents was positively disposed to the 1969 - 1989 groups, but divided in terms of dedication, commitment, and discipline.

On job satisfaction, 55 (61.1%) respondents agreed that the 1969 - 1989 group was more satisfied in the teaching profession while 35 (38.89%) believed that the 1990 - 2010 group possessed higher job satisfaction.

Similarly, 1969 - 1989 groups was more motivated than teachers in the 1986 - 2010 period as shown from the data. 60 teachers (66.67%) agreed with this finding, while 30 (33.33%) disagreed.

**Research Question 3:** How has the role of Biology teachers in Kaduna State changed?

The teachers' responses on the changing role of Nigerian teachers are presented in Table 3. The role of teachers has changed significantly over time. Table 3 below shows the trends of changing roles.

**Table 3:** Teachers' Responses on the Changing Role of Biology Teachers in Kaduna State

Items	1969-1989		1990-2010	
	Score	%	Score	%
Community spokesperson	60	66.67	30	33.33
Surrogate parent	70	77.78	20	22.22
Cleric	50	55.56	40	44.44
Political Representative	30	33.33	60	66.67
Counseling services	50	55.56	40	44.44
Teaching	65	72.22	25	27.78
Total average score/%	45.83	50.93	44.17	49.07

### ***Community Spokesperson***

The overwhelming perception is that teachers (biology inclusive) in the 1969 - 1989 group were largely performing the role of community spokesperson. This was attributed to the fact that at that time, they constituted the elites in the society. 30 (33.33%) believed that this role continued during the 1990 - 2010 period, while 60 respondents (66.67%) believed that teachers continued in the role from 1969 to the present.

### ***Surrogate Parent***

Teachers as surrogate parents was more pronounced during the 1969 - 1989 period as indicated by 70 respondents (77.78%), while 20 respondents (22.22%) held the view that the 1990 - 2010 group acted as surrogate parents. This trend could be attributed to a significant decrease in the Nigerian boarding school system, which may not be unconnected to arbitrary rise in the influx of day and private schools and the refusal of parents to send their wards on long distance.

### ***Cleric***

As respected members of religious organizations, teachers during 1969 - 1989 were believed to have effectively combined cleric work with teaching as reflected by 50 (55.56%) of the respondents supporting this finding. This may not be

surprising as missionaries owned the bulk of schools during this period. Even after the government takeover of schools, through Grants-In-Aid the personnel remained largely clerics as most schools were rooted in the philosophy of the founding missionaries.

### ***Political Representative***

30 (33.33%) of the respondents agreed that teachers in the 1969 - 1989 group acted as political representatives, while 60 (66.67%) of teachers in 1990 - 2010 group acted as political representatives. This position is well illustrated by Majasan (1995) who wrote that a teacher:

*Is the gateway to organization of the grassroots, into an active participating group in civil administration and in the performance of community services? He is the acknowledged leader who serves the community as secretary or interpreter at grass root meetings, religion or environmental health and acts in this capacity without any remuneration. In rural areas, he is the beacon of light for the population, sensitizing them to all*



*kinds of developmental movements  
and health activities that yield  
great dividends.*

### **Counseling Services**

This role remained consistent across the two historical periods. Respondents expressed an overlapping opinion on the role of the counselor with 65 respondents (72.22%) supporting the 1969 - 1989 group as counseling service providers, 25 (27.78%) agreeing that the 1990 - 2010 group provided the same service.

### **CONCLUSION**

Teaching is a complex and demanding profession. To sustain their energy and enthusiasm for the work, teachers need to maintain their personal commitment to the job (Day, 2000). This concept of 'commitment', as investment of personal resources, has long been associated with the professional characteristics of a teacher. It is widely recognized that the role of the teacher has intensified, and teachers are needing to adapt to 'bureaucratically driven escalation of pressures, expectations and controls concerning what teachers do and how much they should be doing within the teaching day. Effective teaching can only occur when teachers promote excellence and are motivated to perform at a high level. Central to the absence of commitment is inadequate salary. This portends that teachers should be well remunerated to enhance their focus and encourage total dedication. The age-old saying that "teachers' reward is in heaven" has become moribund and should be discountenanced as it affects the quality of students' education.

The researchers therefore conclude that a call for a re-orientation of the Nigerian citizenry on the place of teachers in education and the collective destiny of a people is imminent. The Nigerian government and people need to start appreciating basic and specialized

education as a fundamental developmental issue. We as a people must put an end to the excessive politicization in the establishment and administration of schools and colleges. Though politics cannot be totally removed from the educational enterprise, it is imperative to make a clear distinction between the technical aspect of educational planning and administration and the politics of education.

The researchers believe that findings from the study would shed light on the various roles of biology teachers in the school and community, and the consistency of their roles in the history of Nigeria. It would also bring to bear the changing roles of teachers in Kaduna State, vis-à-vis trends in teachers' perception and their commitment to the educational development of Kaduna State (and Nigeria in general).

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were made with the hope that if implemented, would in no small measure boost the status of biology teachers in Kaduna State and Nigeria as a whole:

1. The status and image of teachers (biology inclusive) need to be positively projected, to engender self-confidence and a positive attitude toward the teaching. Teachers on their own part should always dress appropriately and professionally, projecting the teaching enterprise as a professional one.
2. Teachers should be well remunerated, and in some cases be appointed permanent secretary in the State Ministry of Education.
3. The government at all levels should grant soft loans and award other amenities to teachers on a regular basis.
4. There is an urgent need to institute the "Teacher of the Year" Award, by which an annual competition would be held in the state and around the country to seek out and honour the best teacher of the year. The kind of public

interest which such a competition and award can generate will undoubtedly draw the attention of the youth to the values inherent in teaching. Of course, teachers of exceptional output deserve as much recognition as beauty queens and sports celebrities!

5. The Federal Government should also consider awarding the National Merit Awards and other national honours to a few distinguished members of the teaching profession annually. If those they have taught and moulded at all levels turn out to become GCFRs, CFRs QFRs, then at the least, the best of them at all levels deserve such awards.
6. Government should name Schools, colleges, as well as roads and public buildings after retired teachers (dead or alive) who during their working years, made exceptional contributions to the education sector. When we decide to bid goodbye to mediocrity, when we rediscover education as a fundamental value, then the transmitters of knowledge shall take their rightful place in society, and the best of them shall be remembered for generations.
7. We call for a re-prioritization in the allocation and management of our human and material resources, giving education the pride of place it deserves. Even with recent improvements in budgetary allocations, what education gets is still too far below what it merits to get. We call for a re-formulation of our educational goals, principles, and policies, with the aim of demolishing sterile and superfluous structures, of liberalizing and decentralizing the management and administration of education and of reducing to the barest minimum the impact of government bureaucracy on the educational enterprise.
8. Launching a new campaign towards cleaning up and restoring the lost glory of the traditionally revered titles of Teacher, Headmaster, Professor, Provost and Rector.

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