

**ACHIEVEMENT OF SOKOTO STATE
GOVERNMENT IN THE EDUCATION
SECTOR**

Being a paper presented to the Nigerian Governor's
Secretariat on working visit to Sokoto State

Presented by

Alh Muhammad Bello Sifawa
The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education, Sokoto

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INTRODUCTION

I am delighted and humbled to be asked to talk to this distinguished gathering of chieftains in policy matters. The purpose of this dialogue is not to pontificate or proffer absolute solution. Instead I believe the aim is to raise, highlight and reveal lacunae in our practice, in order to stimulate thinking towards and share the burden of finding solutions.

The overall aims of every responsible government in education are to provide education of every high quality and to not only maintain that standard, but also to strive to improve on it. The National policy on education emphasises this very clearly and the Federal Government has specified minimum standard in this regard. {NPE 3rd edition 1998 refers}

This is clearly what the state Ministry Education is pursuing vigorously. Policies and programmes on Education are being implemented by the Ministry through its professional Department such as inspectorate, Primary and Junior, Senior Secondary, Planning, research and statistics and Education resources. Others include Administration and Finance Department. The Ministry has a number of Parastatals under its care for the implementation of policies and programmes. These include state Universal Basic Education Board, State agency for Mass Education among others.

The Development of Education at all level relies heavily on the provision of Basic Education of good Quality as provided in one of the EFA Goals. Thus, the attainment of EFA and MDG Goals by the target year 2015 is being truncated especially if one looks at the pace of each Education is being developed nationally. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) law that demands for all children to be in school has not seen the desired enrolment in our schools due to a number of factors such as

partly, poor infrastructure, inadequate Teachers, obsolete learning materials, poor Monitoring and Inspectors, poverty among others.

Informed by these factors, the state Government declared the state of emergency in the area of Education and articulated a number of policies and programmes aimed at raising the state from its disadvantaged position to a level where it can compete favourably with other states of the Federation. This paper seeks to highlight the policy thrust and modest achievements of the Aliyu Magatakarda Wamkoko (Sarkin Yamman Sokoto) led administration in Sokoto State.

The paper is organised into five segments. The first part presents the introduction. The second segment discusses the policy thrusts, while the third segment looks at the policy areas as it affects education. The fourth segment gives a summary of achievement in the education sector in Sokoto state while the fifth part deals with challenges and constraints faced by the administration in meeting the goals of providing education for all.

POLICY PURPOSE

It is widely argued that Nigeria's ability to realize its vision of becoming one of the twenty top economies in the world by the year 2020 is largely dependent on its capacity to transform its population into highly skilled and competent one capable of competing at global level. The education sector is of pivotal importance to the actualisation of current national and global policy objectives.

The policy thrust of the present administration in the State in line with the National Policy on Education which is to catch up with dynamics of social changes and demands in education with a view is providing an Egalitarian Society. The administration has come up with policies and programmes to realise EFA, MDG and Vision 2020 objectives that will

convert the Socio-Cultural position of the society towards education. The policies and programmes are made to increase access to education for all and provide self employment opportunities for the youth.

To ensure National security and democratic stability, three major issues have to be addressed and given adequate attention, these are:

1. Food security
2. Poverty reduction (through youth empowerment)
3. Educational development.

There is no gain saying the fact that among the aforementioned, education is the strongest and most viable foundation upon which freedom, security, democracy and sustainable development could be built. It is a catalyst for change and an instrument for building economic and social ties within the communities. It is a weapon against ignorance and a major component in poverty reduction and overall development. It could be said that sustainable democracy and National Security would be a mirage without viable and sound educational foundation and development.

KEY POLICY AREAS

The Obasanjo administration reintroduced the UPE which is now renamed Universal Basic Education in 1999 and was made into a nine year programme made up of 6 year Primary Education and 3 year Junior Secondary education. By December 2005, the National Council on education mandated the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council to restructure and realign the existing primary school curriculum and the junior secondary curriculum to make them conform with the 9 year basic education curriculum. The decision to establish UBE program was part of a larger program of reforms by the Federal Government in response to the National and global reforms of the social sector. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in

2006 developed a 9 year basic education curriculum which facilitates the attainment of the core elements of the national economic empowerment and development.

Having that in mind, the administration of Alh (Dr.) Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko (Sarkin Yamman Sokoto) has made it a cardinal objective to give education the maximum priority status it deserves. An educationist himself, the Governor introduced a number of strategies and programmes to continue to strengthen and improve the policies towards achieving the objectives of making the State one of the most developed States in education in the country. To achieve this, the administration has expended about N2, 642,264,093 in executing projects aimed at providing qualitative and accessible education to the people. These projects include the construction of new institutions especially Junior Secondary Schools in the Rural and hard reach areas, expansion and rehabilitation of dilapidated structures in both Primary and Secondary schools in the state, upgrading and establishment of additional women centres to serve as continuity centres for married women and those dropped out due to some reasons, establishment of women education centres in many Local Government Areas and providing uniform to all female students in female boarding schools in the state.

BASIC EDUCATION : The state is implementing fully the Universal Basic Education Laws. In line with this, the state has also enacted its own laws as mandated by the National Council on Education to accommodate its own peculiarities, needs and aspirations.

Pre- Primary School is critical in determining the performance of pupils in later years of their education. Before the advent of the present administration this sub sector had become exclusively a preserve of the children of the economically well-to-do families. To break this trend, Government established 112 ECCDE centres attached to our 1962 public

primary schools to enhance access to Education by all which is line with both the Millennium Development Goals and Education for all.

In addition, the State Government has established more primary schools in every nook and crannies of the state to increase access to education and make it affordable for all. Government has embarked on various mobilisation campaigns to sensitize parents towards sending their children to school on the state media.

Government has also rehabilitated the three model Boarding Primary Schools one in each of the three Senatorial Districts and has directed each of the 23 Local Government Councils to establish one in their areas.

In realisation of gender disparity in the enrolment of girl-child, the State Government has been fulfilling its financial obligation in implementing the UNICEF/DFID/FGN sponsored Girl-Child Education Project in the state. Schools under the project received teaching and learning materials, and their teachers are being updated now and then on new skills on teaching. Communities are encouraged to take ownership of their school through provision of grants to their Management Committees. About N500 million has been so far expended on the project since inception

In order to achieve positive socio- cultural attitudinal change towards western education, the State Government has introduced a programme of integrating Secular Education into Islamic and Education in the State. In line with the National Policy on Basic Education the state Government has embarked on expansion and establishing Junior Secondary Schools in the State.

The government also embarked on massive purchase and distribution of instructional materials and other essential supplies such as text books, exercise books and computers. Series of workshops and

seminars were also organised in order to improve teachers' competence and performances.

To ensure policy continuity, the Government has set-up education Resuscitation Committee jointly funded by the state and the Local Governments to address problems in the subsector such as; infrastructure, learning materials, teacher development and welfare. In fact teachers in the state were among the first in the Country to start enjoying the 27.5% or TSS increment negotiated by the NUT.

In order to ensure smooth transition from Basic Education to Senior Secondary Education Government has embarked on massive expansion of infrastructural facilities and establishment of new Secondary Schools in the State. This has given rise to the number of students enrolled in the school. The students' enrolment as at 2008/2009 session stood at 104,626 out of which 27370 were females. In order to alleviate the problems faced by the parents in sending their wards to Schools, the State Government has made education free from primary to Senior Secondary Education for both indigenes and resident community members. The policy involves non payment of tuition fees, provision of free three square meals for boarding students, free uniforms for female students in boarding schools and payment of registration fees for NECO, WAEC and other examinations. From 2007 to 2009 Government has spent the sum of N131million Naira on payment of examination registration for all students regardless of the States of origin.

PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE, CONSTRUCTION, EXPANSION AND REHABILITATION OF SCHOOLS

The state Government embarked on the construction and expansion of Schools and Colleges as well as rehabilitation of dilapidated structures in various secondary schools in the state including the establishment of a special school tagged Almajiri Integrated Model School (AIMS) at Shuni

town of Dange/Shuni Local Government at the cost of about 300 million, construction of Girls Arabic school at Arkilla Low cost at the cost of N40 million, construction of classrooms, staff quarters and Hall at Sidi Mamman Islamiyya for Quran and General studies at about N40 million, rehabilitation of structures at Federal Science College, Sokoto at the cost of about N10million and expansion of JSS Gagi at the cost of N36 million.

Other projects include the expansion and rehabilitation of GSS Tangaza at the cost of N150 million, expansion and rehabilitation of GDSS K/Marke at over N50 million, expansion and rehabilitation of GDSS Bodinga at N33 million, rehabilitation and expansion of JSS Salame at about N36 million, rehabilitation of GGUS Bodinga at about N150 million, and a host of others all over the state amounting to about N3 billion Naira.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND OTHER SCHOOL ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES

The State Government has purchased and distributed text books for Junior Secondary Schools and sports equipment worth over one hundred million Naira (N100,000,000.00) science materials worth N300,000,000 first aid equipment worth N20,000,000 boarding facilities including mattresses, rubber mats uniforms etc worth N112,000,000 and furniture worth of N40,000,000.00

STUDENTS EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

The Magatakarda administration has increased the number of State indigenes on educational exchange programme in 18 Northern states to about 1000 students thereby enabling the state to fill its quota in all the Unity Schools of Northern States.

SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

In a bid to increase the number of Science and Technical Education students, the science and technical education board has been upgraded to a full pledged Ministry of Science and Technology. Schools under the Ministry have also been increased from six to ten in order to enhance access to Science and Technical Education and equity.

In the same vein, the State Government has also sponsored State indigenes to study in some science schools in and outside the State which include Federal Science College Sokoto, Key Science Academy Abuja and Zaria Academy at the cost of N75, 000,000.00

HIGHER EDUCATION

Conscious of the need to ensure self reliance in manpower for the state and development of higher education sector, the state owned tertiary institutions have been given priority attention. Apart from the state Polytechnic and College of Education, Sokoto, plans have reached advanced stage for the take off of the state University. Expansion of infrastructure to cope us with the increasing enrolment of students was carried out in both the College of Education and State Polytechnic. Similarly, government also provided funds for equipping the Libraries and workshops in order to fulfil the requirement for accreditation of courses run by these institutions.

In order to meet manpower requirement in the state especially in Medical Sciences and technology the state Government has embarked on providing full-sponsorship of qualified people from the State to undertake various courses within and outside the country. Apart from indigenes sponsored to study in various institutions within the country, more than 163 students have been sponsored to study various courses in medicine, science and technology abroad which cost the State the sum of N600, 000,000.00.

The State Government also sponsors state-indigenes to undertake matriculation courses at UDUS, School of Basic Studies Funtua, BUK FUTOMINA and State Polytechnic. Similarly, the State Government purchases direct entry admission forms, UMTE forms and distributes same free of charge to prospective candidates of state origin.

In addition, registration fees for all fresh and continuing students in Tertiary Institutions are being paid by the Government. Another programme for those Students with deficiency in the number credits required for admission into Tertiary Institutions has been introduced in form of Extra-mural classes to make Students re-sit WAEC or NECO and get the necessary credits to get admitted into Universities.

ADULT AND NON FORMAL EDUCATION

The establishment of the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non Formal Education in 1990 gave rise to the establishment of the State Agency for Mass Education by the State Government. In line with the 9 year basic education programme, this agency carries out four key programmes for different target groups. The programmes include.

1. Basic literary programme
2. Post literacy programmes
3. Continuing education programme and
4. Vocational educational programme

For the successful implementation of these programmes the Agency has a total of 733 centres across the state with a total enrolment of 112, 176 adults undergoing various programme.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In view of the dynamism of knowledge, State Government has introduced a policy of professional development for teachers and inspectors. Teachers are supported to attend workshops, seminars and

- conferences organised by institutions and professional bodies or organisations to keep them abreast with the current trends and best practices in curriculum delivery.

In 2009, about 3,000 teachers from both primary and secondary schools attended various trainings and workshops in and outside the State.

STAFF WELFARE

The State Government has introduced a welfare package for teachers to boost their morale and enhance their productivity. Motorcycle loans were provided to teachers and they will benefit from the State Government's housing and vehicle loans just like other professionals.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring units at SUBEB and the Inspectorate Department of the Ministry of Education have been repositioned for effective monitoring and supervision of schools.

Additional Zonal offices have been established to ensure wider coverage of schools while functional vehicles have been provided in all the Zonal offices for school inspection and the head quarters of the Ministries of Science and Education. Three vehicles have been provided for monitoring of Girl Child Education project, Nomadic education and Adult and Non Formal Education Programmes.

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

1. These laudable policies and programmes put in place by the State Government have successfully reversed the stagnating trend of education in the state. The low enrolment which cut-across the subsector has begun to change and with every level witnessing serious improvement. At pre-primary level the gross enrolment ratio has risen

from 36% in 2006 to 48% in 2009 while in the primary schools the number of pupils enrolled rose from 488,355 in 2006/07 to 871,054 in 2008/09 session. Similarly, the Secondary School level rose to 104,626 with 27,370 being females

Girl child enrolment at pre primary rose from 24, 046 in 2007/08 to 35, 14 in 2008/09 session while Primary enrolment (females) increased from 140,884 in 2006 to 174,666 in 2009. At JSS level the enrolment of girls increased from 5,237 in 2006 to 17,388 in 2009, and that of Senior Secondary enrolment for girls increased by more than two folds from 3,593 in 2007 to 8,937 in 2009.

2. As a result of the Government's public enlightenment campaigns, there is increasing awareness in the society on the importance of education as an instrument for change and national development. Government now receives many requests almost on daily basis for the establishment new schools in communities that lack them.

3. The provision of learning materials, rehabilitation of dilapidated structures and other essential school supplies have made teaching and learning more conducive and have also aided students retention in schools.

4. With the coming to office of the present administration in the State, the students exchange programmes has been revitalised such that the state has been able to fill its quota in all the exchange programmes schools in Northern Nigeria.

5. State Government policy in the development of higher education has provided the state indigenes access to higher education within and outside the State.

6. Due to improved welfare package for teachers in the state, the morale of teachers has been enhanced with the resultant effect of reducing the mass exodus of teachers to other professions.

7. Increase in the feeding rate has to a large extent restored confidence of parents and guardians to send their wards to boarding schools.

CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

1. Despite the fact that there has been improvement in enrolment of pupils, students and adults across all levels of education, a number of illiterate children and adolescent youth and school age children who are not in school or not enrolled in the literacy programme are of grave concern to the State Government. This is largely due to some lingering elements of socio-cultural attitude towards western education.
2. Another constraint is the burden of funding education. Despite the huge expenditure required by the education sector, the burden of education funding falls heavily on the shoulders of the State Government. There is little private or community participation in education.
3. Though the Government is expending a lot of resources, the improvement of physical facilities in school, the current teacher-pupils ratio of one to ninety (1:90) especially in rural areas as against the universal standard of 1:40 is very high.
4. In spite of the improved remuneration for teachers there still remains brain drain occasioned by better salary and condition of service offered by other competing professions.
5. There is inadequacy of qualified teachers in both primary and secondary schools.

CONCLUSIONS

Let me conclude this by pointing out that, the State Government has made giant strides not only in revitalising the education sector but also in

coming up with strategies that will ensure stability and continuity as well as growth of education in the state.

At this juncture, I would like to assert that provision of qualitative and functional education is a collective responsibility and should not be left to the government alone. Every stakeholder should contribute his own quota towards the development of education in the state.

- - Thank you for listening and God bless.