

**MY OBSERVATION ON THE PAPER: THE PUBLIC SECTOR  
REFORM – BRINGING QUALITY TO SCHOOLS IN KWARA STATE**

AT THE SYMPOSIUM ORGANISED

BY

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AT THE

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The article - Public Sector Reform: Bringing Quality to Schools in Kwara State - provides an interesting read. It listed in its Background to Reform (pg 7) the components that constitute the education sector in Kwara State as comprising:

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
- The State Universal Education Board (SUBEB)
- The Teaching Service Commission
- The Polytechnic
- Three (3) Colleges of Education, and
- The College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies (CAILS)

Certain issues however need to be clarified in order to buttress the paper's comprehensive assessment and report on education reform in Kwara State.

The submissions of the article concerning the Ministry of Education prior to the introduction and commencement of the current reform described the Ministry of Education as having failed comprehensively in its mentoring and oversight functions to education as a whole in Kwara State. While one does not counter the truth or otherwise of the claim, sufficient premises need to be built to justify the credence of such strong condemnation as revealed in the report.

- What informs the assertion that the Ministry of Education has lost its capacity to provide leadership and steer the process of education in the state (page 8)?
  - Did the submission come as a result of polls conducted? Or specific investigations/surveys carried out?
  - What structures define the operation of the ministry? Are there directorates within the ministry? Were there terms of references for the directorates? What are the expected deliverables from the directorates? What patterns of interrelationship exist between the different directorates? How do the directorates synthesize information flow and harmonize their operations?
  - What percentages of accomplishments have been taken as indication of success in the past? What records clearly indicate a departure from the success trail of the past? A brief statement indicating the gap between expected outcomes from these unit and available results would serve to provide credence to the submissions of the article e.g the Directorate of ....which is in charge of ... no longer performs its role of .... There could be figures (data) to indicate shortfalls from expected outcomes from particular directorates. All these would serve to indicate that conscious efforts have been undertaken to verify what still works and what has failed to work within the ministry. These figures / data would validate the strength of the eventual submission and would differentiate it from the prattling of the uninformed. It will also form the basis of the salvage effort.

- Corruption, politicking and nepotism can indeed serve as impediment to effective functionality in the Ministry. If corruption and other vices have indeed virtually stalled the effective working dynamism of the ministry, has the reform come around to correct such deficiencies occasioned by non conduct of promotion exercises for officials who are long overdue? Have there been deserving incentives to officials in recognition of hard work and technical competence. Could there be clarifications of the manifestations of these negative trends as they affected employment, promotion, allocation of resources, etc. What imbalance has it created in schools and education in general?
- Was a SWOT analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threat) conducted on the Ministry of Education to find out what was working and what was not? Or was the reform a 'touch of inspiration'? Note the quotation: The further backward we look, the further forward we go?
- What is the missing ingredient in the wheel of progress?
- Education is a system. It has components. The interactions of its components follow an orderly pattern. For a system to run smoothly, its components must strike a harmonious chord. In as much as an ailing ministry of education cannot bring out a positive educational outcome, a lasting positive outcome may not be attributable to concepts running independent of enabling structures. The sweeping changes of a reform will need the framework of an enduring structure. If there is a collapse of the structure of education administration, i.e the Ministry of Education, then it should be addressed first before attention shifts to processes.

Is the idea behind the reform linked to a model or a theory?

The most single procedure in the education system should be traceable to a point of attachment in the national policy on education.

There should be a link facilitating interchange of findings between the Faculty of Education, UNILORIN, and the Ministry of Education. There should be a theoretical think-tank who bring outcomes of research for implementation. What avenues exist for research outcomes to be utilized in influencing Kwara State policies on education as government tackles:

- Poor academic performance
- Teachers' job satisfaction
- Eradication/reduction of youth violence
- Dwindling enrolment in public schools.
- Training and retraining of teachers, and exposing them to new techniques
- Adoption of e-learning and utilization of ICT in schools.

## **FOCUS ON SUBEB IN KWARA STATE**

It is important to establish the statutory relationship between SUBEB and the Ministry of Education, and officially document such for posterity. This would forestall such responses as captured on Page 10.

There is a need to clarify the responsibilities of the office of the SUBEB chairman and see how the position of the chairman could become more functional without putting it on a collision course with the Office of the Commissioner. The hierarchy of its relationship with other officials of the Ministry of Education should also be clarified and documented. This, when done, could conveniently safeguard against reverting to a position when the SUBEB chairman would see himself as representing what he is not.

Rather than dwell on the denigrating process affecting teachers' appointment and promotion before the reform , there is a need to beam the searchlight on the challenges associated with recruitment of Primary school teachers in Kwara State.

- What body is responsible for appointing teachers to the different levels of education?
- What basic criteria should qualify teachers for employment?

There should be a drive towards ascertaining the role of NUT , Teachers Registration Council and COPHSON as well as empowerment of these bodies for better management of teachers affairs.

These steps will inch us closer towards setting up a Code of Conduct and Integrity Charter for Teachers in schools which will be embraced by the parties concerned (i.e teachers and their employers).

There is no statistical evidence to back up the report/observation of apparent lack of quality in acquisition of numeracy and literacy skills by school children. Was the submission based on the outcome of compilation of results of particular examination? Were investigations carried out to find how deep or widespread this concern of poor acquisition of numeracy and literacy is? Were there comparative investigations between private and public schools? If a gap exists and is in favor of the private schools, then what factors could have been responsible? As such, will there be a need for Performance Enhancement Programme for teachers in public primary schools?

### **PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Examination malpractice is rife, but were there official records of schools/education officials/students who were involved? Were investigations carried out to ascertain the extent of culpability of state officials? What steps are being taken officially to discourage the continuation of this negative trend? Indeed, are there statistical proofs that students' performances have taken a dip prior to the current reform?

There is a need to explore relationship between the Faculty of Education and the state Ministry of Education.

### **THE REFORM ACTION**

Many good things have clearly emerged with the reform. For one, it is reported to afford a safer and a more edifying treatment of teachers in respect of the payment of their salary; it saved the state government whopping sum of money which before then, had probably always been frittered away, and hopefully plugged a leak; it advocated . It reported an improvement in performance of students but data comparing the pupils' performance during the pre -REFORM era to the REFORM era, are not made available.

The FG policy concerning the transition of pupils from primary to junior secondary school should be appropriately taken in the context of its interpretation which included the appraisal of the Continuous Assessment and Cumulative Record of the child.

But the paper did not comment beyond secondary school education. Are other levels of education not a concern of the Ministry of Education?

## **SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The state government should set up a committee on **Harmonization of the Policy Thrust on Education** in the state.

Areas to look at:

1. Decentralization of school administration in ways that would empower principals of secondary schools and headteachers in the primary school to hire and fire teachers and maintain discipline ( e.g. PTA teachers, Auxilliary teachers).
2. Means of decongesting overcrowded classrooms through building of more classrooms; redistribution of pupils from heavily-populated schools to sparsely-populated schools.
3. Ensuring credit pass at the SSCE and NECO examinations for a minimum target of 70% of the candidates registered for the examination.
4. Establishment of Board of Governors comprising distinguished members of the community where the school is located for all secondary schools in Kwara State. This should be done with a view to encouraging community participation in education affairs. Such boards should comprise at least 8 distinguished members from the community. This is akin to the *own a school* project.
5. Delineating of schools and to carve out units within the school (e.g. Head of Science, etc) and to ensure that students are located in schools within their residential vicinity.
6. Teachers who are being posted to rural communities could be given incentives in lieu of the social amenities that might deny them and perceived discomfort of leaving the city. Such rural communities receiving such teachers could also assist by providing accommodation.
7. The G2 Examination (First School Leaving Certificate Examination) should be resuscitated as an index of measuring performance of primary school pupils as from next academic session.

8. Teaching and learning of the indigenous language should be encouraged to sustain our cultural heritage.
9. Principals and Headteachers may be held accountable for pupils' failure.
10. Government may need to stop the practice of defraying the cost of certificate examination for students.
11. Infrastructural aids to learning i.e. adequately-equipped laboratories, functional school libraries, and workshops for technical schools should be provided throughout the state.
12. Teacher - pupil ratio should be critically examined as recommended in the NPE.
13. The number of arms of a class in a school needs to be determined such that schools are not overpopulated (i.e. a school principal does not have more than 900 pupils in a school)
14. Government may enact a law making it an offence for any parent that refuses to send his/her child to school from the primary level to JSS 3
15. Teachers who possess qualifications higher than the basic requirement for their current teaching posts at the primary school level (e.g. holders of Masters and Ph.D) should be posted to secondary schools or tertiary institutions for optimal usage of their potentials.

#### **REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EXAMINATION OF POLICY THRUST ON EDUCATION IN THE STATE**

1. Do analysis of extra classrooms needed.
2. Development of a joint scheme of work for primary, junior and senior secondary school.
3. Compare SSCE / NECO result for ten years. (1999 - 2009)
4. Compile a data of teachers in public secondary schools in the state based on teacher / student ratio of 2:40
5. Compile a summary of number of teachers per subject in the state.