

## Our mega schools 'll make Ondo second to none –Mimiko

*From ADEWALE SANYAOLU, London. Sunnewsonline.*



Governor Olusegun Mimiko

Ondo State in the past used to be a leading state in the area of providing sound and qualitative education, even before the present Ekiti State was carved out of the State. But the long years of military rule coupled with the lack of political will by those that held sway in the past sent the state to the doldrums in the education sector.

While the upper class discovered an alternative to educating their children through high-paying private institutions, children of the underprivileged, who in

tattered uniforms, must carry their own chairs and desks to school on daily basis, were being taught under the trees by teachers who may not have been paid their salaries and allowances.

That explained building of Caring Heart Mega Schools in Akure, Okitipupa, Ikare and Ondo, among others. The mega schools, according to Governor Olusegun Mimiko, were designed to make them meet the taste of the moment, in order to return the lost glory of the state in the education sector. In this interview, Mimiko “It is the determination of this government to ensure that our primary schools are not death traps. The fact is that many things we ought to have done earlier have been abandoned long time ago. The journey of a thousand miles begins with a step. I know that we shall get there, even if it takes 10 years.” Excerpts:

What will happen to the old schools? At the moment, several old schools are already being upgraded through different degrees of renovation. For instance, the Saint Peters Demonstration School in Akure is currently undergoing renovation and also construction of new building, recreation and sport facilities, beautification, landscape and access road within the school

premises. In all, there are over 57 school projects being undertaken across the State. Similarly, there is also a total overhaul and renovation of facilities going on presently at Saint Helen School.

Our plan for the old schools is to also add a touch of modernity to the ambiance to make it convenient for learning. Again, for the old schools that we cannot embark on fresh reconstruction for, we are making sure that all facilities in new schools are what will be found in the new ones. So in this instance, there is no disparity between old and new schools. And all these we are doing to make sure the students have a sense of belonging and for the first know that they have a government that cares about their future. Mega school concept

The mega school concept is an initiative of the government to replicate a model of sophisticated buildings that match the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) specification for world class school that encourages learning.

The mega models are in three types, the type A, which will accommodate 1500 pupils with 25 pupils in each classroom. The type B, will be constructed to accommodate 500 pupils while the type C carrying capacity will be 250, built to meet needs of pupils in different parts of the state.

The proliferation of the caring Heart Mega School in all senatorial districts in the state is to allow Ondo State's pupils have access to modern education techniques. Adding touch of civility to the schools, they are being equipped with the-state-of-the-art learning apparatus, instructional tools, resort center, art room, computer center, functional library among others.

Already, the process of making private schools in the state status irrelevant is beginning to bear fruit with the completion of world class standard mega schools in the senatorial districts of the state, even as our primary schools are being turned into model schools, the latest being the total transformation of the hitherto dilapidated All Saints Anglican Primary School, Oke Ijebu, in the state capital.

It is the determination of this government to ensure that our primary schools are not death traps. And to achieve some of these targets, government would be spending half a billion naira on massive renovations and fencing of all dilapidated school buildings across the state. The fact is that many things we ought to have done earlier have been abandoned long time ago. The journey of a thousand miles begins with a step.

I know that we shall get there, even if it takes 10 years. Our aim for upgrading the schools like I said while laying the foundation of one of the completed schools, was to bridge the age-long educational gap between the rich and the poor. The scheme is not only aimed at arresting the imbalance in the education between the children of the rich and the poor, but one that is novel and capable of revolutionising education in the state.

**Quality control of teachers**  
On quality control, we have inaugurated the state Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), with the purpose of monitoring and enhancing the performance of teachers and students in public schools in the state, setting, maintaining, and improving education standards and performance indicators as approved in the curriculum below tertiary level, ensuring the credibility of the education system and development. The QAA is also saddled with the responsibility of appropriate educational development of learners and ensuring constant review of policies and practices.

So with these structures on ground, we have been able to avert short coming that may hinder the philosophy of the Caring Heart mega school project. Also the conditions of service for the teachers in the area of remuneration have greatly been looked into to make life better thereby assuring them of job security.

**Maintenance of the facilities**  
This is one of the significant areas of priority in the mega school project and to be on a safer side we deliberately outsource the maintenance aspect of the facilities and buildings of the mega school to a private organizations to sustain the maintenance culture to the later.

Also, another important advantage of the outsourcing of the maintenance of the sophisticated equipment and facilities was that it will not only extend its durability but also generate employment for the people of Ondo State. Already, we have arranged an upfront payment of three years for the outsourcing companies.

Training the trainers  
In our practical commitment to raise the profile and standard of learning in the Ondo State, our administration has just completed another round of its man power development programme for classroom teachers, to update and prepare them for the challenges ahead. However, the training and retraining exercise is a statutory routine in the Caring Heart Mega School Project that had been fashioned to entrench sustainability in Ondo State education transformation process.