

# Expert Opinion

## School Development Grants (SDG)

by Marito Garcia, PhD

The concept of SDG is hinged on effective decentralisation of education systems across the world because as a service, education is too complex to be efficiently delivered and distributed centrally. The administration of school systems is very demanding in terms of managerial, technical and financial capacity of governments which is one immediate cause of failure in many school systems in both the developing and developed world. Decentralised decision-making, therefore, fosters accountability at the local level and ensures that schools provide a teaching and learning environment that reflects school level priorities, values, and reality.

The administration of SDG by Lagos Eko Project is designed using the principle of decentralisation- giving voice and power to principals and to school-based management committees in order to improve students' learning outcomes. For example, schools are given between N1.5 million and N4 million per annum (depending on school size). These discretionary funds are granted to schools based on their School Improvement Plan developed by the School Project Implementation Committee. This model has been used in other countries such as United States, Mexico, Honduras, Mozambique, Brazil, El Salvador and the Philippines. School based management and decentralised management of financial resources have led to better standardised test scores in some countries while Mexico, particularly, has witnessed more involvement of parents, reduced drop-outs, failure rates and repetition.

The Lagos Eko Project implements the medium-partial form of school based management and the impact of decentralised budget control through the SDG has been quite strong. For example, it increased the percentage of five credits pass including English and Mathematics in the WASSCE exams of senior secondary school leavers dramatically over the three years that the programme was implemented from 18.40% at baseline in 2009 to more than 38% in 2012 for Lagos State senior secondary schools comprising 314 schools and over 256,484 students.



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Dr. Garcia's main professional interest is in human development—in education, focusing on early childhood development, conditional cash transfers (CCT), youth employment and skills in the new economy including transitions from education to employment, and application of new technology in education (massive open online courses). He has written several books including his latest book The Cash Dividend: The Rise of Cash Transfers Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2012). Marito has a Ph.D. in Economics and Planning from the Erasmus University Rotterdam, Institute of Social Studies, in the Netherlands.

# Quizzing THE Teacher.

## 1. What is SDG?

- a. School Development Grants
- b. School Differentiate Grade
- c. School Diversity Ground
- d. School Developed Grading

## 2. The most effective means of transfer of grants to schools is through?

- a. Education vote to the Ministry of Education
- b. Cash disbursement
- c. Direct electronic transfer to school's account
- d. All of the above

## 3. Apart from population, School Development Grants are given based on?

- a. School's work load and community
- b. School Improvement Plan
- c. All the school needs for the year
- d. School expenses incurred over time

## 4. The main objective of grant to schools is to?

- a. Acquire properties of benefit to schools
- b. Improve the learning outcomes of students
- c. Equip the principal's office
- d. All of the above

## 5. The Lagos Eko Project does not classify one of these as School Development Grants.

- a. Community donation
- b. Governor Education Awards
- c. Public-Private Partnership Grant
- d. None of the Above



Special Adviser to the Governor, Lagos Eko Project Ms Ronke Azeez with some chiefs and students of Lagos State Model Senior College Agbowa-Ikosi (inclusive unit) celebrating the presentation of a school bus by the Project.

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Students of Vetland Senior Grammar School, Agege performing with their band-set.

## SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS AS TOOL FOR ENHANCED PERFORMANCE

Modern trends in school system revolve around stronger accountability, which is facilitated by resource inputs, regulations and compliance with a set of guidelines drawn from an evidence-based school policy. These inputs usually come in form of School Development Grants, which are discretionary funds given to schools to improve their overall performance.

For the Lagos Eko Project, School Development Grants have been the main tool deployed to achieve the Project's development objective which is to improve the overall standard of education by enhancing students' learning outcomes. Towards this end, all 642 public junior and senior secondary schools annually receive between N1.5 million to N4 million each, depending on the size of the school, to augment schools' non-salary expenditure. The grants are spent on items such as instructional materials and other inputs: training opportunities for teachers, teachers' development and support programmes, volunteer teachers' allowances; laboratory equipment, academic competitions and prizes, remedial courses, library materials; reading enrichment strategies for skill development programmes /ICT to improve teaching and learning as well as other innovative activities. Not more than 30 percent are allowed for minor repairs.

The School Development Grants are disbursed to schools based on approved School Improvement Plan (SIP), which normally include activities that directly impact students learning outcomes, as it is believed that priority needs are defined at the school

level. With this support, leadership and accountability has been enhanced at both school and district levels as there has been continuous progress in WAEC results over time. Also, school leaders take increased responsibility for teaching and learning activities going on in their schools; apart from other positive indicators like school tone, community participation, improved teachers and students attendance, upward moving of schools from low-performing to high-performing, enhanced professionalism of teachers and team-building activities.

In order to achieve optimum utilisation of resources, school leaders, district officers and School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) members are trained in school improvement planning and grants operations, while Project Implementation Committees were formed to prepare and implement the school improvement plans. The SIPs are reviewed and approved at the district level, according to the school development grant manual usually given to schools for guidance. An essential part of the overall process is grant monitoring by districts, consultants, members of the SBMC and the Project Support Unit as well as facilitation and monitoring by Zonal Project Administrators to ensure the standards of data gathering and analysis, reporting and accountability are upheld. The information gathered from the monitoring exercise serves as part of the assessment towards the Governor's Education Award.

## Welcome Note

I have no doubt in my mind that you enjoyed the previous editions of the Eko Landmark. We, at the Lagos Eko Project, will not relent in our efforts to constantly update you on developments in Lagos State public schools and education districts.

We will continue to work with our numerous stakeholders towards an excellent implementation of the project and the actualisation of its development objective.

This edition gives insight to the tremendous innovations in the school system through the School Development Grant. It also assists the principals and other school managers in making priority decisions to enhance students' learning gains. Today, in Lagos State schools, leadership, responsibility and accountability of school leaders have been enhanced and this has helped in boosting the overall performance of students.

Read with joy!



**Ms. Ronke Azeez**  
Special Adviser to the Governor/  
Project Coordinator, Lagos Eko Project



School Development Grants have contributed to education in Lagos State public schools



Mrs. Taiwo Iji  
Tutor General/Permanent Secretary,  
Education District V

Mrs. Taiwo Iji is the Tutor General/Permanent Secretary of Education District V consisting of Badagry, Ojo, Ajeromi/Ifeleodun and AmuwoOdofin. She takes us through the effect of the Lagos Eko Project School Development Grants to teaching and learning in her District.

What major change in your district can you attribute to the Lagos Eko Project grants in the past three years?

I was the first Tutor General to run to Alausa when WAEC result of last year was released because I was so excited to see schools within my district coming out with wonderful results. Schools that were having 10 or 20% had 100% five credits including Mathematics and English. So we can say District V has achieved the Lagos Eko Project's objective of increasing students learning outcomes. A lot of the students have not seen computer before, but with Lagos Eko Project grants, students' have computers in their schools; the teachers use them to teach and during break time, students run to Eko resource room to use the computers on their own so they are now computer literate. There is a huge focus on teachers professional development and teachers now feel confident as a result of training and retraining they received likewise principals are trained on leadership and school management.

How have your students performed over the years?

My district won 27 Governors' Education Awards in 2011, but in 2012 we had 16. This drop was linked to shortage of staff so I employed extra volunteer teachers to address this problem. I also got a consultant and we carried out a research that showed that a significant number of low-performing schools in the district are in the riverine areas, so out of the 300 newly recruited teachers, 50% were deployed to the area. The district also makes examiners' reports from WAEC available to schools. In addressing the problem of wrong shading of OMR sheets by the students, we got sample OMR sheets to continuously educate students on how to shade properly. I can tell you now the issue has been surmounted.

Through the grant implementation, principals are equipped with the knowledge of school budgeting, following due process and financial management.

How is grant monitored and how has the monitoring progressed?

At District V, we make sure schools acknowledge receiving the grants. Zonal Project Administrators (ZoPAs) then visit schools, collect data and check if procedures were followed and school improvement plans carried out. Although a certain time in the year, Lagos Eko Project gives a date for all districts to move out for grant monitoring, the ZoPAs go to schools on a weekly basis, while the grant monitoring team which comprises of school-based management committee, project implementation committee also monitors the implementation process. I also visit schools within the district unannounced.

What are the emerging good practices from the grant implementation?

The standard of teachers has risen to that of world best because they are have firm control of the classes and they are more effective teachers. Through the grant implementation, principals are equipped with the knowledge of school budgeting, following due process and financial management. Grant monitoring by the districts and stakeholders in education is also an example of good practice which needs to be sustained. The overall school administration from the leadership to students learning, effective teaching and school environment has improved learning outcomes. Public school students are learning better now and there is no more inferiority complex with students of private schools.

School Improvement Plan must be student-centred



Mrs. Titilayo Okuneye  
The Principal of Onike Girls' Junior High School

The Principal of Onike Girls' Junior High School, Mrs. Titilayo Okuneye, has said that student-centredness must be the main feature of any school improvement planning. Mrs. Okuneye explained that School Development Grants necessitate School Improvement Plan and that all the activities in the plan must relate directly to students' enhanced learning outcomes.

'As an educationist, I consider my students' overall academic

improvement when preparing the School Improvement Plan with other members of the Project Implementation Committee which includes some of my teachers and a member of the School-Based Management Committee. One of the several things I have done with the school development grant is capacity building for my teachers as this will last forever. My teachers have been trained and re-trained in leadership, ICT and management, and I can see evidence of knowledge being transferred to the students', she said.

The Principal also attributed the neat and conducive environment of the school to the impact of the grant, as she was able to carry out some minor repairs and employ the services of a Sanitation Manager to imbibe the culture of sanitation and hygiene in the students.

An excited Mrs. Okuneye remarked, 'My students have recorded tremendous improvement in the core Lagos Eko Project subjects from August 2009 to July 2010; Mathematics from 31.3% to 72.6%, English from 27.2% to 75.6% and 29.2% to 71.6% in Basic Science. This jump in improvement, I will associate to school development grants' impact in the lives of my students'.

School Development Grant Earned me One-Day Principal Honour



Omobolanle Ogunenika

My name is Omobolanle Ogunenika, a first-year student of Agidingbi Junior Grammar School. I am the current One-Day Principal after having won a school level test-based competition in Mathematics, English and Basic Science. This test evaluates the effect of Lagos Eko Project on the learning gains of individual students in the school. I can conveniently say that the disbursement and efficient use of School Development Grant

by my school contributed immensely to my becoming the one-day principal.

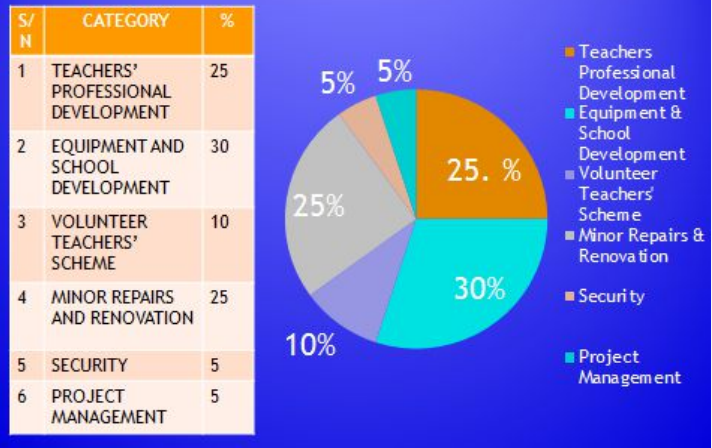
The introduction of School Development Grant in my school has helped in training and retraining teachers, thereby developing new and different methods of teaching and making use of instructional materials to aid students' learning. Apart from this, my school has been able to purchase a lot of instructional materials and our library has now been stocked with lots of books to imbibe a reading culture in the students. My favourite part of the school is the Eko Project Resource Room because the teachers make use of projectors, e-tutors and computers to teach which has made learning fun and interesting.

As One-Day Principal, I met with all teaching staff and emphasised the need to maintain high performances in academics and extra-curricular activities. Also, I coordinated the assembly, met with the Students' Representative Council and hosted the executive members of the Prestige Country Club, Ikeja, who gave out 10 scholarship awards to some of my schoolmates.

Process for Receiving School Development Grants



Grant Utilization By Category



I represent the interest of the community –SBMC Member



Mrs. Ogechi Oke-Aminu  
SBMC Member, Lanre Awolokun  
Senior High School, Gbagada.

What is your role as a member of School Based Management Committee (SBMC)?

As an SBMC member, I participate in the preparation and implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and I also ensure that all laid down guidelines are adhered to. With the cooperation of members of the Project Implementation Committee, we have achieved tremendous change in many areas since we started utilizing the School Development Grants. The students reading habit has improved, thanks to the Lagos Eko Project for the School Development Grant which facilitated the provision of the school library. Also the school tone and general hygiene of students has improved with the engagement of a Sanitation Manager in the school. The contribution of SBMC members in the improvement of schools and the actualisation of the project goals is awesome. I can describe them as the watchdog of the Eko project at the grassroot making sure that the concept and focus of the project is always on track by calling the attention of the school to any deviating standards. We have a lot of professionals amongst SBMC members and they help the school in their professional capacity sometimes.

The relationship between the SBMC and the School management has been very cordial as we are partners in progress and we meet regularly towards our children's learning achievements.

What is the relationship between the SBMC and the school management?

The relationship between the SBMC and the School management has been very cordial as we are partners in progress and we meet regularly towards our children's learning achievements. As SBMC, I am expected to represent the interest of the community and the school and this has increased the demand for accountability within the school system.

Do you think SBMC should continue to be in schools?

Definitely, schools have benefitted from the committee and I see that continuing into the future. Acknowledging the interest of the community is paramount, it makes things work better and I think this should be replicated in other social development sectors. The SBMCs are resourceful and they have also supported the Project's grant monitoring and asset documentation exercises.

Grant Disbursement Table

	UPCOMING SCHOOL(S)	VERY SMALL SCHOOL(S)	SMALL SCHOOL(S)	MEDIUM SCHOOL(S)	LARGE SCHOOL(S)	VERY LARGE SCHOOL(S)	TOTAL
DISTRICT I	1	2	17	32	27		79
DISTRICT II	5	9	22	58	9		103
DISTRICT III	51	25	41	11			128
DISTRICT IV	5	15	40	29	2		91
DISTRICT V	13	30	43	31	18	1	136
DISTRICT VI	4	9	49	39	4		105
SPECIAL							12
POPULATION SPECIFICATION	0-300	301-500	501-1000	1001-2000	2001-3000	3001-4000	
AMOUNT PER SCHOOL	1.5m	2.0m	2.5m	3.0m	3.5m	4.0m	