

Islamiyya, Qur'anic and Tsangaya Education

Introduction

In northern Nigeria, Islamiyya, Qur'anic and Tsangaya Education (IQTE) is important because, in some states, it accounts for over four-fifths of all schools. Many of their pupils come from poor families. In many Islamiyya schools, two-thirds of the pupils are girls. Communities value these schools and many parents prefer them. Like state schools, many of the Islamiyya, Qur'anic and Tsangaya schools are demanding more and better teachers, better facilities and buildings, and better supplies of textbooks and teaching materials.

Both state governments and communities appreciate the value of integrating non-religious and religious subjects into the curricula of Islamiyya, Qur'anic and Tsangaya schools. This integration is regarded as essential for children to succeed in modern society. ESSPIN supports this aspiration for integration by helping deepen understanding of the issues and needs, and by developing and testing ways of integrating religious and non-religious subjects in primary school curricula.

What is ESSPIN's approach?

ESSPIN's approach is based on two premises. Firstly, that with a small stimulus from states, rural communities can mobilise themselves and move towards meeting the Education For All (EFA) targets. Secondly, that dialogue can build trust, and groups that have traditionally been inclined to oppose change can become active actors in implementing the very initiatives that they resisted.

Strategy

In the programme's three northern states (Jigawa, Kaduna and Kano), ESSPIN consults with state, civil society and religious leaders to develop a strategy that integrates religious and non-religious curricula. The strategy has three elements:

Improving understanding and developing options for integrating religious and non-religious curricula through studies and data collection.

Developing guidelines for regulating and monitoring schools to improve the quality of education.

Trialling new ways of integrating religious curricula with non-religious curricula.

Qur'anic schools

Modern Qur'anic day schools

Tahfeez primary – follow state approved integrated curriculum

Tahfeez general – do not follow state approved integrated curriculum

Tsangaya boarding schools

bush – pupils work on farms, communities provide food

suburb – pupils do tailoring and other work

urban – pupils often survive by begging

Islamiyya schools

Islamiyya primary – follow state approved curriculum

Islamiyya general

Bridging gaps

ESSPIN works with education authorities and communities to help develop ways of bridging gaps between religious and non-religious school curricula. This involves arranging dialogues between traditional elders, religious elders, local government education authority staff, head teachers, teachers, malams, parents and pupils. ESSPIN also undertakes research and surveys to gain a better understanding of issues and attitudes.

Establishing systems

Taking public perceptions into account, ESSPIN is helping the states consider supervisory boards for IQTE to develop state management capacity and establish school regulations.

Introducing best practices

ESSPIN also introduces best practices, for example in community participation, enrolment of girls and motivating teachers, and helps states pilot practices they think are appropriate to their situation.

Future challenges

Malams normally avoid getting involved in the development programmes of agencies such as the Department For International Development (DFID) but have responded very positively to ESSPIN's initiatives. Maintaining the trust built in the pilot phase will be a major challenge as the state governments roll out the pilot programme beyond the initial Local Government Areas (LGAs).

ESSPIN will continue to promote better understanding of IQTE. Particular issues to tackle are the place of girls and women in Islamiyya schools, and the Almajari system in Tsangaya schools where students beg to support themselves and the malam.

Additional funds are required if integrated education is to be scaled up at the state level, so ESSPIN is helping states seek funds from federal government. A further way of raising support is by sharing best practices and lessons learnt from ESSPIN's experience, by means of conferences and through a range of other communications.

Common perceptions of IQTE in northern Nigeria:	Quality of education is better in Islamiyya, Qur'anic and Tsangaya schools than in state schools	Islamiyya, Qur'anic and Tsangaya schools build the child's moral character	Parents and communities prefer schools that integrate religious subjects into the curriculum
	Administrators and teachers are more committed in Islamiyya, Qur'anic and Tsangaya schools than in state schools	Community ownership makes Islamiyya, Qur'anic and Tsangaya schools more efficient than state schools	Traditional elders and religious leaders are concerned about the poor quality of education in state schools
IQTE boards could:	Co-ordinate data collection, policy and planning	Introduce innovative ways of integrating curricula	
	Improve the quality of education and introduce integrated curricula	Networking and fundraising	
Trials of best practices Tsangaya cluster pilot:	Community school complements cluster of Tsangaya schools	Children released from Tsangaya school for agreed hours to attend community school	Intensive teacher training
	The community provides a one-room building for the community school	Well-trained motivated teachers from the community	Master trainers and supervisors School support committees
Trials of best practices Islamiyya school pilot:	Targets young Muslim girls as Islamiyya schools have more female students	Satisfies community and parent demands for provision of good quality secular and religious education under one roof	Trains female teachers from the local community who act as role models for the female students