

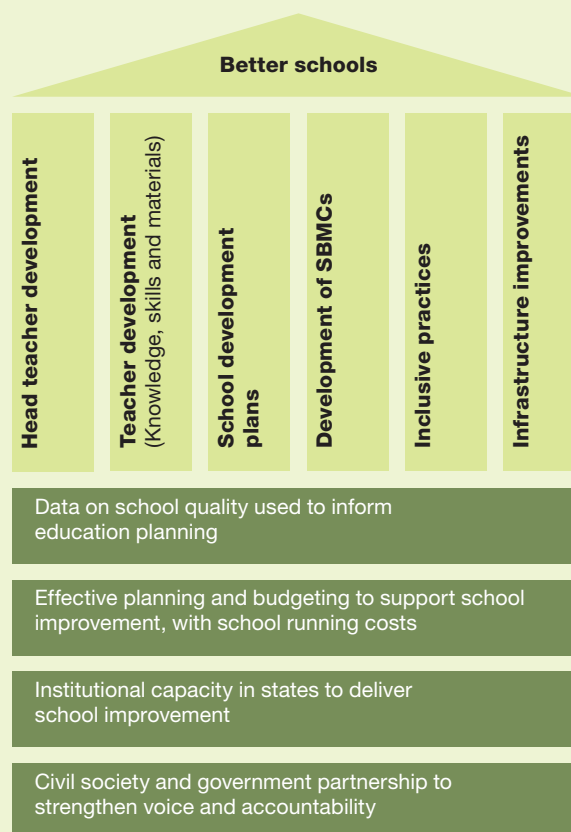
Transforming basic education – an integrated approach to school improvement

Introduction

ESSPIN's approach to raising standards in Nigerian schools is to focus support on the key elements that work together to deliver quality education – an integrated approach – rather than tackle problems in isolation.

For schools to be transformed into dynamic learning environments many things need to happen simultaneously. There need to be changes in the educational system as a whole, such as improving educational management, teaching skills, school infrastructure and learning materials. There also need to be changes outside schools, for example in education funding and governance structures and systems, and in the social and cultural attitudes of parents and communities. These elements of ESSPIN's approach are shown in the diagram (opposite).

An integrated approach to school improvement



The pillars of effective learning

Head teacher and teacher development

Schools are at the heart of the education system so ESSPIN's package of reforms focuses on strengthening school leadership and management, the teaching and learning taking place, and the relationship with the communities they serve. This work involves developing essential skills through modular programmes of training for head teachers and teachers, and in-school support and follow-up. The process is led by the State School Improvement Teams (SSITS); small teams of carefully selected, committed education professionals.

School-based management committees

Schools do not operate in isolation. Local communities, in demanding their rights to basic education for their children, must also understand their roles and responsibilities in helping the state to deliver it. School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) make community 'voice' heard both within the school and by government. They monitor the performance of schools and provide additional resources. ESSPIN is helping to develop the necessary policy frameworks and to train SBMC members so communities are actively represented in the education system.

Inclusive schools

Inclusiveness is about meeting the learning needs of all children, acknowledging and respecting groups that are often marginalised because of their gender, disability, ethnicity, HIV status, poverty etc. ESSPIN is promoting the development and implementation of clear state policies on inclusive education. Schools must adopt practices that ensure a welcoming classroom environment for all kinds of learners and must develop the teaching skills to be able to meet individual needs in classes of 50 students or more. SBMCs have a crucial role in getting out-of-school children into school.

Improved infrastructure

ESSPIN is demonstrating how a solid, secure and safe learning environment will enhance the learning process and encourage children to attend school. Schools need well-designed, well-built and well-maintained classrooms, the necessary teaching and learning resources, and an adequate water supply and toilet facilities to meet the needs of the children and their teachers.

A firm foundation for Nigeria's schools

Policy, planning and people

ESSPIN is supporting state and local governments as they work to improve the management and governance of education by developing robust government systems and structures to provide the necessary institutional support for schools. ESSPIN is helping to translate long-term education strategic plans into Medium-Term Sector Strategies (MTSSs), and then into operational budgets. States and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) are being assisted to rationalise financial systems to improve funding flows to schools. We are also building the capacity of the sector with appropriately skilled personnel and other resources to better manage the delivery of quality education.

Management information

An effective Education Management Information System (EMIS) provides solid data for developing policies, and for planning and budgeting. ESSPIN is providing practical support to improve school censuses in order to get accurate data on schools, and is supporting monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the state ministries of education have reliable and timely information on progress against agreed indicators.

ESSPIN is helping to develop systems to monitor learning achievements (MLA) in literacy and numeracy to guide policy makers and to inform the development of appropriate teaching methods and resources. Teacher performance is also being measured.

Civil society and government partnerships

By actively involving people and organisations from civil society, government efforts to reform the education system are enhanced. Civil society also provides eyes and ears on the ground to monitor the changes taking place in schools and to raise voices of concern if progress is being obstructed – holding those responsible to account. Civil society and government partnerships are vital for SBMC development.