

ESSPIN
Experiences

Management reform:
Kwara State College of
Education, Oro



esspin

Education Sector
Support Programme
in Nigeria



UKaid

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International Development

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In 2008, the Honourable Commissioner for Education, Science and Technology in Kwara State asked for the support of the Capacity for Universal Basic Education (CUBE) programme in implementing the state's education charter, 'Every Child Counts'. Reforming colleges of education was one aspect of that charter. To implement the reform, the Commissioner had established a College Turn-around Task Team chaired by the then Secretary of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB).

The terms of reference for CUBE's initial technical assistance were to 'Design and undertake a review of the institutional structure, systems and capacity of the College of Education, Oro, and produce a development plan for improving the college's effectiveness and efficiency'.

These terms of reference clearly focused on the college itself, but it soon became apparent that the college was operating in a policy vacuum. The remit was, therefore, interpreted flexibly and in May 2008 a three-pronged approach based on strategy, curriculum and management reform was proposed.

Below
ESSPIN's pioneering reform of the management of Nigeria's colleges of education began with work at Oro in Kwara State.



When the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) succeeded CUBE, the priorities for the management component of the reform were defined as:

Improving strategic direction from the State Ministry of Education (SMoE); development of an institutional plan; management enhancement at Oro College.

A major theme of the approach to management reform has been that the goal is to **improve the quality of education** experienced by children in basic education schools in Kwara State. Consequently, management reform was focused on supporting the academic and training activities of the college.

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The diverse challenges of management reform at Oro College fell into three groups: strategic, institutional planning and management enhancement.

Strategic

The initial challenge was to more closely match the supply of and demand for new teachers, and to focus on quality rather than quantity.

Three state colleges of education were producing more than 13,000 qualified teachers per year. The state's Education Sector Plan estimated that fewer than 2,000 new teachers a year would be required for the foreseeable future.

A Teacher Development Needs Assessment (TDNA) showed that out of 19,125 basic education teachers in the state, only 75 reached even minimum standards of competency. Many of those teachers would have been trained by Oro College – a very poor reflection of the college and of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), which accredits colleges of education.

A key reason for producing excess teachers was the perceived need for the college to attract income from student fees to compensate for inadequate state funding. Any reduction in student numbers was seen as a threat to lecturers' income.

This led to three challenges:

The need to strengthen the role of SMOE in strategic planning and oversight of the tertiary education sector.

The need to define the role of the college in pre-service and in-service provision.

The need for a financial strategy based on reduced student numbers.

Below

Oro College needed to produce the right number of well-trained teachers.



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Institutional plan

The initial challenge was to change the college management's perception of institutional planning as a 'wishlist' of infrastructural needs. Instead, they needed to see it as a process that:

Involved the college as a whole, to generate ownership of the way forward – particularly in view of the changing role of the college through the reform process.

Integrated all aspects of college activity to ensure, for example, that decisions on resources supported the academic priorities of the college.

Was focused on achieving the objectives of the college in accordance with state policy.

Provided a framework for taking informed decisions to achieve defined objectives of the college.

Led to action and implementation.

This raised three further challenges:

How to realise this concept of planning in an appropriate college structure.

Determining the content and format of the institutional plan.

Most importantly, deciding how to implement the institutional plan, and by whom.



Management enhancement

The main challenge was to introduce an understanding that 'leaders make it wanted; managers make it happen' into an environment where neither leadership nor management featured prominently in job descriptions or practice.

This raised two practical challenges:

How to embed change when there had been three senior management teams (SMTs) during the period of ESSPIN involvement, making continuity of development virtually impossible.

Identifying key areas of management to be addressed, given the limited extent of ESSPIN support and the virtual collapse of effective management processes within the college.

All images

Children need to be confident that they are being taught by good quality, professional teachers.



Section 2: ESSPIN's response and progress to date

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The work to reform the management of Oro College is described according to the groups of challenges listed above.

Strategic

Following the initial CUBE review, the Turn-around Task Team formulated an action plan, but implementation had been delayed by political pressure against the Commissioner's plan to focus all pre-service basic education teacher training at Oro College. There was also an issue of where in-service education training was to take place.

A meeting of stakeholders was held, chaired by the Commissioner, at which ESSPIN presented a paper outlining the advantages and disadvantages of the various approaches. It was agreed that Oro College should be the only college responsible for pre-service teacher training and in-service provision up to degree level.

This decision has been the basis of Oro College reform for more than two years, but in 2011 renewed political pressure led to the reinstatement of Ilorin College as a college of education, demonstrating the fragility of the reform process.

Kwara's Education Sector Plan had recommended the formulation of a tertiary education sector plan so that college of education reform could be embedded within a wider tertiary sector strategy. This recognised that strategic direction from SMoE needed to be strengthened.

The Commissioner established a Department of Higher Education within SMoE, but by June 2011 no progress had yet been made on the formulation of a tertiary sector plan. SMoE's strategic direction of the sector remains weak and its membership of the Oro College Council remains ineffective.

To formalise agreement on the role of Oro College, ESSPIN supported the drafting of a new state law for the college. In fact, there was a delay of two years before the draft law was submitted for approval. During this time the opportunity was taken to further revise the law in the light of experience gained during the reform process.

Below and left

A well-managed college of education provides the right environment for trainee teachers to flourish.



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Institutional plan

The development of a new institutional planning process commenced with initial meetings with the senior management team to explain concepts and rationales. Workshops were held with the entire staff (approximately 300 people), administrative staff (approximately 90 people) and a planning committee (approximately 40 people) before detailed work was undertaken with a small planning group, chaired by an academic member of staff. The thrust of the process was that resources should support the academic and professional activities of the college and that internal priorities should feed into SMoE's budgetary process. The approach was new to the college: previously planning had been seen as a 'wishlist' of capital expenditure submitted in response to external requests, with little reference to academic priorities.

Meetings of the planning group were held during each ESSPIN consultant visit and progress was made.

When a new management team was appointed in late 2009, a review of the draft institutional plan formed a part of their induction process. However:

Ownership of the process by the college staff was limited. This was a reflection of a management style which did not readily consult the academic community.

The process of moving from the drafting stage to formal acceptance by the college was slow. This was consistent with the lack of engagement by the SMT and a tendency to regard reform activities as something separate from everyday management of the college.

The process of allocating tasks to individuals to ensure implementation of the plan was difficult to achieve.

Below and right
The development
of a professional
teaching force
has to be the
college's priority.



Management enhancement

Initially, there were two key activities, led primarily by the Turn-around Task Team:

The introduction of more rigorous procedures for the selection of students, including an internal screening exercise.

A staff audit. ESSPIN supported the drafting of a form for staff to submit details of their academic and professional profiles.

In the immediate aftermath of these initial activities, ESSPIN supported:

The drafting of advertisements to fill vacant senior management posts.

The formulation of examination questions for shortlisted applicants, and advice on the interview process.

The revision of job descriptions for senior management staff to emphasise the more proactive aspects of their leadership and management roles.

During this period, an Acting Registrar was appointed. He was a key internal change agent and during his appointment:

A new senior management structure for the Registry Department was agreed.

The college's committee system was revised.

A capacity-building plan for the administrative staff was formulated.

Job descriptions for deans, heads of department and school administrators were revised.

An aide memoire for the new SMT on a range of management issues was written.

Other activities included:

Support to the Commissioner in drafting a strategy paper in response to the Kwara State Governor's desire to establish Oro College as a centre of excellence.

Awareness raising with NCCE, which became increasingly interested in using Oro College as a model for reform in other colleges of education.

More recently, progress has been difficult to maintain and the Turn-around Task Team has been given a more active role in monitoring progress towards reform. Nevertheless:

The Bursar has worked, with ESSPIN support, to introduce more effective procedures for monitoring income and expenditure. However, regular reporting to key monitoring committees has been difficult to achieve.

The college has restructured its schools in line with NCCE recommendations. Support was given to the process of allocating staff to the new schools. Even so, the college found it difficult to focus on the need to (i) match staff strengths to the needs of the individual schools, and (ii) ensure a balance in staff distribution. This has caused uneven workloads between staff.

Workshops with registry staff have focused on the need to instil a proactive and leadership approach, in particular as committee secretaries. Staff produced guidelines for committee secretaries.



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Management reform at Oro College of Education has been a complex and often fraught process and is yet to be completed. ESSPIN's experience may guide similar initiatives.

Catalysts for change

During the initial period of reform at Oro College, ESSPIN also undertook preliminary reviews of colleges of education in other states. The working assumption was that for reform to be successful there had to be support from the Commissioner for Education, as was the case with Oro College.

The evidence from the Oro College experience, however, shows that support from the Commissioner does not guarantee a smooth passage for reform. Undoubtedly, there were times when the Commissioner's intervention moved the process forward and his support to the Turn-around Task Team was critical. Even so, lack of capacity in SMoE failed to encapsulate the reforms within a tertiary education sector plan and political pressure ensured that support for other colleges was maintained.

Interestingly, within Oro College, the most productive period was when there was an internal catalyst for change, albeit with the known support of the Commissioner. This coincides with emerging evidence from Gidan Waya College of Education in Kaduna, where the presence of an internal catalyst generated internal momentum for reform, can provide consultants with a wider range of approaches to reform, and can be used to generate greater involvement by SMoE and SUBEB.



Above
Innovative approaches promoting different learning styles, teaching methods and learning resources are possible in a progressively managed college.

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All images

The purpose of
management reform
is to make a positive
difference to childrens'
learning experience.



Knowing the constituency

A critical process during the Oro College reform was the staff audit, during which no attempt was made to assess staff competence. In retrospect, perhaps more time should have been spent in discussing the process and purpose of the audit with members of the college Turn-around Task Team. It is unlikely that this would have affected the outcome because the removal of staff on the basis of their ability would probably not have been tolerated. However, if the exercise had been conducted as a needs assessment, there would have been at least some indication of the quality of staff. The lack of such knowledge has been a handicap during the reform process.

Whose reality?

A more general issue relates to the fact that reform was taking place at only one college of education, so there were no comparative experiences. Concerns at Oro about the impact of reform on the local economy, pressure to bow to demands for admission regardless of ability and the creation of opportunities for the financial benefit of staff have all been factors that at times have seemed to take precedence over the training of quality teachers. Achieving a proper understanding locally of the real purpose of Oro College of Education remains problematic. The extent to which this is common across Nigeria or peculiar to Oro is an interesting question.

Making a difference

The purpose of management reform – and indeed curriculum reform – is to make a positive difference. Changes to procedures, practices and structures will not, in themselves, have any impact. New job descriptions for senior staff will have no impact unless staff performance is monitored against those job descriptions. The institutional plan will have no impact unless identified priorities inform management decisions. New procedures to monitor income and expenditure in the Bursar's Office will have no impact unless the outcome is reported regularly to decision-making bodies – and is acted upon. And the formulation of guidelines for committee secretaries will have no impact on the effectiveness of college business unless the performance of committee secretaries is monitored. The experience from the Oro College reform is that generating the internal will to make a difference is a lengthy, painstaking and frustrating process, and a considerable challenge.



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To reflect or to act?

Once the initial policy decision had been made on the role of Oro College, it was agreed to encapsulate the policy in a revised state law. In fact, it was more than two years before the law was submitted for approval – for reasons that are not immediately apparent. During the intervening period, the reform process highlighted a number of issues that prompted further revision to the draft law.

The issue, therefore, arises as to whether, in a future college reform process, there should be an early revision of legislation or whether there should be time for reflection. The answer probably lies in the local circumstances. On balance, the unintended delay in submitting the draft law has probably been beneficial in that it allowed ongoing changes in response to emerging issues.

However, it is possible that two related issues might have been worth considering.

Given the impact of the Oro reforms on the tertiary sector as a whole, there might have been advantage in addressing the legal framework for the other tertiary sector institutions. This might have been undertaken as part of the implementation of a tertiary sector plan – which has not yet materialised.

There might have been advantage in comparing the Oro law with the enabling legislation of other colleges – although careful note would have had to be taken of the context.



Consequences of intermittent support

In August 2009, two VSO volunteers working at Oro College suggested that, with the current level of intermittent support from ESSPIN, expectations of reform were too high given the capacity of the college and that more intensive on-the-job training and staff development was required.

This highlighted two dilemmas:

ESSPIN's support tended to be focused at the strategic level (institutional plan, legislative framework, role of the college, student numbers) but, in respect of management support, there were operational challenges that hampered strategic objectives. Operational capacity was so low that not all issues could be addressed within the resources available.

Reports from those 'on the ground' indicated that there was a flurry of activity at the college before the ESSPIN consultants arrived, since reform was seen as a separate activity from everyday management of the college. Visits were not, therefore, supporting a seamless, ongoing reform process, but rather a series of emergency measures to achieve progress.

Below and far left

The reform process at Oro College will help transform the college into a centre for quality teacher training.



Institutionalising reform

Realistic budgeting

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'As we speak currently a public hearing has been held to ensure the reforms are enshrined in the law of the college. The reform has reached an advanced stage and surely its dividends will be delivered.'

Mallam Rabiuh Mohammed Bello,
Assistant Director, Teaching
Service Commission/Secretary
of the Oro College Turn Around
Task Team



'The budget is now based on the state Medium-Term Sector Strategy (MTSS) and [Oro College] income and expenditure pattern have now been realigned. Now they don't go beyond what they have. Also committees have been set up, they are functional and bringing results.'

Alhaji Ibrahim Ibn Woru, former
SUBEB Secretary, now Chairman
of the Turn Around Task Team



Above left
Mallam Rabiuh
Mohammed Bello,
Teaching Service
Commission/
Secretary of the
Oro College Turn
Around Task Team.

Above
Alhaji Ibrahim Ibn
Woru, Chairman
of the Turn Around
Task Team.

Ray of hope for teaching profession

Replication and sustainability

‘The reform process for the college has been successful so far. I know the staff of the college are better trained now and even non-teaching staff have their capacities built.’

Abdulganiyu Hanafi is the Registrar at the College of Education, Oro. He has also been a part of the reform right from its inception and believes the college is on its way to becoming a reference point in the history of teacher training in Nigeria.

Hanafi has witnessed the college being praised at different meetings and national seminars such as the Conference of Registrars for Colleges of Education and even at meetings with the NCCE.

‘To us, ESSPIN has been like a torch bearer leading us to where there is light. Indeed, they have assisted us considerably even as the reform has become a part and parcel of the college.’

Administrative and academic staff have been trained in the college and Abdulganiyu Hanafi is one of the beneficiaries of this training. As part of the reform process, senior positions in the college were advertised and filled with competent professionals. This is to ensure that the reform process is sustainable even after ESSPIN’s support has been minimised.

Hanafi said that the success of reform at the college should be shared for replication in other colleges: ‘Other colleges of education should come and ask what we are doing at the college. I know it is a matter of time and they will come to us because they have shown an eagerness to learn.’

‘ESSPIN’s support to the College of Education, Oro has been commended by the NCCE. The work at the college has now gone beyond the state and is being referred to in terms of best practices for all the colleges in the country. We thank God for this. Schools are calling to report that our teaching practice students are the best set they have received. One of such schools has asked if we could increase the number of teaching practice students sent to teach in their school.’

Timothy Adebayo, Deputy Provost Academic, College of Education, Oro



Left

Abdulganiyu Hanafi, Registrar, College of Education, Oro.



Right

Timothy Adebayo, Deputy Provost Academic, College of Education, Oro.

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Oro College is at a crossroad:
there are both opportunities
and threats on the journey ahead.

Opportunities

The strategic framework is now in place:

A new law should soon be approved, confirming the college as a centre for pre-service and in-service basic education teacher training.

There is a focus on ensuring high quality of student intake.

State funding is supportive of staff salaries and the college is the primary recipient of federal Education Trust Fund support in Kwara.

The appointment of the chairman of the planning group as a Deputy Provost brings to the SMT someone who has been centrally involved in both planning and curriculum reform.

Linkages between the college and SSIT bring exciting opportunities for developing in-service teacher training provision.

Threats

There are, however, threats:

The level of continuing political support for the reform is unknown.

There are competitors: Ilorin College has been reinstated as a college of education and the State University is developing a school of education with degree programmes in basic education.

Despite support from the state for staff salaries, the college remains under-funded in terms of non-staff recurrent expenditure. The decline in student numbers exacerbates this factor because of the reduced fee income. However, the maintenance of historic levels of staffing has led to favourable staff to student ratios. That can only be justified through an expansion of in-service training activity.

The future

The current challenge is to ensure that the opportunities are grasped and the threats are addressed. In many respects that is the responsibility of the college authorities, and the SMT in particular. The evidence suggests, however, that there remains a need for a strong monitoring role to be exercised by the College Turn-around Task Team, which itself may need support.

It also needs to be appreciated that there is still significant work to be undertaken to bring the college to acceptable standards. It is simply not good enough to be admitting students in February when the programme commences in November; nor can it be allowed to take so long to process final examination results that students are not able to apply for jobs in the year of their qualification.

For ESSPIN the challenge is to determine:

The most appropriate level of continuing support to Oro College in the context of ESSPIN's own mandate. There remain three types of challenge: (i) improving technical and operational competence at the college; (ii) continuing support to and monitoring of the SMT; and (iii) developing in-service provision.

The nature of support to SMoE in terms of strengthening its strategic direction of the tertiary education sector. There are two key issues: (i) formulating of a tertiary sector plan and (ii) capacity-building in SMoE.

How the experience at Oro College (and more recently at Gidan Waya College) can support reform at other colleges of education.

The level of support for NCCE to strengthen quality assurance procedures at Oro College and other colleges of education.

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Since the Commissioner launched the state's education charter, 'Every Child Counts', much has been achieved.

At a strategic level:

The principle has been accepted that the supply of new teachers should be more closely in line with the demand for teachers.

There has become a focus on quality of students and quality of provision rather than on quantity.

The role of Oro College in the tertiary education landscape has been clarified and encapsulated in a new law.

Within the college:

There is an institutional plan that links academic and resource priorities.

Schools and departments have been restructured and staff allocated to new schools and departments.

Job descriptions for deans, heads of department, members of the SMT and school administrators have been reviewed and revised.

The Registry has been re-structured and capacity building workshops held with staff.

The committee system has been made more streamlined.

Procedures for financial monitoring by the Bursar's Office have been strengthened.

Capacity building support has been given to members of staff, including the SMT.

The greatest challenge, however, still remains. **Can the Oro College senior management team provide the level of leadership that is necessary to sustain the reforms without the constant pressure of an external catalyst for change?**

Only when the answer to that question is 'yes' will children in basic education schools in Kwara State have confidence that they are being taught by good quality, professional teachers.

**Striving for excellence at
Kwara State College of
Education, Oro – Raising the
quality of basic education**

Mrs Faderera Oyawoye does not mince words in expressing confidence about the management reforms going on at the College of Education at Oro in Kwara State: ‘Surely the successes for the college have only just begun. The administrative structures of the college have been restructured to ensure an even more effective set-up to deliver the goals of the institution.’

It was apparent that the college needed new leadership approaches. Following a staff audit, some senior management positions were advertised and thorough examination and interview processes were followed to fill the vacancies. ESSPIN, by supporting the revision of job descriptions, helped to identify the leadership and management roles of these posts to provide a foundation for management reforms at the college. The performance of senior staff will be monitored against the new job descriptions, which are critical to this reform.

The schools and departments within the college have been restructured, with new acting deans and acting heads of department appointed. These post-holders are subject to assessment, with a view to confirming them in post only if they deliver in their new roles.

There has been a steady focus from ESSPIN on supporting the academic and training activities of the college. Strategic support is also being given to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology which houses the recently created Department of Continuing Education headed by Mrs Oyawoye, which is responsible for all higher education institutions including the College of Education, Oro.

Raising the quality of basic education received by children in the state is the main goal of the reform process and hence the drive to improve the pre-service training being offered at Oro. Mrs Oyawoye comments, ‘We used to have between 5,000 and 6,000 students as first year entrants of the college. A lot of them did not meet the requirement because quality was not the priority then. Now the number has been reduced significantly because we ensure only qualified students make it into the college.’

The impact of the reforms at the college is already being felt. Mrs Oyawoye is positive that the new institutional plan will lead to significant results now the priorities of the college as a teacher training institution are beginning to influence the college’s management decisions.

Work to reform the management of colleges of education is only part of our education sector work in Nigeria. The ESSPIN programme in Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, Enugu and Lagos states is improving teaching and management skills in schools and the governance of education at state and federal level.

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