



Improving Basic Education Provision Through Strengthened Organisational Capacity and Human Resources Management

Practice Paper

Contents

2	Abstract	5	MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs	11	Results and Achievements	14	Lessons Learnt
2	Introduction		Organizational Capacity Gaps	13	Challenges	15	Sustainability Strategy
4	Organisational Capacity and Education Delivery	7	ESSPIN's Intervention				

Abstract

This Practice Paper describes the ways that the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) supported organisational capacity development of education Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in the six programme states – Lagos, Kwara, Enugu, Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa – to improve basic education service delivery. It highlights the main strategies and components of the support as well as the outcomes, challenges and lessons learnt. The paper is concluded with recommendations for consolidating and sustaining the achievements of ESSPIN's support to organisational capacity strengthening of the MDAs.

Introduction

ESSPIN was designed as a partnership programme of the United Kingdom and the Nigerian governments to bring about transformational change in basic education service delivery in Nigeria. The programme, which was part of a suite of State-led programmes, was aimed at ensuring that every child of school age attends a good quality basic school, fully participates, and achieves quality learning outcomes. The overarching goal of the suite of programmes was to bring about more resourceful and accountable use of Nigeria's own resources to achieve and sustain this outcome. ESSPIN'S Theory of Change emphasised that:

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- a. children's learning is most effective when an integrated approach is taken to school development and management, and
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- b. school improvement in Nigeria must be accompanied by parallel strengthening of the governance system at Federal, State and Local Government levels.



ESSPIN was implemented over eight and a half (8.5) years, from inception in July, 2008 to end of programme in January 2017. It worked in six focus states - Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, Lagos and Enugu - and at the federal level. Technical assistance along with political engagement were deployed to build capacity, strengthen systems and to improve governance and management for the achievement of programme objectives. In the six focus states, ESSPIN piloted an integrated School Improvement Programme (SIP) with demonstrable and replicable results in improved access and learning outcomes to prove theory.

The programme subsequently leveraged government resources to support the scale up and institutionalisation of the School Improvement Programme (SIP) by the states. At the federal level, ESSPIN worked through the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to support the strengthening of national policy and governance framework to establish functional systems that would facilitate nationwide reforms in basic education service provision.

ESSPIN's work streams and activities were organised in four (4) Outputs and targeted to achieve the following Output Indicators:

Output 1: Strengthened Federal Government systems supporting States' implementation of school improvement.

Output 2: Increased capability of State and Local Governments for governance and management of basic education at State and LGEA levels.

Output 3: Strengthened capability of primary schools to provide inclusive access and improved learning outcomes.

Output 4: Improved Community participation in School Improvement.



Organisational Capacity and Education Delivery

ESSPIN's Output 2 work stream focussed on institutional capacity development of States and LGAs for good governance and effective management of basic education. The Output had two components:

a. Systems strengthening for the use of evidence-based policy development, quality planning and budgeting, and effective performance monitoring and reporting.

b. Organisational capacity development of States MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs for improved performance in service delivery.

This practice paper explains the imperative of adequate organisational capacity of education MDAs for quality education service delivery. It highlights the organisational capacity weaknesses of MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs of the 6 programme states at the inception of ESSPIN and their effect on basic education provision. It describes how ESSPIN successfully supported organisational capacity strengthening of these MDAs for improved performance. The challenges encountered, lessons learnt and results attained are also captured. The paper is concluded with recommendations for consolidating and building on the achievements of programme support to organisational capacity development.

Organizational capacity is the extent of the ability of an organization to function efficiently and effectively to achieve its mandate. It entails visioning, planning, and setting up enabling policies, systems, and processes for the successful conduct of operations to achieve organizational mandate. For education Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), it consists of the ability to:

- a. carry out accurate analyses and realistic educational goals, objectives and targets;
- b. develop evidence-based realistic policies, plans and strategies;
- c. mobilize adequate resources, including funds, equipment, facilities, and human resources, and deploy these appropriately to implement policies, plans and programmes.



MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs Organizational Capacity Gaps

d. achieve educational goals, objectives and targets at set standards and conditions.

Organisational capacity is enhanced by clearly defined statutory mandate and authority to deliver, well-articulated structures and delineated functions of the departments and units, coordinated workforce planning and flow processes.

Lack of organizational capacity results in poor governance, ineffective management, and underperformance in education service delivery. Weak organizational capacity is characterized by poor coordination, role conflicts, waste of resources, inefficient deployment of teachers and other personnel, lack of accountability and poor service delivery. On the other hand, strong organizational capacity of education MDAs will ensure the availability of good quality schools, adequate school infrastructure and facilities, inclusive access and active pupils' participation, recruitment, effective deployment and retention of competent teachers, quality teaching and learning in schools.

ESSPIN's Theory of Change recognized that adequate organizational capacity of education MDAs, particularly MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs, is critical to school improvement and sustainable inclusive quality basic education provision. Adequate organizational capacity of these MDAs guarantees good governance and resourceful management required to:

- a. Establish and maintain good quality basic schools with adequate infrastructure and facilities, effective head teachers and competent teachers as well as sufficient community support.
- b. Establish enabling policy, planning and sector performance monitoring and reporting frameworks to institutionalize school improvement.



An assessment at the inception of ESSPIN in 2008 revealed that MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs of the 6 programme focus states had weak organizational capacities. The states were underperforming and making minimal progress in basic school improvement despite huge investments. The mandates, functions, and responsibilities of MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs for basic education were not well-delineated and harmonized. The LGEAs existed in name and were hardly functioning. The MoEs and SUBEBs organizational structures and functions were not properly aligned and streamlined. The various departments and units of the MDAs had duplicated and conflicting roles and responsibilities.

Furthermore, the MoEs, SUBEB's and LGEAs had no shared vision and core values to instill accountability and guide operations. Credible plans and focus on school improvement did not inform resources allocation and utilization. Basic facilities like operational vehicles, computers and stationery were lacking. Human resources management including staff recruitment, deployment, and professional development, was inefficient. Workforce planning and staff performance management were non-existent. Substantial number of staff had no defined job schedules and contributed nothing towards the achievement of organizational mandates. The interventions of the MDAs in the basic education sub-sector were not complementary but mostly disrupted and conflicted with one another.

The impact of weak organizational capacities of the MoEs and SUBEBs manifested very clearly. There was dearth of reliable education data. As of the time of ESSPIN's inception in 2008, Annual School Census (ASC) had not been conducted for many years, while the Education Management Information System (EMIS) was virtually non-existent. Hardly any planning for basic education took place. School improvement efforts were not supported with planning and evidence-based systemic performance monitoring and feedback. Political patronage and other considerations rather than need determined teacher recruitment and deployment as well as the provision of school facilities and instructional materials. School supervision, support services and quality assurance were poorly organised and serving no meaningful purpose. Basic education service delivery was inefficient; resulting in restricted access, inequity, and poor learning outcomes.

ESSPIN's Intervention

ESSPIN supported organisational capacity development of the MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs of the 6 programme states. The support was aimed at structural and systems strengthening as well as improved human resources management for enhanced functionality, efficiency of operations and coordination of the MDAs. A combination of technical support and political engagement was deployed for effective state leadership and ownership of the initiative. ESSPIN's intervention in organisational capacity development of the MDAs was embedded within the programme's Institutional Development (Output 2) work stream targeted at improved quality of:

- a. strategic and operational planning and budgeting, budget execution, performance monitoring and reporting at State and LGEA level.
- b. service delivery systems and processes at State and LGEA levels.
- c. school support and quality assurance services at State and LGEA level.
- d. State and LGEAs engagement with local communities on school improvement
- e. inclusive policies at State and LGEA Levels.

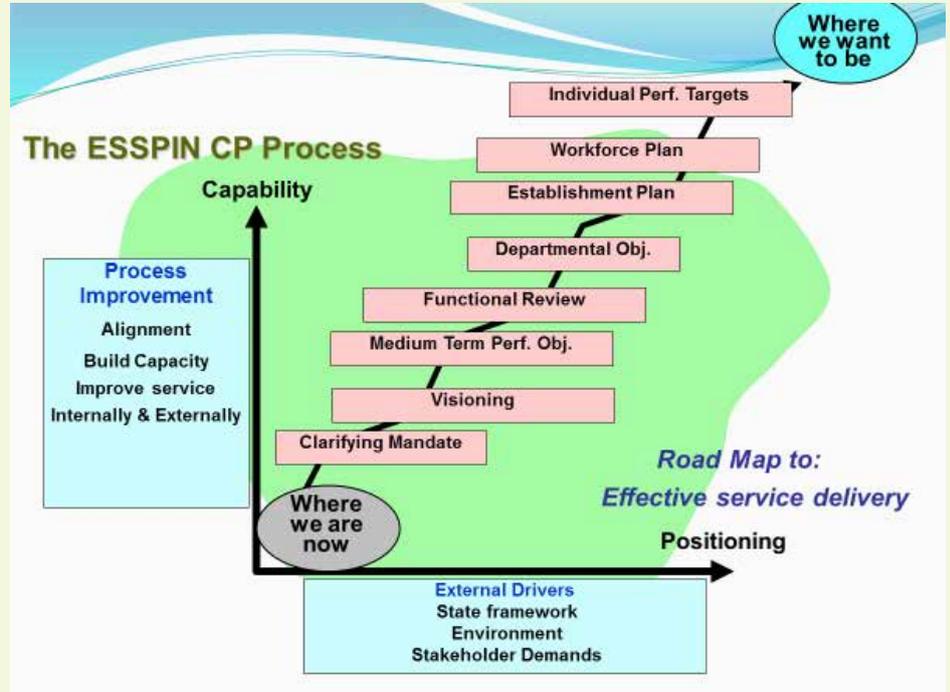
An 8-step corporate planning process map was adopted and implemented for the organisational capacity development of the MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs. The creation of an enabling work environment with the availability of adequate office facilities, equipment and materials was also infused. The process began in 2009 and premised on state buy-in and ownership of the process and outcomes. It was a logical and phased approach that helped the MDAs to:

- a. objectively assess themselves and establish 'Where we are',
- b. realistically determine 'Where we want to be',
- c. set out and implement a framework and process improvement plan and strategy to get to 'Where we want to be'.



The corporate planning process started with Visioning sessions to clarify statutory mandates; and articulate organisational vision, mission statements, long-term objectives, and core values of the MDAs. This phase was followed with functional, structural, systems and processes reviews to ascertain capacity gaps and articulate actions to address them. Next was the restructuring of the Departments and Units of MDAs and the delineation of departmental responsibilities and functions based on the findings and recommendations of the reviews. Establishment and workforce planning followed to determine and specify manpower needs, job positions, staff specifications and schedule of duties. The process is concluded with the staff performance management systems with individual target setting, performance evaluation and feedback.

Figure 1: 8 step corporate planning process



With ESSPIN's technical assistance (TA), a pool of the management team and select staff representatives of all departments of MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs led the processes in their respective MDAs as a strategy to ensure state ownership. The scope, intensity, and period of corporate planning interventions in the MDAs varied. As the MDA with the principal mandate for basic education service delivery, SUBEBs were prioritized for support. Organisational capacity building support to SUBEBs covered all the 8 steps of the adopted corporate planning process. MoEs' organisational capacity development support was limited to clarification of mandate, visioning, functional and structural reviews.

Establishment planning, workforce planning and performance management was not carried out at the MoEs. This scope was considered appropriate and sufficient for the MoEs in relation to MoEs' mandate for basic education. LGEA interventions began in 2014 because of the necessity to leverage on the progress of MoEs and SUBEBs capacity development. Intervention in LGEAs was considered crucial; support was therefore to implement all 8-steps corporate planning process.

The MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs were supported to articulate their organisational vision, mission, core values and strategic goals and objectives for basic education. These were progressively consolidated and updated as policy and strategic planning frameworks and guides. They informed and facilitated policy making, development of 3-yearly rolling education sector medium term sector strategies (MTSSs) and stakeholders' mobilization for school improvement. On this backdrop, the Service Charters of the MDAs were developed along with communication strategies to promote transparency and accountability. This set the platform for good governance of the education sector.



Establishment and workforce planning were the follow-up phases of the corporate planning process. These were focused only on SUBEBs and LGEAs to prioritize basic education provision. Establishment planning involved the development and implementation of organisational establishment plans based on the recommendations of the functional and structural reviews. New Organograms for SUBEBs and LGEAs were agreed and effected to align with departmental functions for improved coordination and operational efficiency. The overall staffing structure was reviewed in line with the identified departmental functions.

Workforce planning was next in the sequence drawing from the establishment plans. HRM&D systems and processes in SUBEBs and LGEAs were reviewed. Analyses of existing job roles, workload analyses, personnel skills audits and job evaluations were conducted to:

- a. identify staff job roles required to deliver on the functions of each department and unit and section;
- b. specify the duties, responsibilities, and accountabilities for each job role;
- c. the qualifications, skills and competencies required to deliver on the identified job roles.

ESSPIN provided TA to SUBEBs and LGEAs' 'Workforce Matching Committees' to match suitable staff with appropriate job posts.

ESSPIN's concluding intervention in organisational capacity development of SUBEBs and LGEAs was the strengthening of performance management. The MDAs were supported to set up functional reporting systems and communication strategies to enhance workflow processes and operational efficiency. Mechanisms for setting, monitoring and providing feedback of individual performance targets were put in place. This is to reinforce performance management by complementing the statutory civil service annual performance evaluation and review that does not relate to school improvement.



Results and Achievements

With ESSPIN's intervention, the organisational capacities of MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs were strengthened. There is clarity on the statutory Mandates of the MDAs and their responsibilities for basic education. The respective MDAs have Vision and Mission statements, strategic plans, and Service Charters are in place and being internalised. There is greater focus on mandate delivery and results in the application of resources and operations of the MDAs. An appreciation of shared responsibility for basic education by the MDAs enhanced collaboration and coordination. The MDAs operate with fit-to-purpose organograms and well-aligned Departmental functions in line with the recommendations of functional reviews.

There is better establishment and workforce planning with documented job positions, staff specifications and schedule of duties tied to school improvement. Engagement and deployment of personnel are based on MDAs' establishment and workforce plans and focussed on improved education service delivery. Provision of enabling working environment with adequate office equipment, facilities and materials receive greater attention.

Governance and management of basic education in the six (6) programme states has been substantially impacted by ESSPIN's intervention in organisational capacity development. The MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs are better organised, more functional, and result-oriented in service provision. There is strengthened State and LGEA institutional capacity to support school improvement. The following are in place and facilitating improved governance and management of basic education for sustainable inclusive access and quality learning outcomes:



a. Integrated evidence-based planning, budgeting, and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems;

b. States' Education Management Information System (EMIS) and LGEAs' Education Management Database providing data and evidence;

c. Development, update, and relatively improved use of education MTSSs to inform budgeting and annual departmental workplans and action plans of MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs;

d. School supervisory and support visits, feedback, and follow-up;

e. education quality assurance evaluation and reporting.

f. Systemic sector performance monitoring and reporting with State Annual Education Sector Performance Reports (AESPRs), Quarterly Monitoring Reports (QMRs).

Strengthened organisational capacity of MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs enhanced institutional capacity of the six programme states to support school improvement. It enabled the states to improve education service delivery and make significant progress towards inclusive quality basic education provision for all of school age. Available resources for basic education are more efficiently and effectively channelled and utilized. The states now achieve better results for investments in basic education. Schools are better equipped and resourced with necessary infrastructure, instructional materials and competent head teachers and teachers. Capacity of schools to support inclusive access and quality teaching and learning is progressively being developed. School enrolment has been boosted across the six states. There are marked improvements in teaching and learning outcomes in the states.



Challenges

ESSPIN has worked with over 16,000 schools benefiting 6.2 million children. It has contributed to bringing an additional 717,531 children (369,096 girls, or 51.4%) into schools across the six states. The programme has enhanced educational opportunities for millions of children and through taking an inclusive approach has improved the learning outcomes of children in the six states.

ESSPIN Programme
Completion Report (PCR),
February, 2017

Government bureaucracy posed a major challenge to organisational capacity strengthening of the MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs. This limited the scope, slowed down pace and prevented the achievement of maximum results. State approvals and buy-in were required and necessary to successfully carry out the intervention and achieve its objectives. Securing these approvals and buy-in took more than the anticipated effort and timeline because of complex bureaucracy and protocols.

The institutional arrangement for organizing and managing human resources in government MDAs was also a limiting factor. State MDAs' organograms and most aspects of human resources management are centrally determined and controlled by an overarching state body, usually the State's Public Service Commission (PSC).

Isolating education MDAs for organisational capacity development was very challenging. The MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs cannot, on their own, restructure and articulate organograms considered suitable for effective operation. They also have no full control of staff recruitment, deployment, posting, promotion and discipline. The implementation of recommendations of organisational capacity reviews were, therefore, not as comprehensive and prompt as required. Some recommendations dealing with establishment and workforce planning could not be implemented as they could only be effected by the central overarching state body.

Lessons Learnt

The States' MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs had been operating for too long with poor organisational capacity. The capacity base of the MDAs was very weak. There were also entrenched interests benefiting from the loopholes that felt threatened by change and reform. It required enormous technical assistance and intense political engagement to make a headway and garner momentum in the organisational capacity strengthening of the MDAs.

Successful and enduring organizational capacity development of government MDAs requires a comprehensive approach and a combination of technical assistance, political engagement and a good communication strategy.

Several underlying factors affect government MDAs' organizational capacity. Some of these cannot be resolved by the MDAs themselves or through technical assistance. Adequate attention should be given to identifying these underlying factors and evolving the strategies and actions to address them.

Government political will, buy-in and ownership are critical to organizational capacity development of MDAs. Sustained engagement with government at the highest possible level should be built into organizational capacity development interventions and support to MDAs. This engagement should span the conception, planning and implementation stages.

As with any reform initiative, various interests will be threatened by the objectives of organizational capacity development of MDAs and the changes that will ensue from it. These interests will resist and work against the success of the initiative. Sensitization and advocacy for understanding, confidence building and cooperation of all interests and stakeholders is essential. Building and sustaining a coalition for reform and change is a key success factor.



Sustainability Strategy

The involvement and full participation of the overarching state body responsible for central management of MDAs as a key stakeholder is key. This is usually the Public Service Commission (PSC) of the state. This will facilitate the implementation of recommendations for MDAs' organisational capacity strengthening that the PSC has responsibility for.

ESSPIN's intervention was premised on state ownership and institutionalisation. Continuous organisational capacity development of MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs has been built into state policy objectives, planning, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation systems. This ensures that organisational development activities, including staff professional development and the maintenance of enabling working environment, are budgeted for, adequately funded, and followed through annually.

The states were supported to use an effective communication strategy to drive the initiative and communicate its outcomes. This is to facilitate stakeholders' ownership and institutionalization. All products and outcomes of the organisational development processes were well-documented and signed off and widely disseminated and properly communicated across all sectors, government agencies and all relevant stakeholders. This is to ensure that the results and achievements are not easily undermined or eroded.

Capacity building for MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs to lead and drive the process was prioritized in ESSPIN's intervention. The management teams and relevant staff of the MDAs were provided necessary technical training to develop internal capacity for continued MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs' capacity training beyond ESSPIN.

Email
info@esspin.org

Website
www.esspin.org

Twitter
@ESSPINUKAID

Facebook
esspinukaid

esspin
Education Sector
Support Programme
in Nigeria

