



**Introducing Modern  
Education into  
Islamic Schools in  
Northern Nigeria:**  
A Report on ESSPIN's  
1st Phase Experience  
2008-2014

**Practice Paper**

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Northern Nigeria has a large Islamic and Quranic school sector. These schools focus primarily on recitation or memorization of the Quran or teaching of basic Islamic texts. The federal government and the state governments in northern Nigeria had been keen to introduce the teaching of modern subjects within different types of Islamic schools to ensure that children in these schools learn basic literacy and numeracy. Such efforts had, however, largely failed. The malams (Islamic teachers) were viewed to be ideologically resistant to modern education due to its association with colonial rule.

When ESSPIN started its work in the three northern states — Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa — it received requests from different state agencies for technical support to help develop an effective integrated basic education model that could be introduced into the Islamiyya, Quranic and Tsangaya Education (IQTE) schools. ESSPIN responded by undertaking in-depth consultations with parents, traditional elders and malams to assess the feasibility and demand for such an integrated model within the community.

Based on positive feedback from the community, ESSPIN launched a low-cost community based integrated education pilot in 2010 in three Local Government Authorities (LGAs) of Kano. The model was tailored to suit both the Tsangaya schools, which cater mainly for boys and focus entirely on the study of the Quran, and Islamiyya schools, which are popular with Muslim girls and more open to the teaching of modern subjects than Tsangaya schools.



**Below**  
Malams instructing pupils in a Tsangaya school after receiving training on IQTE model.

## Background

Since its initial introduction in Kano, the ESSPIN integrated education model has been formally adopted by SUBEB Kano, and has been expanded into 16 LGAs using state government funds. The model has also been replicated in Jigawa and Kaduna.

Currently, over 27000 children in IQTE schools across the three states are receiving basic education through this model, 40 per cent of whom are girls. Close to 1000 Tsangaya schools have joined the programme, and over 700 community teachers have been trained (see details in technical report).

The capacity of the Kano SUBEB team has been developed to manage existing schools and to replicate the model across the state, and also to extend technical support to Kaduna and Jigawa. Six hundred and seventy five children from the first cohort in Kano that was launched in 2010 are taking their transition exam to Junior Secondary School in April 2014.

Three factors helped inform ESSPIN's decision to get involved in introducing basic education into Islamiyya and Tsangaya schools: 1) the scale of this sector — in 2008, Kano was estimated to have 23000 IQTE schools as opposed to 5500 state primary and secondary schools; 2) the higher ratio of girls in Islamiyya schools as compared to state schools, thereby making them a good platform for improving girls' access to quality education; and, 3) the limited capacity of the state to meet the UBE targets on its own.



### Above

Girls in Islamiyya schools are learning basic numeracy and literacy as a result of IQTE models.



### Above

Boys in Tsangaya schools are equally given the opportunity to access basic education.



Given the challenges faced by the government schools in Nigeria, if the IQTE schools could be made partners in the provision of modern education, it could help meet the government UBE targets and improve the economic opportunities available to children enrolled in IQTE schools. The question, however, was how to develop a model of integrated education that could overcome the malams' ideological resistance to modern education and also be low-cost enough to be replicated on a large scale by the state governments.

ESSPIN's consultations with the communities showed that parents want both Islamic and modern education for their children; however, they valued them for different reasons. Islamic education was seen to be essential for developing a good moral character, while modern education was seen to be essential for formal sector employment.

The resistance to modern education was thus not ideological; it had much to do with the perceived poor quality of education in state schools. Further, consultations with the malams showed that, if modern education could be provided in a way that it would complement instead of replacing Islamic education, they were not against it.

The key to developing a successful integrated education model thus rested in adapting the formal schooling model to fit the needs of this specific community and providing incentives to the malams to actively engage with it.



## Supply side innovations

In order to ensure that modern education could be provided to complement Islamic education using a model that is effective in delivering quality education and is also low-cost, a number of innovations were developed on the supply side.

### Forming Tsangaya school clusters

A Tsangaya school cluster format was developed where five Tsangaya schools in close proximity to each other were grouped as a cluster and children from this cluster invited to attend a centrally located community school run by ESSPIN. Forming a cluster was more effective than sending a teacher to individual Tsangaya schools to teach modern subjects as it enabled the programme to reach out to a larger number of Tsangaya schools.

Further, it reduced resistance from the malams, who were at times averse to sharing their space with the modern subject teacher. In the case of Islamiyya schools, which operate more as regular schools with multi-grade classes, the model focused on providing a community teacher to the school to help improve the teaching of modern subjects in the primary classes.



### Right and below

Parents have embraced the IQTE model which creates a platform for their children to learn and develop good moral character as well as secure a future for formal sector employment.



### Adjusting teaching hours

Respecting Islamic education required adjusting the teaching hours for modern education to fit the teaching schedule of the Islamic subjects. As most Tsangaya schools focus on the study of the Quran in the morning, most of the community schools were scheduled to operate in the afternoons or evenings, when the children were free to attend to modern education. Each Tsangaya cluster and Islamiyya school was permitted to set its own weekly timetable for the study of modern subjects as long as they allocated between 12 to 15 hours of contact time for the teaching of modern education. The flexibility in teaching hours was central to acceptance of the model among the malams.

### Community teachers

The model relied on recruiting teachers from within the community. Individuals with 10 to 12 years of education were recruited to act as teachers. Being from the community was an essential selection criterion as it helped reduce teacher absenteeism. Employing community teachers was also more cost effective as they could be recruited at one-third the cost of government school teachers. In a context where the state is failing to mobilize adequate resources to invest in education for all, such low cost intervention had higher chances of state level expansion.

### Rigorous teacher training programme

Once selected, the community teachers were made to follow a rigorous teacher training programme. A total of 19 training modules were developed, which were implemented over a period of three years. The first module consisted of five weeks of training, three in a workshop format and two in school. At the end of this five-week training module, the community teacher started to teach in the school. The remaining 18 modules, each one of which was of three days duration, were implemented on a monthly basis for the first six months, after which the training was reduced to bi-monthly and then a quarterly basis. These modules trained teachers in child centered teaching and also improved their subject knowledge.



**Left**  
Community teachers are recruited and trained to deliver quality teaching in IQTE.

### Involving malams in teacher selection

In order to ensure the smooth working of the programme, the malams were involved in the selection of teachers in order to ensure that they trusted them. The malams were asked to nominate the community teacher for their cluster. However, all nominated teachers were given a written and oral test to assess whether they met the basic requirements. Malams were requested to nominate new candidates against initial nominees who failed to meet the required standards.

#### Below

Teachers are teaching pupils following a clear scheme of work; pupils are assessed against this scheme.



### Training support teachers

The success of the intervention relied heavily on the active participation of the support teachers, who were required to provide in-school support to the teachers and monitor progress in schools through school support visits. The support teachers were also central to the expansion and sustainability of this programme as they were trained to carry out the training of new community teachers using the 19 modules. The support teachers were selected from within the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) in the selected LGAs. The decision to involve the LGEA staff in the running of this model from the start has been critical to its smooth adoption by SUBEB Kano.

### Condensed curriculum

Since the model drew on children between the ages of 8 and 12 and did not allow for long summer breaks, it was possible to condense the six-year primary school curriculum into four years. Teachers were trained to follow a clear scheme of work each term, against which the students were assessed.

#### Below

Enrolment rate in the Islamiyya schools are increasing as more parents send their girls- child to school.





## Stimulating demand

Winning the trust of the malams and making them active partners in the provision of modern education was central to the success of the ESSPIN IQTE model. This at the very least required showing respect to the malams and convincing them that the model was meant to complement and not replace Islamic education. Involving the malams in the selection of the teachers was part of this approach. In addition, a number of incentive schemes proved very effective in ensuring that the malams took an active part in the programme.

### School feeding

Children in Tsangaya schools routinely beg for food in the local community or run small errands for community members in return for small payments. Developing an integrated education programme that complements Islamic education risked depriving the children of the time to secure food or small cash income, which is crucial for their survival.

For the first six months, the pilot therefore introduced school feeding, whereby children were given a meal in the community school; the responsibility for cooking the food was rotated among the malams of each cluster. This incentive did ensure regular attendance of the children

However, due to its relatively high cost, this incentive scheme was phased out after six months as per the original plan. The lesson learned from the pilot was that if states could allocate funds for feeding schemes to be attached to Tsangaya education programmes, they could have a very positive impact on student retention.



#### Right

A farmer supported through the ESSPIN scheme with farming inputs to improve his harvest.

#### Right

Children in Tsangaya schools are now on track to realize their dream of acquiring quality basic education.





### Farming inputs

ESSPIN engagement with malams revealed that most malams are involved in subsistence farming but fail to have a good harvest due to scarcity of funds to purchase proper farming inputs, such as seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. Given the challenge of the financial sustainability of a school-feeding programme, ESSPIN developed a scheme to provide one-off support to the malams to purchase farming inputs to improve their harvest.

ESSPIN also encouraged the malams to save part of the increased harvest to buy inputs for the following year. This intervention again worked very well in mobilizing the malams to continue to send children to community schools.

The intervention also showed that provision of farming inputs combined with basic farm extension training can increase the yield of the farms cultivated by the malams. However, it proved difficult to motivate the malams to save part of the harvest to purchase the inputs for the following year given their immediate needs. The pilot did show, however, that support with a farming extension programme is an important area in which government and development agencies can help improve income generation within this population.

### Direct cash subsidy

In Kaduna, malams were offered Naira 3000 per month for participation in the programme. Direct cash payments proved very effective in winning malams' cooperation, leading to rapid expansion of the model. But, as in the case of other incentives, this intervention was also time bound. After the first year, malams were given a choice between one-off support with the purchase of farming inputs or continuing with the monthly support. The malams opted for the farming scheme, and, as in the case of Kano, recorded major improvement in their annual yield.

All these interventions were time bound and aimed to mobilize initial cooperation. ESSPIN's experience shows that a feeding scheme is arguably very desirable for schooling interventions aimed at Tsangaya school children because they are reliant on the community and the malam for their daily food. Farming schemes targeted at malams of Tsangaya schools also have great potential to reduce the economic marginalization of this community.

Finally, ESSPIN's work with the Tsangaya and Islamiyya population also showed a high demand for skills training. ESSPIN found that offering skills training to the older children in Tsangaya clusters is another powerful incentive to motivate the malams to send the younger children for modern education; this intervention is now being trialed through a separate pilot also supported by UKAID.

### Skills training programme for mothers in Islamiyya schools

In contrast to the incentives given to the malams in the case of Tsangaya schools, in Islamiyya schools the incentive scheme was targeted towards mothers of female children to motivate them to ensure regular attendance. Mothers of girls studying in the primary classes of the Islamiyya schools supported by ESSPIN were offered training in basic skills such as soap and jewelry making, leather work, and sewing. Participation in the skills training programme was conditional on the mother ensuring the regular school attendance of her child.

The programme not only proved very effective in ensuring regular attendance, but it also proved highly effective in the economic empowerment of these women. The attendance in training classes is 100%. Further, all women are very keen to use the skills for income generation activity. Training is given in a group format, and many of these groups have started to sell the items they are making in the market at a profit. ESSPIN is also providing small individual and group loans to the more entrepreneurial women within these groups to help them move towards setting up their own income generation activities.

#### Right

Women are equally motivated through basic skills training like leather work and jewelry making, sewing; monies they generate to their wards to school.



## Evidence of success

### Expansion of the intervention

The first major evidence of the success of the model is its widespread acceptance within the malams across Kano, Jigawa, and Kaduna. The model has expanded from the initial 30 community schools in three LGAs in Kano to the establishment of 160 schools across 16 LGAs in Kano, targeting close to 700 Tsangaya malams

Another 160 Islamiyya schools are also benefitting from this model in the same 16 LGAs. In Kaduna, the model is benefitting 196 Tsangaya schools; and in Jigawa 60 community schools have been established, targeting close to 200 Tsangaya schools and another 30 Islamiyya schools (See Annex A). The limit to further expansion in Kaduna and Jigawa is state funding, not the resistance from the malams.

### Student retention

The model has also been very effective in ensuring student retention. A Tsangaya school, being a boarding facility, has a relatively mobile population because parents at times need to ask the students to return to the hometown for various economic or personal reasons. Thus, a 30 percent dropout rate cannot be avoided. However, for the remaining population, retention has been very effective. Data on the first cohort of students in Kano, who are going to sit for the state run Junior Secondary Transition Exam in April 2014, shows 70 per cent student retention.

### Learning outcomes and transition to Junior Secondary

The children are also showing impressive learning outcomes, especially when compared with comparable state schools. Written and oral assessments are carried out with the children annually through an independent team consisting of SUBEB and LGEA staff. The average pass rate across different cohorts is 75 per cent. It is also important to note that 37 children from cohort 1 in Kano took the Junior Secondary Transition Exam in April 2013, a year ahead of schedule, and all passed. The ability of these 37 students to sit the transition exam before the formally scheduled date bears testimony to the commitment of the teachers and the quality of teacher training they have received from ESSPIN.

**Table 1:** Comparison of performance in Islamiyya, Tsangaya and conventional primary schools

	Cohort 1			Cohort 2		
	Islamiyya	Islamiyya	Control	Islamiyya	Islamiyya	Control
Hausa	58.2%	52.3%	23.3%	67.2%	62.2%	47.8%
English	56.5%	55.6%	43.2%	63.7%	52.4%	49.9%
Arithmetic	46.6%	55.5%	41.5%	60.5%	56.8%	52.4%



### Institutional embedding of the model

The other major evidence of the success of this model is its adoption by SUBEB Kano, and the capacity building of SUBEB staff to manage and run this model with limited ESSPIN support. Further replication of the model is being carried out through the SUBEB team in Kano, which is also providing technical support to SUBEB and LGEA teams in Jigawa and Kaduna. SUBEB Kano's financial commitment to the expansion of this model across the state has steadily increased from Naira 65 million in 2012 to Naira 85 million in 2013, with Naira 160 million planned for 2014.

Kano SUBEB is now leading efforts to lobby federal government to match Kano state government's commitment to expansion of this model.

Another important sustainability related achievement of the programme is its ability to retain the community teachers it has trained. The model was based on training a community teacher who had a minimum of Senior Secondary School Certificate through a special community teacher training programme designed by ESSPIN.

In the beginning, retention of these teachers was expected to be a major challenge as they are paid relatively low monthly allowances due to the need to run the model at a low cost; keeping the model low-cost is the only way to reach the maximum number of children.

Despite this challenge, ESSPIN IQTE programme has had a 90% teacher retention rate, and out of the 10% of teachers who left, 3% did so to enrol in a course of higher study and another 5% had to leave their community after marriage (this applied specifically to the case of female teachers).

#### Below

Teacher, using teaching aid to instruct in a Tsangaya school.



#### Below

Pupil in Tsangaya schools demonstrating knowledge of basic numeracy.



## Next steps

### Further capacity development of SUBEB and LGEA staff

In the ESSPIN extension phase, ESSPIN will continue to provide support to SUBEB Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa to further strengthen the capacity of the SUBEB staff to plan further expansions of this model and to manage the programme on a long term basis. Further, ESSPIN will continue to support the state governments to develop plans that will help mobilize additional resources from the federal government to support further expansion of this model. ESSPIN will continue to help improve the capacity of the SUBEB staff to undertake student assessments and monitor student retention. Technical support for a state wide IQTE census planned by SUBEB Kano will be provided.

### A better understanding of the hurdles to modern education

ESSPIN will also complete two major longitudinal studies that are being carried out with students of Tsangaya and Islamiyya schools. In 2011, ESSPIN undertook a baseline survey of close to 1000 children enrolled in the first cohort of Tsangaya schools in Kano. The survey gathered information on the socio-economic background of the students, the malams and the teachers.

A follow up survey was carried out between May and July 2014, where the attempt was to trace each child, even those who had dropped out, to understand what factors helped some complete and led others to drop out, how access to education has changed either the aspirations or actual life opportunities for children who had completed the full primary cycle, and whether those who dropped out early still gained some benefit from the education they secured in the ESSPIN supported school. The study will be available in the fall of 2014.

The second longitudinal study draws on a sample of female students from Islamiyya schools and regular state schools to study how access to Islamic as opposed to modern education impacts the aspirations and future life options of girls in northern Nigeria.



#### Left

A traditional ruler appreciates the support given to Tsangaya and Quranic schools.

## Annex A: Quotes from the field

The baseline survey for this study was carried out in Kano in 2011, and the follow up survey is scheduled for 2015. The study will be available in the fall of 2015. These two studies are ground breaking in terms of advancing our understanding of what factors restrict access to modern education within the IQTE population in northern Nigeria and what impact the provision of modern education has on the future life opportunities and aspirations of the children.

### Lead malam in a Tsangaya school

Malam Hamisu Dantakai, the lead malam from Fagge D2 cluster, Fagge LGA in Kano, expressed appreciation for the learning outcomes in the ESSPIN school in the following words: 'If children from my Tsangaya, who have never been inside the walls of a public school, can now speak some English and write texts, Dantakai (ESSPIN school) must do it.'

### Proprietors of Islamiyya schools

'The ESSPIN IQTE integration programme implemented in this school has totally changed the orientation of the parents towards sending their daughters to secure Western education. They now send their wards to school regularly. By offering skills training to the mothers of these girls, ESSPIN has empowered them economically and enhanced their commitment to ensure the regular attendance of their daughters,' says Malam Ash'habu Surajo Idris from Sabilul Rashad Islamiyya, Rijiyar Lemo, Fagge LGA.



**Left**  
Community teachers are recruited and trained to deliver quality teaching in IQTE schools.



Alhaji Ahmed, Proprietor, Aliyu bn Shu'ab Islamiyya, Farawa, Kumbotso LGA, expressed similar sentiments: 'Gone are the days when our parents hid us in 'Rumbu' (a local storage facility) because of their dislike for modern education. We suffer to date because of that, and we do not want to expose our children to the same suffering. ESSPIN has shown us the path to secure good education for our children and we are now determined to follow it till the end.'

### Mothers in female Islamiyya schools

Mansura Hassan, one of the mothers in the female Islamiyya school programme who has benefitted from the skills training programme, has this to say: 'ESSPIN killed many birds with one stone. It introduced the teaching of modern education while letting the children also continue with their religious education. At the same time, the parents are not left behind, as mothers are being provided training in income-generation skills. Economically empowering the mothers in turn helps release the economic stress on the fathers too. We have already started to sell small items made by the use of skills we have been taught by ESSPIN. We are now planning to form an association that will be working towards enlightening other women who do not send their daughters to public school, as education eventually makes people independent.'

Amina Yahaya, another mother from Zalihatu Islamiyya, Rijiyar Lemo, Fagge LGA, also made similar observations: 'My life has changed. I have acquired different skills, which make me independent. I no longer need to bother my husband with small requests for food items that I need to prepare delicious and nutritious food for my family. The little income makes a big difference.'

**Left**  
Women are now benefiting from ESSPIN skills training programme.



### Father of a Tsangaya student

‘I would have failed to secure the benefits of this programme but God destined that my child should not suffer from ignorance. Malam Gwani Sunusi, the Tsangaya malam in the neighborhood, spent much time convincing me to allow my child to join the literacy class. I eventually sent the child to the ESSPIN school out of the respect I have for the malam. Luckily enough, my child is determined and has gone a step further. He is now in a Junior Secondary School and is bent on attaining the highest level of academic education to rub shoulders with children of the elite and to also support the community he came from.’  
Father of one of the children from ESSPIN supported Tsangaya schools, Kumbotso LGA.

### Support teacher

‘I have learned through the ESSPIN IQTE training programme that effective teaching and learning take place when the teacher realizes and maximizes the potential of his or her students, and tries to help each child overcome his or her weaknesses,’ says Zainab Iliyasu, Community Teacher from Nassarawa LGEA.

### Community teachers

‘The regular training I get from ESSPIN has trained me to use very good teaching methods, which make me a better teacher. Parents are very happy about what they see their wards do and say as the result of the good teaching. I thank ESSPIN,’ says Aisha Mohammed, Nurul Adafal Islamiyya, Kurna.

#### Below

IQTE complements Islamic education; it helps take girls off the street into schools.



Salim Ibrahim from Ma'ahad Umar Darma Islamiyya School, Kano Municipal LGA, notes his appreciation for the ESSPIN IQTE model in the following words: 'I was one of the people who were pessimistic about the new idea of integrating Western education with Islamic education. I always thought that the two cannot work together, but thanks to ESSPIN, today I am convinced that one cannot live a productive life without acquiring the two. ESSPIN is training us in how to effectively impart literacy and numeracy skills while these children also continue to secure Islamic education. Prior to coming to my class, at least twenty-six out of thirty-two pupils could not write the shortest word or greet in English, but today I have students that can write sentences in English and can tell the time correctly using an analog watch. Parents visit us from time to time to thank us for the positive change they recognize in their wards.'

#### A Male Student

Kabiru, a Tsangaya pupil who was one of the 37 children who completed the primary cycle in an ESSPIN school a year ahead of the scheduled exam, and who is now in Junior Secondary School, says 'The sky is the limit; the doors have been opened, when people thought they were closed for me. I am confident that by the grace of Allah I will finish my education and become like the children of the rich in the cities and urban communities.'

#### A female student

'The ESSPIN IQTE Programme has made my educational pursuits easier as it provides books, pencils, and a blackboard, and trains our teachers to provide me with quality basic education,' says Aisha Ahmed from Darussakina Islamiyya Kurna, Fagge LGA.

**Right**  
IQTE complements Islamic education; it helps take girls off the streets into schools.



**Right**  
Children are enrolled into IQTE school and given access to quality basic education.





## Annex B

### Student and Teacher Data in ESSPIN Supported IQTE Schools in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa (31 July 2014)

#### Number of students in ESSPIN support IQTE schools (Kano, Kaduna, Jigawa)

States	Tsangaya Schools & students				Islamiyya Schools			Total Students
	Schools	Teachers	Students (Boys)	Students (Girls)	Schools	Teachers	Students	
Kano (cohort 1,2, 3 & 4)	160	199 Male	6,895	44	158	190 Female	6,819	13,758
Kaduna (cohort 1,2 & 3)	196	279 (70 female, rest male)	7,738	2,983	--	--	--	10,721
Jigawa (cohort 1 & 2)	60	72 Male	1185	798	30	30 Female	900	2,883
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>15,818</b>	<b>3,825</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>7719</b>	<b>27,362</b>

#### IQTE data per cohort: Kano State

States	Tsangaya Schools & students				Islamiyya Schools			Total Students
	Schools	Teachers (male)	Students (Boys)	Students (Girls)	Schools	Teachers (female)	Students	
Cohort 1	30	43	1,195	44	30	36	1,017	2,256
Cohort 2	30	36	1,200	--	28	34	1,302	2,502
Cohort 3	50	60	2,500	--	50	60	2,500	5,000
<b>Cohort 4</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>4000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>6,895</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>6819</b>	<b>13,758</b>

IQTE data per cohort: Kaduna state

States	Tsangaya Schools & students				Islamiyya Schools	Total Students
Kaduna	Schools	Teachers (Male+Female)	Boys	Girls	No Islamiyya school programme in Kaduna. Female students are absorbed within Tsangaya schools.	
Cohort 1	27	65	1250	700		1950
Cohort 2	94	111	3488	1163		4651
Cohort 3	75	103	3000	1200		4120
Total	196	279	7738	2983		10,721

IQTE data per cohort: Jigawa state

States	Tsangaya Schools & students				Islamiyya Schools			Total Students
Jigawa	Schools	Teachers	Boys	Girls	Schools	Teachers	Students	
Cohort 1	30	36 Male	753	330	--	--	--	1083
Cohort 2	30	36 Male	432	468	30	30 Female	900	1800
Total	60	72 Male	1185	798	30	30 Female	900	2883

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