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A critique of Management Reform at Oro College

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CUBE	Capacity for Universal Basic Education
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ESSPIN	Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ETF	Education Trust Fund
HoD	Head of Department
MTSS	Medium Term Sector Strategy
NCCE	National Commission for Colleges of Education
OD	Organisational Development
SMoE	State Ministry of Education
SMT	Senior Management Team
SSIT	State School Improvement Team
STL	State Team Leader
SUBEB	State Universal Basic Education Board
TDNA	Teacher Development Needs Analysis
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

Introduction

1. In 2008, the Honourable Commissioner for Education, Science and Technology in Kwara State asked for the support of CUBE (the fore-runner of ESSPIN) in implementing the State's education charter: *Every Child Counts*. The charter represented a reform agenda with four strands: teacher quality improvement, inspectorate development, institution building and college of education turn-around. It is the last of these strands – college of education turn-around – that is the focus of this paper. To implement the reform the Commissioner had established a College Turn-around Task Team of four persons chaired by the then Secretary of SUBEB.
2. The terms of reference for the initial involvement of CUBE consultants 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.” Two consultants were appointed to cover the areas of (i) curriculum and (ii) institutional management.
3. The initial terms of reference clearly focused on the College itself, but it soon became apparent that the College was operating in a policy vacuum. The consultants, therefore, interpreted their remit flexibly and in their report (May 2008) proposed a three pronged approach based on strategic, curriculum and management reform.
4. When ESSPIN succeeded CUBE, the management consultant was engaged in September 2008 to review progress since the initial report. Thereafter, the priorities for the management component of the reform (the focus of this paper) were defined as (i) improving strategic direction from SMOE, (ii) development of an institutional plan and (iii) management enhancement at Oro College. The teacher education consultant was engaged to provide support to curriculum reform.
5. Although this paper focuses on the management component of the reform, it has been a major theme of the approach that the goal is to improve the quality of the educational experience of children in basic education schools in Kwara State. Consequently, management reform was focused on supporting the academic and professional activities of the College. Without fundamental reform to curriculum planning, delivery and assessment the educational experience of children will remain at a deplorable level. In those circumstances management reform would be wasted.

Challenges

6. Over the period of ESSPIN's involvement, the challenges faced have varied over time and may be described as strategic, operational, technical, political and attitudinal.

Strategic

7. The initial challenge was to more nearly match supply of and demand for new teachers and to focus on quality rather than quantity.
 - i. Three State colleges of education were producing over 13,000 qualified teachers per year. The State's Education Sector Plan estimated that less than 2,000 new teachers a year would be required for the foreseeable future.
 - ii. A Teacher Development Needs Assessment (TDNA) showed that out of 19,125 basic education teachers in the State, only 75 reached even minimum standards. Many of those teachers had been trained by the College – a damning indictment of the College and also of the National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE) which accredits colleges of education (and which subsequently became the focus of another strand in ESSPIN's reform programme).
 - iii. A key reason for producing excess teachers was the perceived need for the College to attract fee income to compensate for inadequate State funding. Any reduction in numbers was seen as a threat to lecturers' income.
8. This led to three consequential challenges:
 - i. the need to strengthen the role of SMOE in terms of strategic planning and oversight of the tertiary education sector;
 - ii. the need to define the role of the College in terms of both pre-service and in-service provision;
 - iii. the need for a financial strategy in the context of reduced student numbers.

Operational

9. At an operational level, the dominant theme has been that the key change agent in the reform has been the Commissioner. Except for one relatively brief period there has been no internal change agent. In addition, during the period of ESSPIN's involvement, there have been three different Senior Management Teams in the College. Consequently, generating engagement with and ownership of the reform process within the College have been a constant, and perhaps the greatest, challenge.

10. The above represents challenges for ESSPIN in the relationship with the College, but there were also internal challenges for ESSPIN. Two, in particular, were critical:
- i. The engagement of the two consultants supporting Oro College reform was intermittent (ie they were short-term consultants). Although they had the support of the ESSPIN State office, they were not on hand to monitor day-to-day management decisions. Some of these decisions raised doubts about the College's commitment to the reform process.
 - ii. The initial analysis that the college was operating in a policy vacuum raised the necessity to extend the reform process to SMOE to address the need for strategic direction. This extended the consultant's terms of reference but provided a challenge in the context of ESSPIN's priorities.

Technical

11. Closely related to the operational challenges were the more technical aspects of the reform process. The TDNA exercise had given a clear indication of the low quality of teachers in the State, but assessment of College staff was merely subjective. In these circumstances it was a challenge to know what approach to adopt in developing an institutional plan and new management approaches. The key challenge was to move from discussion and development to implementation. It was also a challenge to know whether slowness of implementation was due to technical, intellectual or attitudinal factors.

Political

12. Underlying all the above challenges was the presence of political influence. Although the Commissioner was the main change agent and although ESSPIN was not directly involved in political activity, it was evident that the major players were subject to political challenges in sustaining the path of reform.

Attitudinal

13. As suggested under "Operational" above perhaps the greatest challenge was related to the fact that the main change agent was external to the College. An inherent aspect of this challenge was attitudinal. The rhetoric of the College was one of support for the reforms, but it was a constant challenge to convert the rhetoric into reality.

ESSPIN Response/Progress

Commencement (April / May 2008)

14. The initial review undertaken in April / May 2008 envisaged a four phase approach:

i. Phase 1: Establishing the Policy Framework

The assumption at the time of the Review, consistent with government policy, was that existing teacher training provision at Oro, Ilorin and Lafiagi colleges would be consolidated at Oro College and that student numbers would be significantly reduced to become more in line with demand for teachers in basic education schools in Kwara State. It was envisaged that in order to address issues about the quality of existing teachers, Oro College would also become the centre for expanded in-service provision.

ii. Phase 2: Consolidating the Policy Framework

This phase envisaged a Rationalisation Impact Review in which government would establish strategic direction for the college including pre-service student numbers, policy for in-service provision, funding methodology and staff numbers. There would also be a focus on curriculum reform and a review of teaching methodology.

iii. Phase 3: Institutional Development Plan for the College

Following the establishment of a policy framework, it was envisaged that there would be a range of student, staff, finance, estate, structure, curricula and management issues to be discussed and incorporated in an Institutional Development Plan.

iv. Phase 4: Implementation and Management of the Development Plan

In this phase, the agreed Development Plan would be implemented, managed, kept under review and revised in the light of circumstances. The strategic plan would also inform annual work plans as part of an annual budget process.

Expectation (September – December 2008)

15. Between the initial review in May 2008 and the first ESSPIN involvement in September 2008, the Turn-around Task Team had formulated an action plan, but implementation had been delayed by political pressure to focus in-service training at Ilorin College (which was also being proposed as the centre for the Faculty of Remedial Studies at the new State University) whilst accepting that pre-service training should be consolidated at Oro College.

16. There were strong reasons for a one-college solution:

i. integration of curriculum reform in pre-service and in-service training;

- ii. having one set of staff who could undertake training on curriculum reform for both pre- and in-service training;
 - iii. focusing staff expertise in difficult recruitment areas in one college rather than spreading such expertise more thinly between two colleges;
 - iv. utilising space and evening out the peaks and troughs of workload (It was likely that in-service training would be most active during the vacations when teachers are free from school duties – and when pre-service students are not in residence at the College);
 - v. cost effectiveness in that it would create multiple income streams and would utilise space and facilities.
17. A meeting of all stakeholders was held, chaired by the Commissioner, at which the ESSPIN consultant presented a paper outlining the advantages and disadvantages of the various approaches. It was agreed that:
- i. Oro College should be responsible for pre-service teacher training and in-service provision up to degree level;
 - ii. the new State University should be responsible for degree level in-service training through a Faculty of Education on the Ilorin College site (with the Remedial Faculty on the same site).
18. This decision was consistent with the views of the Task Team, Education Sector Plan (ESP) and the May Institutional Review.
19. The paper presented to the meeting of stakeholders also drew attention to Policy Objective TE1 in the ESP which recommended the establishment of a Higher Education Review. The ESP had stated:
- “At present many useful policies (College of Education Turnaround, setting up a State University) are not being presented or costed as an integrated program. Risk of piecemeal reforms that do not properly establish coherent policy.”
20. Unfortunately, this aspect of the paper was overshadowed by discussion on the future roles of Oro and Ilorin Colleges. Although the advisability of formulating a tertiary (higher) education sector plan was to be raised again during the reform process, it was never to take root. Two years later the lack of an agreed strategy for the tertiary education sector led to concerns about the sustainability of college of education reform.
21. Agreement having been reached on the role of Oro College, ESSPIN supported the drafting of a new Law for the College encapsulating the college as a centre of pre-service and in-service basic education.
22. The expectation was that new legislation would circumvent any further opposition. 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 during the reform process.

23. During this initial phase, other significant developments included the following.
- i. The establishment of a Department of Higher Education in SMOE in response to the need to strengthen SMOE's strategic direction to the College.
 - ii. Members were appointed to the Oro College Council, the governing body of the college. There had been a period during which the Council had been dormant. The newly appointed chairman of the Council gave impetus to the reform process within the College.
 - iii. Agreement that 1,000 would be the maximum annual pre-service student intake at Oro College, but priority would be given to the quality of students. The Commissioner let it be known that quality was to be the determinant even if the intake target were not met. The Task Team were instrumental in introducing a screening exercise consisting of an examination and interview designed to ascertain academic merit and motivation. In the first year of operation only 287 students were admitted. This compared with over 5,000 in the previous year. In the second year the figure was 758.
 - iv. Recognising the financial impact of reduced student numbers, the State budget for the College for 2009 fully covered staff salaries (a large part of which had previously been funded from fee income); fees for new students were almost doubled to N30,000 (including N5,000 for internet access); and there was a capital budget of N80.7m. This was a good settlement for the College, but unfortunately budget releases did not meet expectations and there continued to be pressure on staff salaries.
 - v. A process of staff review and development was begun (staff audit). ESSPIN supported the drafting of a form for use by academic and managerial staff in submitting details of their academic and professional profile. It was assumed by the consultants that this exercise, to be carried out by the College authorities with the support of the Task Team, would provide an indication of the capacity of staff. In fact, the exercise was limited to contractual and disciplinary issues eg whether staff were validly employed, whether they were beyond retirement age, whether their disciplinary record warranted dismissal. Lack of an assessment of the capacity of staff meant that an essential element in forming a judgement about the quality of the institution was not available.
 - vi. Support was given to a review and revision of job descriptions for senior management staff to emphasise the more pro-active aspects of their leadership and management roles.
24. During this period the dynamics of the reform process had centred on a working relationship between ESSPIN and the Task Team operating in the name of the

Commissioner. The SMT in the College had been a source of information for the ESSPIN consultants and had been asked to review the new draft Law. In terms of initiating reform, however, their role had been passive.

Progress (2009)

25. As a consequence of the staff audit, vacancies arose for two key positions in the SMT (Registrar and Bursar). Shortly afterwards a vacancy arose for the post of Provost. A Deputy Provost was appointed Acting Provost and an Acting Registrar (an officer in SMOE) was appointed with the support of the Commissioner.
26. The Acting Registrar was a key internal change agent. During the period of his appointment:
 - i. a new senior management structure for the Registry Department was agreed;
 - ii. the College's committee system was reviewed and revised;
 - iii. a capacity building plan for the administrative staff was formulated in consultation with the staff;
 - iv. a range of management issues were identified and incorporated in a discussion document which formed an aide memoire for the new senior management team. The issues raised included: the role of the Deputy Provost, career structure for administrative staff, committee structure, school structure, student administration, financial administration and management information.
27. An important activity that was commenced during this period was the development of an institutional plan. Following initial meetings with the SMT, workshops were held with the entire staff (c300), administrative staff (c90) and a planning committee (c40) before detailed work was undertaken with a small planning group under the chairmanship of Mr Adebayo, a lecturer in the College. The thrust of the process was that resources should support the academic and professional activities of the colleges and that internal priorities should feed into the MTSS process. The approach was new to the College: previously planning had been seen as a "wish list" of capital expenditure submitted in response to external requests with little reference to academic priorities.
28. Support was given to the drafting of advertisements to fill the vacant posts of Provost, Registrar, Bursar and Librarian. (The last post had been vacant for some time.) Support was also given to the formulation of examination questions for shortlisted applicants and advice on the interview process. It was agreed, however, that ESSPIN would not become involved in the selection of candidates. In fact, unknown at the time to the STL and the consultants, a member of the ESSPIN Kwara office did attend the interviews – although with no consequential ramifications.

29. The posts of Registrar and Bursar were filled from September 2009, but there was delay until November in the appointment of a Provost – and even more delay (over a year) in the appointment of a Librarian. (In fact, it remained a mystery to the consultants as to why the Acting Librarian was not confirmed in his post.)
30. Other supporting activities during this period included:
 - i. a draft strategy paper for the Commissioner in response to the Governor’s desire to establish Oro College as a centre of excellence;
 - ii. further job descriptions of College staff were reviewed and revised including those for Deans and Heads of Department to strengthen their leadership, strategic management and monitoring roles and for school administrators to support the work of Deans;
 - iii. awareness raising with NCCE who became increasingly interested in using Oro College as a model for reform in other colleges of education. A joint NCCE/ESSPIN Task Group was established to monitor progress and raise awareness in other colleges. Although the Group itself never became active, ESSPIN became increasingly involved in support to NCCE and arrangements were made for staff from other colleges of education in “ESSPIN States” to visit Oro and to discuss the reforms.
31. Upon appointment of a substantive Registrar, the previous Acting Registrar became a member of the Turn-around Task Team and continued to be an influential player.
32. ESSPIN supported the induction process for the Registrar and Bursar through workshops on the reform process.
33. Arising from the work of the teacher education consultant, the College restructured from subject-based schools to three schools of General Education, ECCE and Primary, and Junior Secondary. In the absence of the teacher education consultant, but with the assistance of the VSO working on teacher education in Oro College, support was given to the planning group, the SMT and the Task Team in 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: student ratios between schools and between departments. A consequence has been uneven workloads between staff.
34. New deans and heads of department were appointed on a one-year acting basis and it was agreed that performance of deans, HoDs and staff would be monitored at the end of each semester. The effectiveness with which this took place was disappointing.
35. The dynamics of the reform process during this period reflected the nature of the different activities:

- i. the filling of the vacant senior management posts involved periodic discussions with the Commissioner, Chairman of Council, Chairman of the College Turn-around Task Team and the Acting Registrar;
- ii. the planning process involved close interaction with Mr Adebayo, the chairman of the Planning Group, together with extensive workshops and planning meetings;
- iii. other internal college reform involved detailed discussions with the Acting Registrar and workshops with Registry staff;
- iv. close contact was maintained with the College Turn-around Task Team.

Frustration (January – July 2010)

36. The new Provost (an internal appointment) was appointed in November 2009 (the previous Acting Provost reverted to his position as Deputy Provost). By way of support, ESSPIN facilitated an “away-day” for the SMT and new deans. The main focus was on the role of the SMT and its relationship with other college committees, particularly the Council. It reviewed curriculum reform and the institutional plan.
37. Discussions with the Chairman of Council indicated that a similar event for members of Council would be advantageous. This was arranged, but was overtaken by events. On arriving at the College in March 2010, the greeting was “the reform is going well – we have just bought six new cars”. Given the parlous state of the College’s finances, the purchase of cars for members of the SMT and the Chairman of Council did not seem entirely consistent with either the institutional plan or the thrust of the reform process. The purchase had been authorised by the Council from the profits from the ICT Centre which had itself been funded by increases in students’ fees. It was also intimated that members of Council might expect to receive a “seating allowance” for attending the “away-day”.
38. The ESSPIN consultants requested a meeting with the Chairman of the Turn-around Task Team and Acting STL. The “away-day” was postponed and the Commissioner was informed. The monthly subvention to the College was suspended pending further investigation.
39. It also appeared that, notwithstanding assurances at the “away-day” for the SMT during the previous visit, the SMT had not moved towards final approval of the institutional plan. This was facilitated during the visit.
40. During this period, ESSPIN support was also given to:
 - i. the Director of Works and a planning group chaired by Mr Adebayo to formulate an estates strategy as an inherent part of the college’s institutional plan. The estates strategy was agreed with the intention that it should inform the MTSS exercise and submissions for ETF funding. The ETF submission in 2011, however, showed a high

priority for funding a new Home Economics building when there were only two students in Home Economics. It was disappointing that it required the intervention of the Commissioner, Chairman of the Turn-around Task Team and STL to persuade the SMT to revise their submission to be consistent with the institutional plan and reform agenda;

- ii. allocating responsibilities to individuals for implementing sections of the institutional plan. This proved to be a challenging exercise, highlighting the difficulty (common in Nigeria) of moving from the planning stage to implementation;
- iii. the work of the new Bursar in strengthening the monitoring of income and expenditure against budget. Monthly reporting schedules using excel spreadsheets were developed by the Bursar and senior staff. Such reporting should be standard practice, but acceptance that major committees within the College should receive such reports as a matter of routine was difficult to achieve;
- iv. further revision of the draft Oro College Law in the light of experience;
- v. members of the Registrar's Office through workshops which explored ways in which they could support the reform process. Four themes were addressed in particular: improved effectiveness of meetings, enhanced support to Deans, strengthened quality assurance procedures and implementation of the institutional plan. Following the first workshop, participants produced a document "Guidelines for Committee Secretaries".

41. With the appointment of a new SMT it had been hoped that impetus for reform would increase. The Turn-around Task Team had become less active and although ESSPIN consultants were making regular visits to Oro College, the pressure was to "phase down" direct input and to focus on other ESSPIN priorities within more diversified terms of reference.

Cross-roads (August 2010-present)

42. However, recognising that reform may stall and that the Council was not sufficiently effective in monitoring reform, the Task Team was given a more active role and the chairman (who had also been appointed to a part-time ESSPIN post as national consultant) began to spend more time at the College to support the SMT. Experience during the first nine months since the appointment of the new SMT indicated that a more directional approach was necessary and monthly monitoring reports were instituted by the Task Team.
43. In August 2010, the Commissioner asked for a financial statement from the College to support funding to establish Oro College as a centre of excellence. The SMT were reluctant to provide the statement in the belief that there would be little support for such a proposal. The Chairman of the Turn-around Task Team and the previous Acting Registrar provided the required statement which led to the State budget being increased to cover

salary costs. There will, however, continue to be funding constraint because fee income (over N30,000 per student) will fall as a consequence of reduced student numbers.

44. Shortly thereafter, the Commissioner took advantage of the fact that the draft Oro College Law had not yet been passed. The proposed new Law reduced the number of Deputy Provosts from two to one and, in anticipation of the change, Oro College was operating with only one Deputy Provost. In October 2010, the College Council appointed Mr Adebayo as a second Deputy Provost. Mr Adebayo had been instrumental in the reform process – he had been chairman of both the institutional planning group and the curriculum reform group and was the College’s representative at discussions with SSIT about the provision of in-service education.
45. The appointment of Mr Adebayo as Deputy Provost (Academics) has given an opportunity for the College to review its institutional plan with a member of the SMT driving the process and with only oversight support from ESSPIN. Other aspects of management capacity remain of concern, however. Monitoring and evaluation of deans and heads of departments was not as rigorous as envisaged; NCE 1 students continue to be admitted as late as February when the semester starts in November; and examination processing fails to notify students of their results in time to apply for advertised vacancies.
46. These continuing management deficiencies are disappointing particularly since substantial progress has been made since August 2010 in the area of curriculum planning, delivery and assessment and in the area of in-service provision. Even in these area, however, it is not immediately apparent that the process is being driven by the SMT.
47. With an election looming, it is also of concern that the initial decision to focus all pre-service and in-service (up to degree level) basic education teacher training at Oro College has come under political threat with Ilorin College being re-instated as a college of education.

Issues arising – Lessons

48. An analysis of the above account tends to highlight a number of key events/issues from which lessons might be learned. They will be discussed under the following headings:
 - Catalysts for change
 - Knowing the constituency
 - Whose reality?
 - Making a difference
 - Involvement in key appointments
 - To reflect or to act?
 - Consequences of intermittent support
 - Targeting of resources

Catalysts for change

49. During the initial period of reform at Oro College, ESSPIN also undertook preliminary reviews of colleges of education in Kano, Kaduna, Jigawa and Lagos. The working assumption was that for reform to be successful there had to be support from the Commissioner, as was the case with Oro College in Kwara. This lack of apparent support was a key factor in ESSPIN's reluctance to follow those preliminary reviews with further support.
50. 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; political pressure ensured that support for Ilorin and Lafiagi colleges was maintained; and college funding suffered from lack of budget releases. Interestingly, within Oro College, the most productive period was when there was an internal catalyst for change, the Acting Registrar, albeit acting with the known support of the Commissioner.
51. Although there is, as yet, insufficient evidence to draw any firm conclusions, a comparative case study is developing with recent ESSPIN support to Gidan Waya College of Education in Kaduna. Here, the catalyst for change is internal – the Provost – and ESSPIN support is being directed, at least partially, towards encouraging greater involvement and commitment towards the College by the Commissioner, SMOE and SUBEB. It is also interesting to note that the presence of an internal catalyst for change has provided the ESSPIN consultants (both of whom have been involved with Oro College reform) with the opportunity to adopt different approaches at Gidan Waya than at Oro. In particular, although ESSPIN support is more limited at Gidan Waya than at Oro, the opportunity to hold week-long workshops with the whole of the Academic Board and SMT provides for a concentrated interaction with key players that was rarely available during the Oro reform process.

Knowing the constituency

52. A critical process during the Oro College reform was the staff audit. The ESSPIN consultants provided support in the design of forms to capture basic information from members of staff. However, the process of the audit was limited in that 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. In one respect, however, it is unlikely that this would have affected the outcome because it is unlikely that the pervading culture would have tolerated the removal of staff on the basis of their ability. On the other hand, 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.

53. Interestingly, Gidan Waya staff have themselves suggested that such an exercise is conducted as part of ESSPIN support. The consultants strongly recommend that ESSPIN facilitates that process because it could provide valuable information not only about Gidan Waya, but might also raise issues about colleges of education in general. It is understood that ESSPIN support is subject to available resources.

Whose reality?

54. A more general issue relates to the fact that reform was taking place at only one college of education. Superficially, a visit to other colleges would indicate similarities in terms, for instance, of infrastructure, but it has not been clear whether attitudes are similar. Concerns about the local economy, pressure to bow to demands for tertiary education notwithstanding ability to benefit, creation of opportunities for the financial benefit of staff have all been factors that at times have seemed to be taking precedence over the training of quality teachers. The gulf between what the consultants believed to be the purpose of a college of education and local attitudes has sometimes been a challenge to understand. The extent to which this is common across the federation or local to Oro is an interesting question.

Making a difference

55. The purpose of management reform – and indeed curriculum reform – is to make a 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 actually make a difference is a lengthy, painstaking and frustrating process and a considerable challenge.

Involvement in key appointments

56. Another critical process during the Oro College reform was the appointment of members of the SMT. ESSPIN consultants advised on the examination questions and interview procedure, but with hindsight perhaps more time could have been spent on reviewing the selection procedure. It is understood that a marking scheme was adopted in order to

emphasise objectivity, but selection processes inevitably involve an element of subjectivity. In adopting a marking scheme it is conceivable that some elements that form a subjective judgement were omitted from assessment. A rigid marking scheme seems somewhat out of place, especially for the appointment of the Provost since three names are submitted to the Governor at which point political influence and subjectivity play an important role in the final appointment. There may also have been some advantage in the consultants commenting on the examination scripts if candidates' names could have been kept confidential. Whether any of the above factors would have changed the outcome of the selection process cannot be known and nothing in the above should be taken as an implied criticism of the appointments that were made. The comments are simply a reflection on the process that might be taken into account should a similar situation arise in future.

To reflect or to act?

57. The heading of this section is a consequence of reflection on the process of revising the Oro College Law. Once the initial policy decision had been made to locate all pre-service and in-service basic education teacher training at Oro College, it was agreed to encapsulate the policy in a revised Law. In fact, it was over two years before the Law was submitted for approval – for reasons that are not immediately apparent. (At the time of writing approval is awaited.) During the intervening period, the reform process highlighted a number of issues that prompted further revision to the draft Law.
58. 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 a time for reflection. Discussions in the context of reform at Gidan Waya have led to a decision to reflect upon the reform, but the situation is different. At Oro College there was a more fundamental change in the role of the College and other tertiary sector institutions. It was this that led to the belief that early revision to the Law was advisable.
59. In practice the delay has had no practical effect. It is a matter of speculation as to whether political support for the re-instatement of Ilorin College as a college of education would have been any less effective if the Oro Law had already been passed – probably not. On balance, therefore, the unintended delay in submitting the draft Law has been beneficial in that it allowed on-going changes in response to emerging issues.
60. However, this leaves unresolved two issues that with hindsight might have been addressed.
 - i. 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, as previously explained, has not as yet materialised.

- ii. Oro College was the only college of education undergoing a reform process, although ESSPIN had undertaken preliminary reviews at colleges of education in other States. One of the consequences was that there were no on-going comparative experiences. In the area of legislative reform, there might have been advantage in comparing enabling legislation – although careful note would have had to be taken of the context.

Consequences of intermittent support

- 61. In August 2009, shortly before the new SMT took up their posts, two VSOs working at Oro College (primarily on curriculum / teaching methodology) wrote to the ESSPIN consultants suggesting that, with the current level of intermittent support, 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.
- 62. The response, as far as management support was concerned, was that, although ESSPIN support would continue, “it is important that [the new SMT] is seen to be running the College..... These are experienced persons and they need to have the freedom (and confidence) to act – and be seen to act - without the voice of an ESSPIN parrot on their shoulder”.
- 63. This interaction highlights a dilemma which was probably underestimated at the time. In fact, it highlights a number of dilemmas:
 - i. The appointment of a new SMT led to expectations about the pace of reform which did not materialise.
 - ii. ESSPIN’s support tended to be focussed at the strategic level (institutional plan, legislative framework, role of the college, student numbers, management support, etc) but there were operational issues that hampered the objective of creating a centre of excellence. Operational capacity was so low that all identifiable issues simply could not be addressed on an intermittent basis and within the resources available. There was, therefore, a mismatch between ESSPIN’s capacity – and some might say objectives - and the needs of the College (as rightly identified by the VSOs).
 - iii. This mismatch was exacerbated by ESSPIN’s changing priorities. In April 2009, the two consultants engaged on curriculum and management reform were asked to produce a workplan based on 120 days each (Kwara: 100; other:20) for both 2009-10 and 2010-11. Before the end of the first year, the priorities of ESSPIN Abuja were such that support to Oro College was curtailed and during 2010-11 is likely to be less than 20 days for the management component.
 - iv. The role of the consultants was to work with the College Turn-around Task Team. This team was indispensable in that it spoke with the voice of the Commissioner and was able to make major contributions to exercises such as the screening of potential

students and the staff audit, but it, too, operated at a strategic level and was new to the process of reform. It was not until the Chairman of the Task Team also became a part-time member of the ESSPIN office that he became immersed in day-to-day activities at the College.

- v. Nor did the ESSPIN office have the capacity - or the role - to monitor day-to-day management decisions at the College. Reports from those “on the ground” tended to indicate that there was a flurry of activity at the College before the ESSPIN consultants arrived, but that reform tended to be seen as a separate activity from everyday management of the College. Visits were not, therefore, support to a seamless reform process, but rather a series of fire-fights to achieve progress.

Targeting of resources

64. Just as there were issues of intermittent support, so were there also issues about the targeting of resources. Inevitably, college of education reform overlapped with other reform activities. Three, in particular, are worthy of comment.

- i. The growing involvement of Oro College in in-service activity is closely aligned to the work of SSIT and is profiting from the fact that the ESSPIN consultant working with SSIT is full-time in the ESSPIN Kwara office.
- ii. An on-going issue at Oro College has been the level of the State subvention, in particular salary costs. This highlighted the need for synergy between SMoE and the Ministry of Finance. Also, the use of the term “overhead” in Ministry terminology for non-staff recurrent expenditure fails to capture the essential nature of such expenditure for institutions of education. The MTSS process might have provided an outlet for discussion, but at least at the beginning of the reform process, the MTSS was restricted to capital expenditure and did not include staff salaries. The MTSS reform, therefore, failed to address an urgent component of college of education reform.
- iii. The recognition that college of education reform would need to incorporate reform at SMoE and in particular the formulation of a tertiary education sector plan expanded the terms of reference for ESSPIN support. However, the necessary work to support the Director of Higher Education would best have been undertaken as part of general organisational development (OD) support to SMoE. At the time the need was identified, however, the focus of ESSPIN’s OD support was on strengthening SUBEB rather than SMoE.

Future challenges and plans

65. Oro College is at a cross-road: there are opportunities and threats.

Opportunities

66. The strategic framework is now in place:

- i. a new Law should soon be approved, confirming the College as a centre for pre-service and in-service basic education teacher training;
- ii. the passing of the new Law provides the Governor with the opportunity to appoint Council members on the basis of their management and education experience rather than political affiliation. This should strengthen its governance role. The new Law also more clearly defines the roles of the Council and senior officers and the abolition of the “seating allowance” should ensure that one of the highest non-staff expenditure items is significantly reduced;
- iii. there is a focus on quality of student intake and, through the work of the curriculum component of ESSPIN support, a focus on quality of teacher education;
- iv. State funding is supportive of staff salaries and the college is the focus of ETF support in Kwara;
- v. the appointment of Mr Adebayo as Deputy Provost (Academics) brings to the inner circle of the SMT the one person in the College who has, since the beginning of the reform process, been intimately involved with both curriculum reform and the formulation of an institutional plan – and has shown commitment to both;
- vi. linkages between the College and SSIT bring exciting opportunities for development in in-service provision.

Threats

67. There are, however, threats:

- i. there is an election which will bring a new Governor and, presumably, a new Commissioner. The level of continuing support for the reform is as yet unknown;
- ii. there are competitors: Ilorin College has been re-instated as a college of education and the State University is developing a School of Education with degree programmes in basic education;
- iii. 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 through reduced fee income. Moreover, reduced student numbers whilst maintaining historic levels of staffing has led to very favourable staff: student ratios (approximately 1:10 compared to NCCE norms of 1:25). That can only be justified through an expansion of in-service activity.

The future

68. Amongst these opportunities and threats, the challenge is to ensure that it is the opportunities that are grasped and the threats that are repulsed. In many respects that is the responsibility of the college authorities and the SMT in particular. The evidence suggests, however, that there will still be a need for a strong monitoring role to be exercised by the College Turn-around Task Team which will itself require the support of ESSPIN.
69. It also needs to be appreciated that in international terms there is still significant work to be undertaken to bring the College to even minimum standards. It is simply not acceptable to be admitting students in February when the programme commences in November; nor is it acceptable to take so long to process final examination results that students are not able to apply for jobs in the year of their qualification. These are deficiencies that no competent management would tolerate.
70. For ESSPIN the challenges include:
- i. determining 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 – the sorts of issues that in their email of August 2009 the two VSOs identified as needing daily on-the-job training; (ii) continuing support to and monitoring of the SMT; and (iii) development of in-service provision ;
 - ii. support to SMOE in terms of strengthening its strategic direction of the tertiary education sector. There are two key issues: (i) the formulation of a tertiary sector plan and (ii) capacity building in terms of the role of the Director of Higher Education and staff in the Department;
 - iii. building upon the experience at Oro College (and more recently at Gidan Waya College of Education) by supporting reform at other colleges of education;
 - iv. continuing support to NCCE to strengthen quality assurance arrangements at Oro College and other colleges of education.

Conclusions

71. Since the Commissioner launched the State's education charter *Every Child Counts*, much has been achieved.
72. At a strategic level:
- i. the principle that the supply of new teachers should be more nearly in line with the demand for teachers has been widely accepted;
 - ii. there has become a focus on quality of students and quality of provision rather than on quantity;
 - iii. the role of Oro College in the tertiary education landscape has been clarified and encapsulated in a new Law;
 - iv. the College Council, the governing body of the College, has been reconstituted.
73. Within the College:
- i. there is an institutional plan that links academic and resource priorities;
 - ii. schools and departments have been restructured and staff allocated to new schools and departments;
 - iii. job descriptions for deans, heads of department, members of the SMT and school administrators have been reviewed and revised;
 - iv. the Registry has been restructured;
 - v. the committee system has been made more streamlined;
 - vi. procedures for financial monitoring by the Bursar's Office have been strengthened;
 - vii. an estates strategy has been formulated by the Director of Works and a working group of the Planning Committee;
 - viii. capacity building workshops have been held with members of the Registrar's Office, the Planning Group and the SMT;
 - ix. awareness raising workshops have been held with all staff;
 - x. support has been given on a group and individual basis to members of the SMT and other members of staff as well as to members of the College Turn-around Task Team.
74. The greatest challenge, however, still remains. Can the SMT provide the level of leadership that is necessary to sustain the reforms without the constant pressure of an external catalyst for change?
75. Only when the answer to that question is "yes" will a child in a basic education school in Kwara State have the benefit of being taught by someone worthy of being called a teacher.