

**Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria
(ESSPIN)**

**Support to Federal Ministry of Education:
Annual Education Conference**

Report Number: ESSPIN 074

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December 2015



www.esspin.org

Report Distribution and Revision Sheet

Project Name: Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria

Code: 337662

Report No.: ESSPIN 074

Report Title: Annual Education Conference – Support to FME

Rev No	Date of issue	Originator	Checker	Approver	Scope of checking
01	December 2015	Jake Ross	Kayode Sanni	Kayode Sanni	Accuracy, completeness, formatting

Scope of Checking

This report has been discussed with the originator and checked in the light of the requirements of the terms of reference. In addition the report has been checked to ensure editorial consistencies, accuracy of data, completeness of scope and responsiveness to client's requirements.

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The documentary series is arranged as follows:

- ESSPIN 0-- Programme Reports and Documents
- ESSPIN 1-- Support for Federal Level Governance (Reports and Documents for Output 1)
- ESSPIN 2-- Support for State Level Governance (Reports and Documents for Output 2)
- ESSPIN 3-- Support for Schools and Education Quality Improvement (Reports and Documents for Output 3)
- ESSPIN 4-- Support for Communities (Reports and Documents for Output 4)
- ESSPIN 5-- Information Management Reports and Documents

Reports and Documents produced for individual ESSPIN focal states follow the same number sequence but are prefixed:

- JG Jigawa
- KD Kaduna
- KN Kano
- KW Kwara
- LG Lagos
- EN Enugu

Contents

Report Distribution and Revision Sheet	ii
Disclaimer	iv
Note on Documentary Series	iv
Acronyms and Abbreviations	vi
Abstract	7
Achievement of the Terms of Reference for ESSPIN Deputy Programme Manager with respect to Annual Education Conference, Abuja, Dec 2015	8
Background.....	9
Findings and Issues Arising.....	9
Options and Next Steps.....	10
Appendix 1: Presentation	11
Appendix 2: Conference agenda	24

Acronyms and Abbreviations

DFID	Department for International Development, UK government
DPM	Deputy Programme Manager, ESSPIN
EDOREN	Education Data, Research and Evaluation In Nigeria
EPR&D	Educational Planning, Research and Development Department, FME
ESSPIN	Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria
FME	Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria
MLA	Measurement of Learning Achievement

Abstract

1. This report documents the support provided to the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Education by ESSPIN's Deputy Programme Manager regarding a presentation session entitled "How can we use the evidence we have to improve policy and practice for better learning outcomes?" at the first Annual Education Conference, Abuja, Nigeria on 07 December 2015.

Achievement of the Terms of Reference for ESSPIN Deputy Programme Manager with respect to Annual Education Conference, Abuja, Dec 2015

Tasks	Progress made and agreements reached	Proposed/agreed follow up
Draft presentation on “How can we use the evidence we have to improve policy and practice for better learning outcomes?” within ‘Improved Learning Outcomes’ Sub-Theme, for Annual Education Conference, Abuja, Dec 2015.	Completed and shared with EDOREN/DFID team in advance as requested.	Briefing and run-through with Deputy Director Mrs Khadijah Liman to make presentation on behalf of Federal Ministry of Education (FME).
Attend conference and join sessions on learning outcomes.	Completed: session attended.	Write up report as milestone deliverable for ESSPIN Q4 2015 (this document).

Background

2. The ESSPIN Deputy Programme Manager (DPM) served as a member of the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Education Systems Reform Committee on Measurement of Learning Achievement (MLA) from near the time of its inauguration in 2012 to completion of its responsibilities in 2015. During that time, he participated actively in the deliberations, consultations and report drafting of the Committee, including guiding the Committee in line with DFID's Practice Note on [National and International Assessments of Learning](#) (of which he was co-author).
3. When the Education Data, Research and Evaluation In Nigeria project (EDOREN) and Department for International Development (DFID) were planning the first Annual Education Conference, to be held in Abuja on 07 December 2015, they invited the ESSPIN DPM to make a presentation within the 'Improved Learning Outcomes' sub-theme. However, it transpired that the other panel members were also male, and the DPM had taken a pledge¹ to turn down invitations to appear in all-male panels at public conferences. It was therefore readily agreed with the conference conveners that the DPM would support a suitable female presenter for the session instead. After reviewing the options, the DPM reached agreement with Mrs Khadijah Liman, Deputy Director, Educational Planning, Research and Development (EPR&D) Department, Federal Ministry of Education and fellow MLA Committee Member, that she would make the presentation.

Findings and Issues Arising

4. The presentation and facilitator's notes can be seen in Appendix 1.
5. It was very apparent to all present that Mrs Liman's delivery enhanced the presentation, in that she extemporised examples from her personal experience—for example in having attended a poorly resourced rural primary school in her own childhood. This brought the evidence about contrasting levels of learning outcomes in rural and urban communities to life. Mrs Liman's identity and delivery made the entire presentation more authoritative, coming from a Nigerian woman's perspective and with the status of a ministry official rather than that of an external technical assistant from overseas.

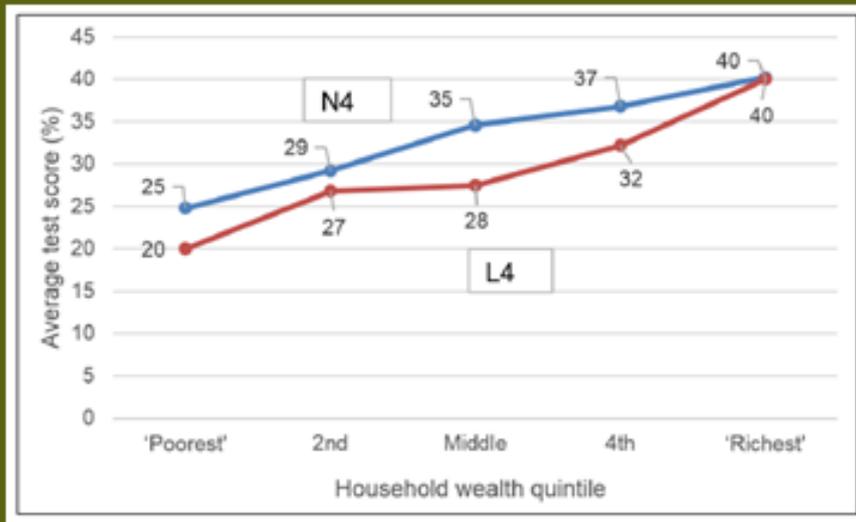
¹ <http://www.owen.org/pledge>

Options and Next Steps

6. ESSPIN's Output 1 team will continue to support FME as the policy on MLA is developed through JCCE and related channels. ESSPIN will continue to advocate that international development partners coordinate behind FME to establish a unified, coherent, broad consensus, adequately resourced, international standard, sample based, regularly conducted and published national assessment in Nigeria at the earliest opportunity.

Appendix 1: Presentation

How can we use the evidence we have to improve policy and practice for better learning outcomes?



FME/EDOREN conference Abuja

07 December 2015

How can we use the evidence we have to improve policy and practice for better learning outcomes?

Outline

- Identify what's **wrong** before acting
- Identify what **works** before acting
- Engage decision-makers and practitioners
- Establish regular national assessment of learning outcomes
- Stay the course

All protocols duly observed. The focus of this presentation is to address a major challenge facing the leaders of Nigeria's education sector: how to use evidence to improve policy and practice for better learning outcomes. I will begin by emphasising the need to identify and act upon the **right problems** (not the wrong ones); and the need to pick solutions that are **proven** to be effective. I will share some examples of the kinds of evidence-based problems and solutions I mean; before outlining how to engage decision-makers and practitioners; and arguing for a single, regular national assessment of learning outcomes in Nigeria.

Evidence-based policy-making

Don't 'fix' the wrong problems;

Do identify what works for the right problems

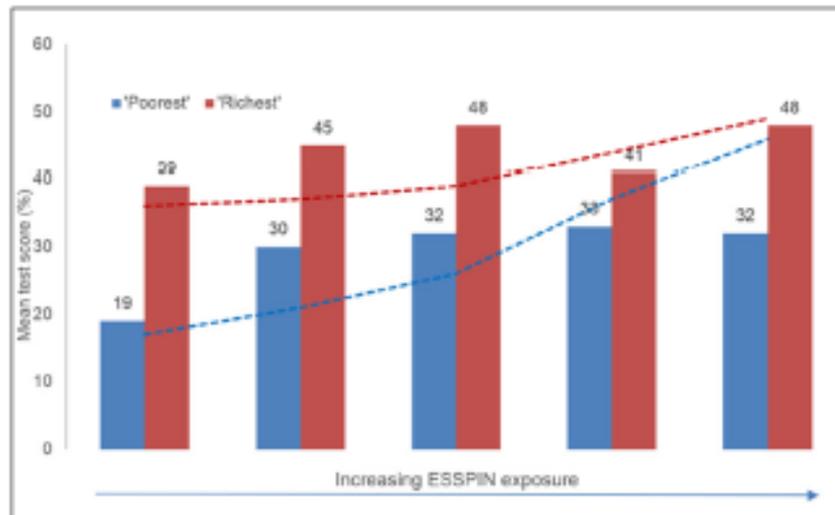
Populist problems	Populist solutions	Evidence-based problems	Evidence-based solutions
Many children are not attending school	Free school feeding for all	Children not enrolled and not attending school	Community surveys and engagement
Children are not learning enough in school	Free school feeding for all	Children are not learning enough in school	Focus on foundational literacy and numeracy
Teachers are unqualified	Mass training and certification	Low teacher competence	Continuous professional development in classrooms
Lack of resources to invest in education	Co-opt business and community funding	Insufficient investment in quality of learning	Prioritise teacher development and learning materials

The first issue is to identify and act upon the right problems, not the wrong or popularly-conceived ones. That will help avoid expensive, unsustainable and wasteful actions. It will help concentrate our scarce resources on the things which really matter, to ensure all children enrol and regularly attend a safe and decent quality school, and actually learn to read, write, do their sums while they are there. You know the saying 'With a hammer in your hand, every problem looks like a nail!' Not everything in education can be solved by feeding all the children in the state. But poorly targeted school feeding, or cash transfers, can certainly eat up the entire education budget and more. We must focus on the problems that really affect equitable access to good quality learning for all. For instance, much policy and media discourse is on low teacher qualifications, but the evidence shows that teachers with a paper qualification are not necessarily better teachers than those without, so spending a lot of money on mass training and certification is not necessarily the answer for how to help children learn more. Better to focus on teacher competence and performance in the classroom, and provide continuous classroom-based professional development and feedback to all teachers in their classrooms, in the conditions they actually face.

Example of evidence-based problem and solution (1)

Richest 20% pupils 2x better learning outcomes than poorest 20%
 School Improvement Programme closes **wealth gap in learning**

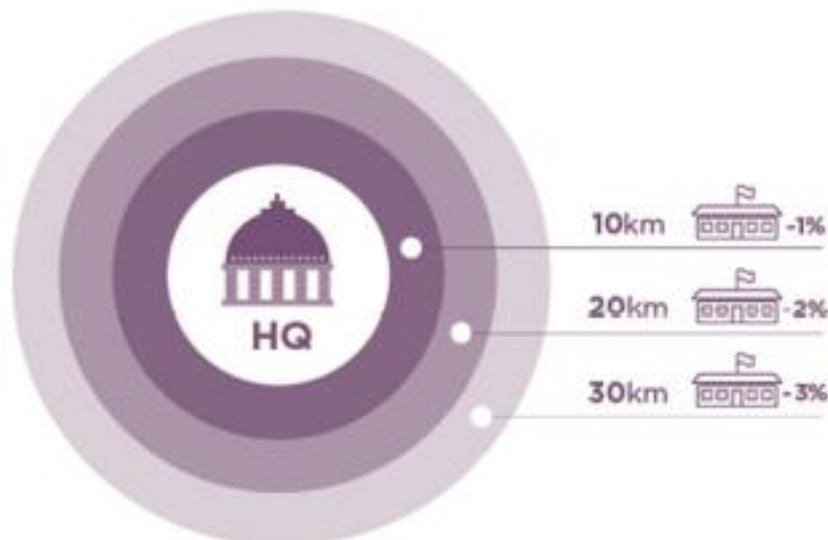
Figure 5: Does being in an ESSPIN school reduce the effect of wealth inequality?



Note: Bar graphs show actual values, while dotted lines show average trend in mean scores.
 Source: ESSPIN Composite Survey 2, 2015

Evidence from well-conducted surveys can help us identify which problems to focus upon. ESSPIN's Composite Survey 2 in 2014 has shown us that wealthier children score double the marks of poorer children within the same classroom in any typical public primary school. However, if that school has been supported by a comprehensive whole-school improvement programme, the wealth gap can be significantly narrowed. With those state governments' School Improvement Programmes, all children benefit, but the poorest children benefit most of all...which is something I am sure we all agree is a noble objective and outcome.

Example of evidence-based problem (2)



“For every increase of 10 kilometres in distance between the school and the headquarters of the local government authority, average test scores dropped by around one percentage point.”

Source: ESSPIN Composite Survey 2, 2015

Another evidence-based problem revealed by the same survey, is that for every increase of 10 kilometres in distance between the school and the headquarters of the local government authority, pupils’ average test scores dropped by around one percentage point.

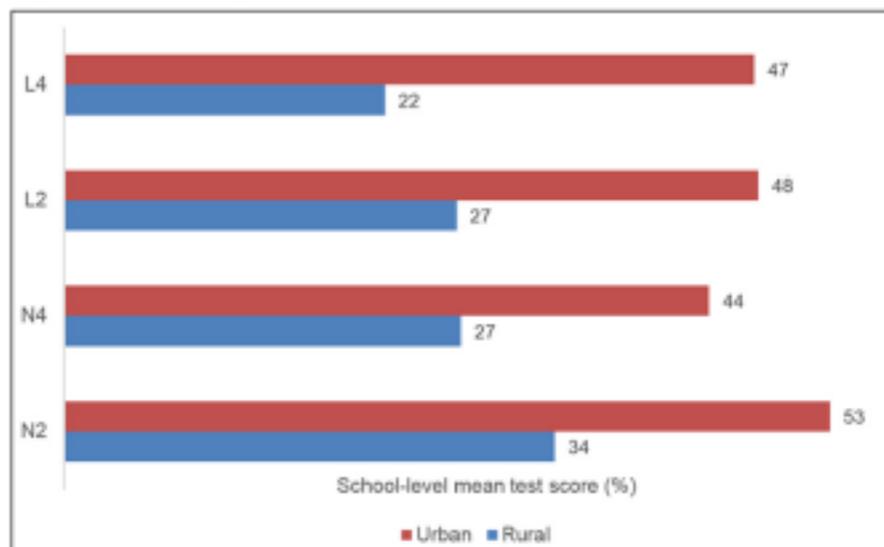
(See next slide for further exploration of this issue.)

Example of evidence-based solution (2)

Pupils in rural schools score half that of urban pupils in tests

Target policies, resources and teacher support on rural schools

Figure 6: CS2 Pupil test scores in rural and urban schools



Source: ESSPIN Composite Survey 2, 2015

This reveals a massive rural/urban divide blighting the lives and future prospects of millions of Nigerian children—as illustrated in this chart. The red bars show learning outcomes of urban children in English literacy and numeracy, that are roughly **double** that of the blue bars of rural children's test scores. It is not a matter of blaming rural teachers for poor performance; it is about identifying the policy and resource responses which will allow and encourage better teachers to serve in rural schools, and to lift up the standards of the teachers who are currently in those schools already. That is where our scarce resources need to be invested, if we want to see learning outcomes improve significantly.

Example of evidence-based problem and solution (3)

Problem: low standards of teacher competence, knowledge and skills causing low pupil learning outcomes, esp. in northern states

Solution: recruit, retain and promote the teachers who perform best

Table 30: Teacher competence in CS2 by gender groups

Teacher competence criteria (%)	Male	Female	Significant difference
Knowledge of English/maths curriculum	26.2	44.1	F
Use of one or more teaching aid	95	97.6	
Use of one or more teaching aid, excluding reading/writing/copying from blackboard	68.2	82.4	F
Praise more than reprimand	74.8	86.6	F
Assigns two or more individual/group tasks	46.2	59.5	F
English score (%)	39.7	53.4	F
Mathematics score (%)	55.5	67.7	F
Passes English and mathematics test	28	57.5	F
Competence score (CS1 version)	64	73.4	F
Meets teacher competence standard (CS1)	59.5	73	F
Competence score (CS2 version)	55	68	F
Teacher competence standard (CS2)	13.6	40.4	F

Teacher competence standard (CS2) by gender groups and states			
States	Male	Female	Significance
Enugu	39.8	59.0	F
Jigawa	6.9	14.1	
Kaduna	16.5	24.1	
Kano	9.6	25.0	F
Kwara	25.5	41.8	F
Lagos	42.3	59.5	

Evidence:

Female teachers performing significantly better than male on almost all criteria.

Northern states: c 80% male teachers; Southern states: c 80% female teachers

Note. F = significant difference in favour of females; M = significant difference in favour of males (p < .05) Source: ESSPIN Composite Survey 2, 2015

So who are the better performing teachers? You don't need to be able to read all the indicators and criteria of teacher standards on the left side of this table. What you can see is that in the right-hand column, if there is a letter M it means male teachers are out-performing female, and if there is a letter F, it means female teachers are out-performing male ones. How many letter Ms can you count? Admittedly, most female teachers are employed in southern states, where teaching standards generally are currently higher than in northern states; but the relationship holds also in the north, as shown by the data in the state-level examples shown at the bottom. If we want our schools to be both more inclusive and more effective, the policy response to consider is employing more female teachers in recruitment rounds.

Reality check: consider the working context



Of course, evidence-based policy and practice is no magic wand. We must not lose sight of the cramped, dilapidated conditions many teachers work in, and children are expected to learn in (but may fail to).

Work with State and school partners to promote ways learning can happen within the context



Picture credit: ESSPIN

Our duty is therefore to find ways of working with State- and school-level partners—with CSOs and local government and SBMCs and school communities—to promote ways of children learning that can happen within the context of schools as they really are.

Using local materials, find ways for children to actively practice reading, writing and maths.



And that means putting learning materials in children's **own hands**, based on well-designed teachers' guides and in-class support for teachers, so that **all** pupils get to **actively practice** reading, writing and maths skills in varied, interactive, enjoyable ways throughout their school careers.

Engage decision-makers and practitioners

- Present the evidence regarding which problems really matter for children's learning
- Engage early and repeatedly around core messages
- Develop a professional culture of sharing research and evidence; discussion, openness, inclusion, challenge and debate
- Set up multiple, frequent, regular, low-stakes, accessible research consumption forums

So, to pull this together: we must present to policy-makers at the top, and to practitioners in the classroom, (and to every layer in between), the evidence regarding which problems really matter for children's learning. We must engage early and repeatedly around the core messages: poorer children are learning less; rural children are learning less; female teachers are performing better, and so on. A good way to do this is to develop in all education ministries and SUBEBs and LGEAs and schools and colleges a professional culture of sharing research and evidence. Such a culture is based on discussion, openness, inclusion of all, willingness to challenge (respectfully of the opinions of others) and debate the best way forwards. We can make progress towards that professional culture, not by big formal conferences and PhD programmes, but by setting up multiple, frequent, regular, low-stakes, informal, friendly, enjoyable, accessible, inclusive research consumption forums in any and every education workplace.

Establish regular national assessment of learning outcomes

- Secure resources for a single, regular, Nigerian Federal Government-led, sample-based **national assessment** to international standards with IDP support
- Move away from costly programme- and institution-specific assessments of learning
- Conduct cycle without fear or favour across political and development timelines
- Build a national expectation of public debate of the findings

One major action would make the biggest single contribution to improving the evidence base for policy and practice in Nigeria: establishing a single, regular, sample-based, national assessment system, which meets international standards. With unified FME leadership and UBEC capacity, all Nigerian education MLAs and International Development Partners alike are encouraged to throw their resources behind a single systemic National Assessment, rather than a multiplicity of costly programme- and institution-specific assessments of learning. This National Assessment of Learning must be conducted on a regular cycle without fear or favour across political and development programme timelines. And it will succeed if it is approached by building a national expectation that each time it runs, the findings will be publicly disseminated and debated in the media, throughout society and the economy, in legislative and executive chambers, and in the education sector MLAs and school communities themselves.

Conclusion:

How can we use the evidence we have to improve policy and practice for better learning outcomes?

- Focus on the real problems
- Implement what is proven to work in context
- Engage decision-makers and practitioners
- Establish regular national assessment of learning outcomes
- Keep doing what works: focus on children, learning and teaching performance

To conclude: How can we use the evidence we have to improve policy and practice for better learning outcomes? We must focus on the real problems. We must act guided by what is proven to work in genuine Nigerian school contexts. We must foster a culture of evidence-based policy and practice amongst leaders, education officials and practitioners alike. We must establish a regular national assessment of children's learning outcomes without further delay. And we must keep doing what works: focus on children, on learning, and on the quality of teaching performance in schools. Thank you for listening.

Appendix 2: Conference agenda



UKaid
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Annual Education Conference

Making Evidence Work for Basic Education Policy
and Practice in Nigeria
Email: info@edoren.org



Federal Ministry of Education

7 December 2015
Sheraton Hotel Abuja
CONFERENCE AGENDA

08.00 - 08.45 Arrival and Registration

09.00 – 09.45 SESSION 1: Conference Objectives, Programme and Formal Opening

- National Anthem Carol Nelson
- Introduction and protocols Carol Nelson
- Welcome and conference objectives Kemi Williams/Prof Oladele Akogun
- Official Conference Opening – Hon. Minister of State for Education, Professor Anthony Ezie Anwuka

09.45 – 11.00 SESSION 2: Key Note Presentation and Discussion. Chair- Hon. Minister of State for Education, Professor Anthony Ezie Anwuka

- Introduce keynote speaker Prof. Oladele Akogun
- Keynote speech Prof. Emeritus PAI Obanya
- Youth experience of education research Mastura Aiyu & Hussaina Hassan
- Plenary discussion Chair-Hon Minister
- Introduction to panels and next session Steve Packer

11.00 – 11.20 Group Photograph then Tea Break

11.20 – 13.30 SESSION 3: Sub-Theme Panels – Four Challenges Chair- Steve Packer

1. Better primary school teachers
2. Improved learning outcomes
3. Safe schools
4. Use of data to improve access

13.15 – 14.15 Lunch

14.15 – 16.30 SESSION 4: Plenary Feedback and Debate Chair- Steve Packer

- Rotating plenary feedback All (convenors)
- Summary of common messages and discussion Steve Packer

16.30 – 16.45 SESSION 5: Conference Outcomes and Closure Chair- Prof. Emeritus Obanya

- Summary of next steps Dr. A. Olulayo Director, EPRD
- Official conference close Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education











