
The Role of Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) in Transforming Basic Education into Effective One in Jigawa State: Situations and Challenges

By

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Abstract

Educational transformation is what aid development the world over. In Nigeria, educational policies change over the decades in order to achieve the nation's educational goals. In line with these changes, Universal Basic Education act was introduced in 2004 and was given the mandate among others, to partner with other agencies/organizations in promoting Basic Education. From the data available with ESSPIN; prior to the ESSPIN/Jigawa State partnership, only 0.2% of the teachers can organize their pupils to work in groups and only 0.1% of the teachers have sufficient knowledge to teach literacy at the lower basic classes of Jigawa schools. This paper focuses on the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) and its partnership with Jigawa State government in transforming Basic Education. It looks closely into the output three (school) by examining the situation of schools prior to the commencement of the programme with special consideration to State School Improvement Team (SSIT) as change agents; what went well and what needs to be improved. SSITs are new wine in new bottle, and for better transformation, the paper recommends that the government should manage its SSIT effectively by given them all they need; financially, technically and otherwise. They should also be giving a place in decision making.

From the ancient times to date, the lives of human beings have changed greatly; from local and primitive to a more modern and technological life. All these changes could not have been possible without education. The dynamic nature of education is well pronounced in all human endeavours. In Nigeria for instance, educational policies are changing in order to meet the demand of the individual and the nation at large. The

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Nigeria's philosophy of education believe that education fosters the worth and development of individuals, for each individual's sake, and for the general development of the Society (FRN, 2004). This is not possible to achieve without a standard and flexible education system at the school level. The policy therefore insists on the fact that there is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end, the school programme needs to be relevant, practical and comprehensive, with interest and ability of individual learners leading the direction in education (FRN, 2004). Therefore, educational transformations are necessary to meet the challenges of modern world and to achieve the educational visions. In line with the above development, the Nigerian government at all levels set educational ministries, agencies and Parastatals to succeed in the quest for better education and better Nigeria. Some of these governmental organizations include; Federal ministry of Education, State ministries, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Local Education Authorities (LGEAs) etc. There are also international organization assisting educational activities in Nigeria, these include; World Bank, Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), Korea International Agency (KOICA) British Council, Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) etc

However, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) is the body responsible for the promotion of Basic Education in Nigeria. At the state level, the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) is carrying out similar function of UBEC with Local Education Authorities (LGEAs) supporting at the various local governments of the states. The National policy of Education 2004, stressed that Education boards or similar authorities shall be responsible for the management of the schools.... (FRN, 2004). According to the policy, basic education shall be free and compulsory for all children. In line with the above policy statement therefore, the fundamental principle of UBE in Nigeria is that everybody must have access to equivalent education comprehensively and Co-educationally (Adepoju & Fabiyi, n.d). The UBE act of 1999 which came into effect in 2004 is the national document that gave the UBEC mandate to co-ordinate and monitors the UBE activities in Nigeria. The UBE commission is a Federal government agency co-coordinating all aspects of UBE Programme implementation. Its vision is to be a world class education intervention and regulatory agency for the promotion of uniform, qualitative and functional basic education in Nigeria (UBE, n.d.).

In related development, the UBE Commission is mandated by section II no. 9 (I and j) of the UBE act 2004 to facilitate and ensure smooth collaboration with International Development partners (IDPs) and non-governmental organization to boost basic education delivery in Nigeria. In keeping with this mandate, UBEC has attracted financial and technical supports from International Development partners (IDPs)

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prominent among which includes; Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), Korea International Agency (KOICA), World Bank, UNICEF, USAID, British Council and Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN). ESSPIN is supporting Institutional Capacity building of UBEC and SUBEB officials in Education planning strategy (UBE, n.d.). This paper is therefore going to consider the partnership between Nigerian government and ESSPIN in transforming Basic Education in Nigeria, in one of the ESSPIN operational states (i.e. Jigawa State).

Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) and the Current Situation

ESSPIN is a United Kingdom aid (UKaid) organization under the Department For International Development (DFID). Under this programme, the Nigerian and UK governments are working together to give all children a quality basic education. However, years of neglect have left Nigeria with poor quality Basic Education, and for this ESSPIN became an important Educational Programme in Nigeria. For decades, many schools failed to provide even basic opportunities for learners, school buildings and facilities were inadequate, teaching standard low, teachers receive inadequate training and had little motivation to improve. Management of education was often ineffective, inefficient and top heavy.

There is a desire for reforms but policies and plans were not implemented effectively. Financial management was opaque and capital and operating funds do not reach school as intended. This current dire state of education means that children fail to acquire even the fundamental skills and knowledge that they need, but policies and plans not implemented effectively. Financial management opaque and capital and operating funds do not reach school as intended. This current dire state of education means that, children fail to acquire even the fundamental skills and knowledge that they need to lead productive lives as individuals and citizens (Transforming basic education, 2010/2011). Due to these situations, support of organizations like ESSPIN is very vital to rescue the Nigerian Educational System in order to make the idea of “Education for All” (EFA) a reality.

What is ESSPIN?

The Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) is a partnership between the Nigerian government and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID). This is a Six – year programme (2008 – 2014) to support the federal and state government of Kano, Kaduna, Jigawa, Kwara, Lagos and Enugu to develop effective planning, financing and delivery system that will improve the quality of Basic Education.

ESSPIN got a team of experts working in the six states with its head office at Abuja. These teams work closely as an entity in terms of achieving their goals in transforming basic education in Nigeria. Moreover, ESSPIN works with other DFID funded state level programmes (SLPs). It builds on DFID capacity for Universal Basic Education project and the Girls Education Project and works along side with the World Bank State Education Project (Transforming basic education, 2010/2011). The above mentioned six-states are referred to as ESSPIN states. ESSPIN is working with pilot schools in some selected local government of the states. In the six – ESSPIN states for instance, Kano is working with three L.Gs, Kaduna 23 LGs, Jigawa 9 LGs, Kwara all the LGs, Lagos with 100 schools across the state while Enugu is only working with one L.G.

Presence of ESSPIN in Jigawa State

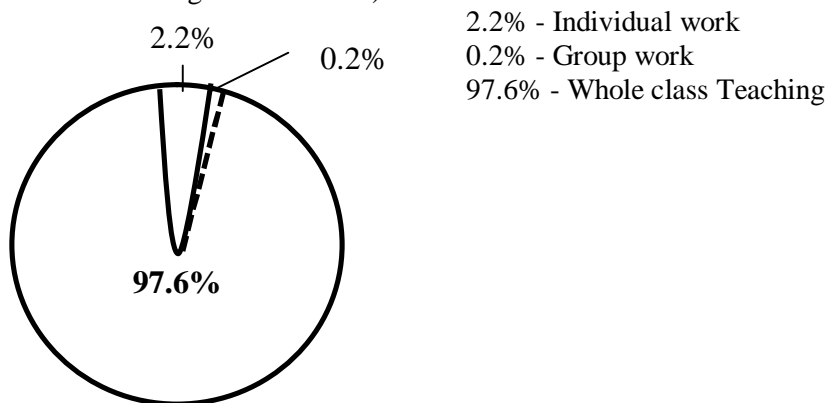
Jigawa as a state in the Federal republic of Nigeria is committed to providing qualitative basic education for its children under the care of Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and Local Education Authorities (L.G.E.As), as mandated by Part IV 12(i) and 13 (i) of the compulsory free Universal Education act 2004 which mentioned that in each state there shall be Universal Education Board and Local Education Authorities. (FRN Gazette, 2004). In every human endeavour there should be a goal or a vision. Jigawa as a state has its educational vision, which it wants to achieve through the programme. The vision states that; Jigawa schools will develop pupils who can read and write; who have imbibed the virtues of hard work; who have acquire the skills for self reliance; who are patriotic and responsible citizens. (Strawbridge, 2010)

In line with the above therefore, Jigawa state partnership with ESSPIN is geared toward achieving the vision. From the beginning of the programme, ESSPIN collaborated with SUBEB and other Educational agencies to employ highly qualified personals to assist it in conducting its activities within the state. ESSPIN commenced by conducting surveys and other related research activities to find out about the current situation of Basic Education in Jigawa State. Some of the result of these surveys/assessments is shown below:

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Classroom Survey Results

(How teachers organize the class)



Teacher Development Needs Assessment (TDNA) in Literacy (English)

| No. of Teachers | Percentage | Ranking |
|-----------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| 6 | 0.1 | Sufficient Knowledge to teach |
| 227 | 2.2 | Near Sufficient |
| 10,285 | 74.9 | Not Sufficiently Competent to teach |
| 10,518 | 100 | |

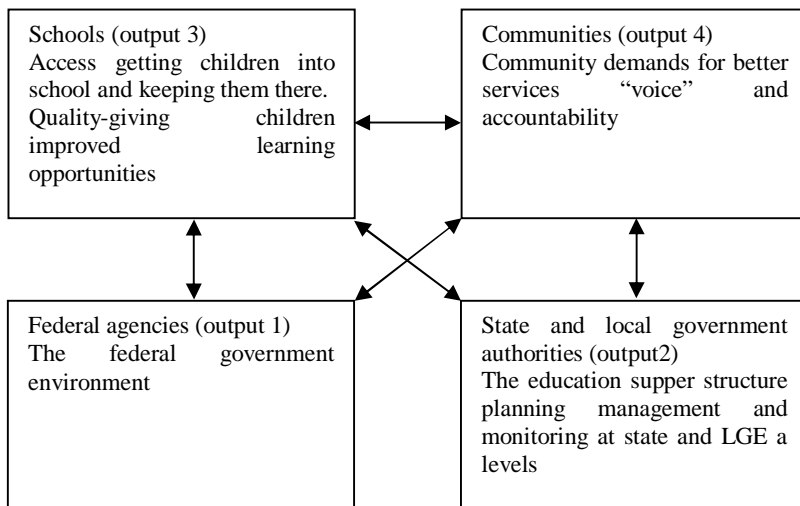
(Source: ESSPIN/SSIT Documents, 2011).

From the above findings and many more, the following facts were well pronounced in the Jigawa Educational System:

- 1 Teaching in the Classroom is more of a teacher centred approach.
- 2 Teachers receive inadequate training.
- 3 Head Teachers (HTs) and School Support Officers (SSOs) are not doing what they supposed to do.
- 4 Financial management is inappropriate.
- 5 Community-school relationship is weak
- 6 School building and other facilities that aid teaching and learning are inadequate
- 7 Monitoring and mentoring is generally weak
- 8 School is not allowed to evaluate its situation
- 9 HTS, teachers, parents are not involved in the decision making etc.

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In related development, ESSPIN is working with 104 pilot schools in nine local governments to curtail the situation. ESSPIN split its activities to units referred to as outputs for a successful implementation of its programme; these outputs are divided into four as follows:



Source: www.esspin.org

All these four outputs are closely related and depend on each other to make the programme a success. Special consideration will be given to school (output 3) which is where teaching and learning takes place.

The School (Output 3)

The school (output 3) is the place where children learn. It is the place where the state educational vision can be achieved; therefore the school is the most important place for the state as far as ESSPIN is concerned. It’s also very important to ESSPIN because it involves highly intellectual people who were examined and interviewed by ESSPIN to form a team called the State School Improvement team (SSIT). The SSIT members are usually the link between the school, ESSPIN and the state government in the school improvement programme.

State School Improvement Team (SSIT) as Agent of Change

SSIT are the new idea for Nigeria and has been established in all ESSPIN states. The teams are responsible for delivering both better teaching and better leadership in the school improvement programme. From the result of the surveys and other researches, the ESSPIN states understand that the current school system is simply not working and doing more of the same is unlikely to bring a positive result.

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Developing the SSITs has given the states control of their educational training. The state via SSIT can ensure that SSIT addresses state need and is responsive to the situation in schools. Also educational activities are delivered by a skilled team of practitioners/educators who “belong” to the state, and who are trained in intervention which are likely to make a difference (Planning for better schools, n.d.)The Jigawa state SSIT conducts their work with the spirit of team work, tolerance and punctuality. Some of their tasks in the school improvement programme include receiving professional training from ESSPIN to build their capacity to become familiar with the current thinking and good practice in the following areas:

- a Child development learning style and linkages with learning and teaching
- b Teaching numeracy and literacy
- c Supervision of and provision of advisory support to teaching and learning.
- d School Improvement.
- e School management (including the involvement of communities/SBMC)

Moreover, the SSIT members should support quality team in the process of teaching and learning and give support to the School Support Officers (SSOs), Head Teachers (HT)/Teachers and encourage good school/community relations (Letter of Appointment, 2010).

What went well about ESSPIN in Jigawa State

ESSPIN is working with 104 pilot schools in nine local governments of Jigawa state. It has made plans and even started constructing classroom blocks and toilets in some of the schools. In related development, the SSIT are doing their possible best to make ends meet in the ESSPIN Schools. Since the inception of SSIT as a team, a lot of water has passed under the bridge. But with regard to this paper, what went well will be discussed under the following sub-headings:

Teaching and Learning: Teaching is the most important aspect of each school, if teaching and learning are in order, then the school can be regarded as an effective one. The most prominent feature of ESSIPIN school in Jigawa state is the classroom sitting arrangement; students sit in a round table (facing each other) while the lesson is going on. The teacher on the other hands goes round the class to support children while working. This allows the pupils to discuss, and do work in pairs or in groups. Now in ESSPIN Schools you can see teachers working together and also pupils using variety of materials in lessons. Most importantly teachers can now organize their classes very well during lesson. This shows that the classroom survey result on how teachers organize their class cannot be the same again.

Leadership and Management: The head teacher (HT) is now playing the role of a guide, and friend not a “master” or a superior officer. Now the school tone i.e. the HT/Teacher and pupils/teachers relationship is very sound and friendly. The HT with the support of the teachers, community and the SSITs can evaluate the school and make plans for further improvement. In relation to this, in the past, the enrolment of Karnaya primary school in Dutse LGEA was 122 pupils (87boys and girls 35girls) although the school had good buildings, a playground, water but lack toilet and effective leadership. With the support of the SSIT, the HT, Isah Abdullahi conducted a school self evaluation and discovered how to improve his pupils’ performance, motivate his teachers and raise community support. The school enrolment has since increased to 209 students (15boys and 50 girls) (Impact, 2011)

Community-School Relation: Now in all the 104 ESSPIN schools there is a special delegation of responsibilities called the community school relations officer. This person is appointed among the teaching staff with the responsibility of interaction between the school and the community. The situation in ESSPIN schools in Jigawa state now is that the school should visit the community as the case may be. Also the school based management committee (SBMC) aid in strengthening community-school relationship in ESSPIN Schools. This relationship usually improves pupils’ achievement. A HT from the most populous primary school in Jigawa state said that in his over twenty years as a HT in Nasoro Primary School Gumel, he has never seen the community more focused on children’s achievement than now. He added that the amount of support pouring in to the school from the community is really encouraging (ESSPIN, n.d.).

School-Support Visit: One important thing in this school programme which is supposed to be mention here is the way in which the SSIT visit the ESSPIN Schools regularly to support them in carrying out their activities. This school visit makes the output 3 activities a successful one in Jigawa state. After every workshop or an activity, the SSIT will visit the schools for support.

What Needs Improvement (The Challenges)

There had been previous education programmes in Nigerian states. Some had preferred two-year, 5-year and even 10-year plans based upon visionary state wide assessment of their needs. (Planning for better school, n.d.).

ESSPIN as an educational programme involving many stakeholders in Nigeria cannot be a hitch-free one. Some of the prominent challenges faced by the programme in Jigawa state are as follows:

Resistance to Change: It’s a human nature that a change is not accommodated easily. There is a great resistance to changes from many individuals involved in this programme, perhaps because of fear of loss of power, or they like to do it the way they

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have learnt it or the way they have been doing it. Due to these and many more reasons, people feel that if they allow change happen, they will be irrelevant or others might look down upon them. Therefore, it could have been better if those who attended the programme regularly would be utilized to aid the change in behaviour to those who are still resisting change. The programme should organize training and orientation to those resisting it.

Timing of the Activities: Public holidays, school holidays, negligence by some high ranking officers in the programme and even the security situation in some neighboring states hinder the timing of event in the ESSPIN activities. A good timing yields a very good result. The planners in SUBEB and ESSPIN should work hand in hand to come up with a very good time table, and the SSITs should be given ample time for school support visits.

School Grants: Each term, ESSPIN gives out a little grant to its schools to help them buy instructional materials and other relevant things to aid teaching/learning. The problem here is that some schools, after fulfilling all the criteria for getting the fund, might not access it up to the end of the year. Perhaps this problem can be from SUBEB or ESSPIN. It could have been better if ESSPIN will liaise with the SSIT to ensure that all schools get their grants in earnest.

Continuity of ESSPIN: From 2010-2012, ESSPIN is responsible for almost every bit of the programme implementation in Jigawa state. But from this year (2012) ESSPIN will only be responsible for giving technical support and the various states involved in the programme will be responsible for financing it. This programme with a world standard is very vital in transforming Basic Education in our states, but the greatest challenge is “can the states continue to spend its money in programme?” Only time will tell. Currently, ESSPIN and Jigawa state via the SSIT members are conducting survey to come up with the state bench-mark for all Basic Education grades. The result of this survey will actually indicate position of Jigawa State in the change process.

Conclusion

Change is technically easy and socially difficult. Raising the standard of education in Nigeria is an enormous task for all and sundry in the field of education, but for decades our stakeholders always prepare to do it the way it has been done. If we do not change we won't progress. ESSPIN approaches, focus support on key elements that work together to deliver quality education. ESSPIN uses an integrated approach to transforming education – rather than tackle problems in isolation. If Nigeria wants to become a great country and a great economy, it must transform its educational system.

Recommendation

To transform our schools into dynamic and effective learning environment, many things need to happen simultaneously. Things like improving educational management, teaching skills, school infrastructure, in-school professional development and relevant learning materials need to be considered. The school community relationship needs to be strengthened at all times for a better transformation.

There is now a plan to extend the ESSPIN programme to all the junior and primary schools of the state. For this to be a success, the state government should utilize its SSIT members wisely by giving them all they need and allowing them to be part of decision making in this viable project. More so, the state should try to give a lot of time in orienting those involved in the programme in order to accommodate it. Lasting transformation comes from already changing behaviour, the SSIT members are already changed persons, as such they will help a lot to change other people involved in this transformation process.

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