

Strategic Planning and Medium-Term Sector Strategy

Introduction

Quality education requires all parts of the education system to work well together. This, in turn, means having a vision, policies to deliver that vision and a strategy. The strategy then has to be translated into the practical work plans and detailed budgets that are needed to deliver high quality teaching and learning.

Although all Nigerian states have education policies and strategies, these don't necessarily lead to detailed plans and budgets, partly because many states do not have adequate data for planning.

ESSPIN is working in six states to develop a strategic planning framework for education, and to collect data and information for planning purposes. This will help states to develop Medium-Term Sector Strategies (MTSSs) in the form of three-year plans and then to translate the MTSSs into one-year operational plans and budgets.

What is ESSPIN's approach?

As part of public financial management reform the Federal Government requires each state to produce an annual budget based on a three-year rolling MTSS. The sector strategy sets out policy, describes activities and puts forward a budget.

ESSPIN's approach is to work with states to establish an annual cycle of planning and budgeting that is firmly directed by the MTSS.

MTSS framework

The MTSS is a three-year rolling operational plan for education for the state. The MTSS sets out activities, timeframes and costs.



Strategy

In Nigeria, states and the Federal Government are increasingly using MTSSs in order to manage their resources more efficiently. With ESSPIN's help, the various parts of government responsible for education provision are working together to agree common plans and budgets. Mapping out specific activities and calculating what they would cost helps those involved to appreciate that developing policies, strategies, plans and budgets are related to each other, and that they are essential steps towards the goal of quality education (see also ESSPIN briefing note 2: Public Financial Management).

Developing state visions, missions and strategies

ESSPIN helps senior state government managers develop visions, mission statements, strategic plans and work plans for their organisations. Going through this process also helps clarify departmental roles and responsibilities (see also ESSPIN briefing note 3: Organisational Development). The state Ministries of Education are the lead partners and involve the ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) – responsible for the different components of the education system, such as State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) and other parastatals.

Building strategising and planning skills

The aim is to build strategising and planning skills, particularly in the Departments of Planning, Research and Statistics (DPRSs), where carefully costed plans can focus on a state's highest priorities. These plans will help SUBEBs work more effectively with the federal Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), for example by putting together robust bids for resources, and devolving funds and responsibilities to Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) where appropriate (see also ESSPIN briefing note 2: Public Financial Management).

This will help the various parts of the education system, from state ministries of education through to School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs), to reorganise themselves, streamline roles and responsibilities, make better use of resources and deliver services more effectively.

Six states completed MTSSs and detailed budgets for activities for 2009–2011. The match between state education plans and annual education budgets is already improving. Analysing what has and has not improved will provide teams with valuable lessons for preparing future MTSSs. Initially, ESSPIN planning and financial specialists worked with cross-departmental teams to prepare the first MTSS. Now, state planners and finance specialists, having enhanced their skills, are enthusiastically taking on increasing responsibility for the annual work programme.

Future challenges

ESSPIN and state partners face three challenges.

The first challenge is for states to locate authority and responsibility where it will have the greatest impact on improving the quality of education. For example, schools need to be able to develop their own plans and budgets, and LGEAs need to be able to take these school plans and integrate them with state plans and budgets.

The second challenge is to develop mechanisms whereby citizens can express their needs and feed these into educational planning (see also ESSPIN briefing note 6: Community Engagement and School Governance). Planning should take account of local priorities – consolidating them at local government level and aligning these with state plans. This requires support for LGEAs in improving their planning and budgeting skills.

The third challenge is to build on progress so far and establish MTSSs as an integral part of the work of MDAs and their DPRSs, so that the approach will continue without ESSPIN support and the quality of education in each state will continue to improve.

The ESSPIN MTSS framework

Tool for planning and budgeting state education

Costed, three-year rolling operational plan

Detailed work plan for year one and less detailed work plans for years two and three

Updated annually

Plans and costs put together by state teams initially supported by ESSPIN planning and financial specialists
