

ESSPIN  
Experiences

Curriculum reform:  
Kwara State College of  
Education, Oro



**esspin**  
Education Sector  
Support Programme  
in Nigeria



**UKaid**  
from the Department for  
International Development

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Nigeria is in the middle of extensive education reform. The move towards universal basic education and the shift towards a learner-centred curriculum have had a significant and far-reaching impact upon the pre-service and in-service training of teachers.

The strengthening of teacher education in Nigeria, supported by ESSPIN, began with an institutional and curriculum development programme in Kwara State College of Education at Oro, following a review of the college by the Capacity for Universal Basic Education (CUBE) programme in April 2008 when a 'fundamental overhaul of curriculum' was recommended.

The reform agenda is being supported through the commitment of the State Governor and by the Honourable Commissioner for Education, Science and Technology in his drive to improve the quality of education as set out in the campaign 'Every Child Counts'. The curriculum transformation at Oro College is one of the campaign's four strands.

Although the motivation and tenacity of the reform programme at Oro is clearly externally driven, a Teacher Development Needs Assessment (TDNA) provided tangible evidence for the urgent need for reform within the college. The TDNA showed that out of 19,125 primary teachers in the state, only 75 reached even minimum standards in english and mathematics.

**Below**  
Nigeria needs  
quality teachers.



Both Oro College and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), which accredits colleges, had a shared responsibility for the poor quality of teachers. **The time had come for radical reform of the curriculum.**

Throughout the curriculum transformation process, the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) has been aware that any changes made at Oro must be acceptable and in line with the federal teacher education body NCCE. A new curriculum is due to be implemented in Nigerian colleges of education in 2011.

The Oro experience plays an **important role in shaping and evaluating the delivery of these new programmes.**

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The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) curriculum does not represent established international best practice. ESSPIN support is prioritising fundamental curriculum transformation for teacher education in Nigeria in general, and in Oro College in particular.

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## Staff

In early 2008 staff morale in the college was low, as a significant number of contracts had been terminated based upon lack of qualifications and disciplinary issues. This posed an early challenge for ESSPIN as they sought to establish good working relationships and initiate a process of reform with an apprehensive staff. In addition to this, the reform process was being driven externally, causing further scepticism among college staff.

From the outset the college's senior management team (SMT) had been unstable, with several changes and 'acting' appointments. This lack of certainty had on occasion hampered decision-making activity and accountability.

If reforms are to be sustainable, the SMT needs to provide an increased level of leadership without pressure from an external catalyst for change.

All members of the SMT and teacher trainers (lecturers) lacked up-to-date knowledge and understanding of curriculum planning, teaching theories, methodologies and assessment. This was having a negative impact on their ability to teach effectively.

There was no effective system for curriculum quality assurance. Deans and heads of department therefore lacked direction and accountability.

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## Students

With no effective policy direction from government, student numbers increased to a level which bore no relationship to the actual state requirement for teachers. The increase in numbers was directly related to student fees compensating for low levels of government funding. The college needed to focus on training quality teachers for basic education and not view themselves as an entry point for those unable to attend university.

Throughout Nigeria the teaching profession has such a low profile that it was rare to find a student on campus who intended to teach.

**Below**  
ESSPIN is helping teachers acquire the necessary skills to teach.



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## Curriculum

The existing curriculum failed to meet the requirements of preparing effective basic education teachers capable of delivering the new curriculum. The college structure did not benefit the new approach to basic education. There was a distinct lack of planning for all aspects of long-, medium- and short-term curriculum practice.

Teaching practice was identified as ineffective at developing sound professional teacher standards, especially in primary teaching methodology. The State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) did not allow students to do teaching practice in primary schools.

The existing NCE standards for teachers tended to describe subject content – not professional attitudes, knowledge, skills and practice.

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## Finance

Sufficient and managed funding to support the reform process was not available. Consequently, the desire to admit students of a lower quality and run additional courses to augment salaries remained high. Staff felt financially unsupported and undervalued in their efforts to engage in the transformation of the college.

If quality planning and delivery of a curriculum is desired, there must be long-term investment in the resources required. Simple materials such as chalkboards, paper, pens, ink and printers must be available to teacher trainers and students.

## Section 2: ESSPIN's response and progress

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The ESSPIN response successfully united both internal and external catalysts for change. Throughout the curriculum transformation there was a desire to ensure college staff participation in decision making and staff ownership of documentation and implementation tools. Consequently, key staff formed the Curriculum Transformation Committee which was involved at each stage of the process.

An advisory group was established early on, with representation from the ministry, university and college. Membership was advised by the Honourable Commissioner for Education. Its purpose was to promote thinking beyond the vision of the college itself, and monitor progress towards agreed goals.

# Internal developments

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## Curriculum review

In view of the need to provide teachers for all areas of basic education, the NCCE revised the existing NCE teacher education programmes and developed the following areas of specialism within the college:

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Early Child Care and Education (ECCE).

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Primary.

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Junior secondary.

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Adult and non formal.

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Special education.

This gave the college its starting point for internal reform – a complete review of how the curriculum was taught and organised. This resulted in a curriculum outline, policy and school structure for pre-service training being agreed.

The conceptual development of all members of the Curriculum Transformation Committee and college staff was crucial if their contributions were to reflect genuine, sustainable reform. Therefore, a series of workshops were delivered focusing on the theory of education transformation and current educational thinking, which reinforced the need to shift the staff's own focus from teaching to learning.

### Below

Every child deserves high quality basic education.

### Far below

Nigeria's teachers should inspire and encourage children.

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## Overhaul of NCE programmes

The 2008 analysis of the curriculum review highlighted the immediate need to address the NCE programmes being offered at Oro College. This entailed:

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Updating the general education course to reflect basic education methodology and the shift from a focus on content to method.

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Raising the profile of the Methods courses and strengthening the links between Content courses and current primary teaching methods.

The NCE curriculum had been subject-based and NCE holders were being employed in primary and/or secondary schools, even though the minimum qualification for secondary education was a degree. Substantial progress was made when NCCE revised the NCE programmes. The college would now offer specific courses in ECCE, primary and junior secondary teaching, removing the existing 'one-size-fits-all' programme.



**'Schools are calling to report that our teaching practice students are the best set they have received.'**  
Timothy Adebayo, Chairman, Curriculum Transformation Committee and Deputy Provost Academic, College of Education, Oro

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**Restructuring of the college**

The introduction of rigorous interviewing and screening of potential NCE students immediately raised the quality of students accepted, but also resulted in a vast reduction in student numbers and college income.

During 2009 restructuring was almost complete and the three schools of ECCE/Primary Education Studies, Junior Secondary, and Education were established. Departments were allocated and programmes and credits were agreed.

The college then reallocated staff to populate the new structure. The process was complicated and original aims to explore staff student ratio, teacher trainer qualities and workload etc were compromised as departments fought to hang on to existing hours, staff numbers and attitudes.

Staff preferences and qualifications were considered and college staff were assigned to the college's new schools. Deans and heads of department were appointed in an 'acting' capacity. Not all lecturers were allocated during the process, and the outcome of their deployment remains unclear.

With the introduction of the new ECCE curriculum in 2008 and the knowledge that primary education had for so long been neglected, allocating high-calibre staff to these schools should have been a prime consideration.

However, to work in the School of ECCE was deemed by a substantial number of staff to be beneath the role of lecturer. This response demonstrated a lack of understanding of child development, educational thinking and Nigeria's poor standards of education as confirmed through the TDNA.

ESSPIN (with the support of VSO) gave continual credibility to the ECCE programmes, staff and students, using them at every opportunity as examples of good practice and commitment to reform. Access to an operational ECCE centre was a requirement of a college running the NCE programme for ECCE. Consequently, VSO embarked upon establishing such a centre on campus in February 2010. The profile of ECCE in general was raised, and was soon regarded as a beacon of reform success in the college and throughout the state.

**Below**  
Academic staff must understand the principles behind effective teaching and learning.



## External developments

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### Curriculum planning (learning programmes) and delivery

Having been assigned to specific schools, academic staff now had to plan for the new NCE courses. This called for a revolution in thinking, understanding and application of the principles behind effective teaching and learning. Their focus could no longer be on content; it had to shift to the processes of teaching and learning.

The task of designing a standardised planning template was led by the ESSPIN consultant, but due to a lack of understanding and confidence many lecturers were unable to complete the task. The template provided a structure for writing comprehensive learning programmes (lesson-by-lesson plans) for every course taught over the three-year NCE programme; it proved to be a daunting and lengthy task.

In June 2010, a review of progress within the curriculum reinforced the immediate need for practical support in writing plans, understanding new teaching methods, using learning materials and evaluating peer performance.

From the onset of the reform programme it was deemed essential that the curriculum transformation should be based upon a set of Teacher Professional Standards (TPS). The NCCE produced such a document, organised around three themes: professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. These competencies were introduced to lecturers as part of the curriculum planning process. However, they initially caused confusion as staff misinterpreted them as criteria for self assessment, and not as standards to be attained by all students by the end of the three-year NCE programme.

Lecturers were expected to integrate the TPS into the learning programmes and ensure assessment for each course provided clear evidence that students were progressing towards achieving all competencies. Again, this task only became achievable after extensive practical support from ESSPIN.

In early 2009 amendments were made to the timing and length of teaching practice. This area of curriculum reform has yet to be fully addressed as assessment needs to reflect TPS, new teaching strategies and use of effective teaching and learning materials.

Through in-depth workshops and training provided by ESSPIN and VSO, the college is now beginning to understand the enduring benefits of making and using a wide range of cost-effective and quality learning materials. If this can be sustained, the learning experiences offered to students will become markedly enriched.

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### Monitoring and evaluation

ESSPIN consultants worked with the new State School Improvement Team (SSIT), Teacher Quality Improvement (TQI) and college academic staff to devise a comprehensive programme for observation, assessment and feedback, applicable to lecturers, students and trainers.

The SSIT, TQI and Oro staff used the observation programme to monitor and evaluate each other's performance while delivering in-service training to primary teachers in selected schools. Consultants facilitated the training and follow-up workshop. All participants gained in confidence and skill.

Management and curriculum consultants from ESSPIN facilitated joint training for administrative and academic staff on writing effective quality assurance reports. The process of connecting the reports to targets in the institutional plan was new, but well received. Unfortunately, there was insufficient experience and capacity at senior management level in the college to evaluate and act upon the reports.

Although the Kwara Career Path work seeks to strengthen all aspects of the teaching profession, the pre-service standards have had a marked impact on the reform of student assessment and the planning of daily curricula. In a wider sense, its implementation should lead to a growth in education students deciding to become part of the teaching profession.

## Section 3: Issues arising and lessons learned

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Having a stable management capable of taking a leadership role is essential if educational reform is to be cemented and sustained. The appointment in 2010 of a Deputy Provost (Academics) boosted senior management activity at Oro College as he was closely involved in, and committed to, the whole reform process from the beginning.

Careful consideration should be given to the administration of a 'staff needs analysis' before embarking upon a reform agenda. This could provide crucial evidence of capability, enabling the development of more appropriate programmes and achievable timelines.

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## Staff development

It is possible that a reform process would be more effective and sustainable if the following skills are initially addressed in a foundation course:

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Time-keeping.

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Taking minutes and setting agendas.

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Presenting.

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Report writing.

For sustained curriculum change there needs to be federal/state backing and impetus. However, if curriculum reform is ever to be initiated, understood and applied on a daily basis, the desire for change must come from staff within the college.

If the ultimate aim of curriculum transformation is to produce effective, confident teachers for basic education, it is essential to spend time on:

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Learning how to plan effectively.

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Demonstrating and applying new teaching methods.

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The effective use of teaching and learning resources.

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Making cost-effective teaching and learning resources.

If effective learning programmes are to be planned and delivered, lecturers need to have a sound understanding of: subject content; key teaching points; the purpose of good assignments and assessments; and the practical changes presently being implemented in the primary schools to provide a learner-centred approach. Achieving a depth of understanding in these areas is still an issue.

Once Oro College lecturers were involved in developing the learning programmes specific to their courses, there was an expectation that they would then understand how to incorporate teacher standards, new teaching strategies and develop appropriate learning materials and assessment tools. However, it became apparent that the ability of lecturers to independently produce effective planning had been overestimated and linkages could not be made without explicit direction from the consultant.

If theory is to be applied effectively in the reform process, it must be clearly understood and placed in a direct and practical context. Once this has been achieved, an enduring period of small group and individual support will be essential. This should gradually embed the necessary skills and thinking required for sustainable, independent progression.



**Left**  
Curriculum reform requires the desire for change to come from staff within the college.

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It is worth noting that a reform agenda places many expectations on teacher trainers. They are required to teach a new curriculum, using methods of which they have no personal experience, and deliver it effectively to students who are being exposed to this thinking and practice for the first time. For this reason, teacher trainers need to be exposed to, and experience, as many different learning styles, teaching methods and learning resources as possible. This takes expertise and time.

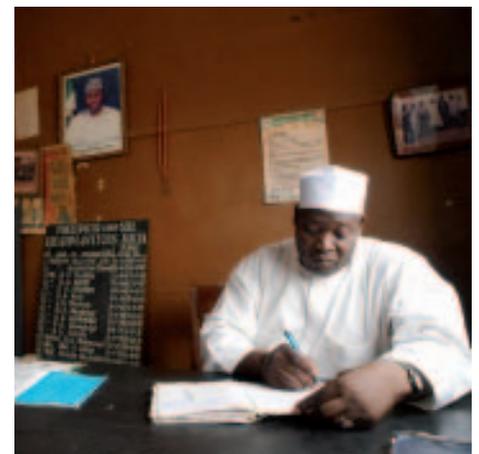
Understanding and confidence rose significantly when deans and heads of department were given responsibility for training staff in their schools and departments. The ESSPIN consultant provided materials, an outline of training and personal feedback from observing their performances.

The TPS are an integral tool for all teacher trainers' planning and assessment. Therefore, they demand high priority when being explained and introduced as an assessment tool. Not only do they need to be included within the learning programmes, but also used to assess each student teacher over the three-year NCE period. A whole process of assessment, recording and feedback would need to be devised if the TPS are to be used effectively. If adequate time and depth of understanding are ignored, the application is likely to be weak or inaccurate.

Inadequate or poorly prioritised funding for schools and departments results in low morale, inactivity and unsustainable developments. The budget needs to be directly linked to the institutional plan. Those with direct responsibility for achieving targets within the plan should, where appropriate, have a budget allocated to specific actions.

Some aspects of working practices at Oro are still incomprehensible, such as allowing students to join a course in February when the semester begins in November. This is not acceptable and makes it difficult for a student to pass this course.

If sustainable improvements to education are to be achieved, similar work needs to be completed in other colleges of education. This could perhaps be achieved through ESSPIN support to individual colleges, through colleges working together or by college staff being trained on a zonal basis. Reliance upon in-service intervention will result in a perpetual remedial programme of reform.



**Left**  
The TPS are an integral tool for all teacher trainers' planning and assessment.

**Right**  
ESSPIN is putting children at the centre of learning.



## Focused on reform

## Teachers can face future challenges

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**'ESSPIN has been a moving force which has strengthened our hand to carry out the reform effectively. We now have a sense of focus and I can tell you that we have surely transformed the landscape of teacher training. Significant changes have been made.'**  
Ibrahim Busari, Secretary, Curriculum Transformation Committee

**'...as far as the needs of basic education is concerned, teachers in Kwara will no longer have a problem because the college is grooming them now to meet future challenges.'**  
Alhaji Ibrahim Ibn Woru, former SUBEB Secretary, now Chairman of the Turn Around Task Team



**Left**  
Ibrahim Busari, Secretary, Curriculum Transformation Committee.

**Below**  
Alhaji Ibrahim Ibn Woru, Chairman of the Turn Around Task Team.



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## Uniqueness of Early Child Care and Education Programme

'It is quite difficult to find someone who is trained to handle children between ages 1 to 3... and that is what the College of Education, Oro is doing. I was impressed with what I saw at the Early Child Care and Education Centre when I visited' says Dr Ayodele Olufunmi, the owner of Sunny Day Private School, Offa, Kwara State.

During the visit Dr Olufunmi was surprised that the college now has a programme dedicated to training student teachers for early child care. Based on what she saw, she promptly requested that graduates of the Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) Programme be sent to Sunny Day Private School for immediate employment.

Currently the ECCE centre is one of the key success stories of the college. 'To be able to handle children at that level needs someone with a set of special skills and I am sure the graduates of the college will be able to do that. That is why I have tabled a request for the graduates of the college whenever they are done with their studies', says Dr Olufunmi.

ESSPIN has also supported the recruitment processes of the college. This was done to ensure that screening of potential students into the college was thorough and further improved the quality of admission. It is hoped that this will improve the quality of basic education in the state and the nation as a whole.

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## Replication and sustainability

**'ESSPIN's support to the College of Education, Oro has been commended by the NCCE. The work at the college has now gone beyond the state and is being referred to in terms of best practices for all the colleges in the country. We thank God for this. Schools are calling to report that our teaching practice students are the best set they have received. One of such schools has asked if we could increase the number of teaching practice students sent to teach in their school.'**

Timothy Adebayo, Chairman, Curriculum Transformation Committee and Deputy Provost Academic, College of Education, Oro

### Below

Timothy Adebayo,  
Chairman, Curriculum  
Transformation  
Committee and Deputy  
Provost Academic,  
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## Section 4: Future challenges and plans

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Sustainability is the prime challenge facing any reform agenda. With this in mind, the following support and plans are in place.

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## Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)

Additional VSO input will provide ongoing support and evaluation of:

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The peer and student observation cycle, which needs embedding into the academic calendar, and practical guidance to achieve meaningful judgements.

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Teaching practice; to reflect the learner-centred approach and professional teacher standards.

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Development of the Education Resource Centre. The Education Trust Fund (ETF) is being used to finance an Education Resource Centre in the college. Once established, it is hoped that it will become an excellent facility for teacher trainers, students, in-service training participants and school staff to explore and make effective teaching and learning resources.

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The ECCE centre was established in February 2010. It cares for and educates children from day care to Primary 1. With continued encouragement, this facility could provide excellent first-hand teaching experiences for teacher trainers, students and in-service training participants.

The SSIT and Oro College work with a full-time, Kwara-based consultant to continually develop closer links around all in-service activities. This offers opportunities for professional growth to both teachers and the trainers.

The teaching profession in Nigeria has suffered a decline over the past two decades. The Kwara Career Path is an opportunity to reverse this depressing trend. Proposals are being submitted to the state government's Executive Council. Careful awareness raising and detailed training for teachers, head teachers, assessors and unions will be crucial to successful implementation.

The new NCCE accreditation process and toolkit is ready to be applied to colleges. The standards and evidences are firmly embedded in quality rather than quantity. Oro was consulted over the clarity and accessibility of the draft instruments and made some useful contributions. Oro College is to assist NCCE in a pilot accreditation.

One component of the accreditation toolkit is the self evaluation document. Colleges are provided with a wide range of simple prompts to undertake a comprehensive and ongoing assessment of all aspects of the institution. This is potentially excellent for identifying strengths, weaknesses and 'next steps'. All colleges, including Oro, will definitely require specific training in how best to use this instrument.



**Above and below**  
Effective teaching methods enhance basic numeracy and literacy skills.



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Fundamental changes have been made in the Oro College curriculum since the CUBE review and the launch of the charter 'Every Child Counts':

The college structure is more in line with the needs of basic education.

Students applying to the college are now rigorously interviewed and screened.

The planning and delivery of some NCE courses has improved.

Academic staff are becoming aware of the new primary 1–3 English and maths syllabus and lesson plans.

Academic staff are beginning to refer to pre-service Teacher Professional Standards when assessing students.

A peer observation cycle exists, but implementation needs further attention.

Curriculum targets are identified and incorporated in the institutional plan.

The ultimate aim of the ESSPIN Curriculum Transformation Programme at Oro College is simple:

**‘To improve the quality of student teachers, thus improving and sustaining the quality of basic education in Kwara State.’**

This has not yet been achieved, but **ESSPIN’s involvement has facilitated substantial progress.** However, without increased capacity at senior management level it is doubtful that reform can be sustained. Significant consultancy input and monitoring of activities is still a major requirement if Oro College is to continue to edge towards achieving the aim of providing effective teachers for basic education.

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## **Strengthening teacher training through curriculum transformation – Oro College leads the way**

Timothy Adebayo, Deputy Provost Academic for the college and chair of the Curriculum Transformation Committee is certain that the reform of the College of Education, Oro in Kwara State will go a long way in supporting teachers' training in the state.

The reform of the college in Oro is one of the strands of the education reform in Kwara State and this has made the college a model for others. This process has enjoyed tremendous support from the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), which has been impressed with the level of work done. The college now has a fully transformed and operational curriculum, and this will hopefully be the way forward for all colleges of education in Nigeria. Oro is the only college that has tested its school assessment toolkit.

‘Some weeks ago, NCCE commended us again on the reform that we are undertaking at the college. This for me is a level of recognition for all the effort we are putting into the reform’.

ESSPIN, funded by UKaid, is focused on making the college an effective centre of pre-service training for basic education teachers. The Kwara State Ministry of Education is being supported to ensure this happens, by establishing a comprehensive programme for pre-service education for the college.

To sustain the current reform process, the college is ensuring that the teaching and administrative staff of the college are actively involved in the process.

ESSPIN is supporting the college to raise teaching quality and standards through its new structure – the School of Education, School of Early Childhood Care Education and Primary and the School of Junior Secondary education.

It is hoped that ESSPIN's support in the development of better systems for training and deploying teachers and the successes at the college will inform the work in other colleges across Nigeria.

Work to reform the curriculum in colleges of education is only part of our education sector work in Nigeria. The ESSPIN programme in Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, Enugu and Lagos states is improving teaching and management skills in schools, and the governance of education at state and federal level.

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