



# Taking school improvement to scale: the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria

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## Executive Summary

The paper shares ESSPIN's experience of taking a school improvement programme to scale from small pilots in some of the most challenging operational contexts in Nigeria. Lessons are drawn around systems reform, sustainable financing, technical capacity building and improvement of schools.

ESSPIN aims to enable more Nigerian children to complete a full cycle of basic education of acceptable quality, leading to meaningful learning outcomes, in a country where an estimated 10.5 million children are out of school (42% of primary-age children), with 90% of them never having attended school.

Key challenges being addressed include unsatisfactory learning outcomes, poor quality schools, unskilled and unmotivated teachers, fragmented communities and civil society, decaying infrastructure, uneven funding of schools, weak government planning systems, unpredictable political leadership, and rising insecurity.

ESSPIN's approach is to work strategically with all three levels of government (Federal, State and Local) to adopt an integrated reform programme with improving school performance as the central focus.

ESSPIN's long term impact is improvement of learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy for all categories of children. The key outcome is improvement in the overall quality of schools through integration of essential school improvement measures. A Composite Survey has enabled ESSPIN to demonstrate significant improvements in specific learning outcomes as a result of school improvement interventions.



# 1 Introduction

*“Creating change in education is easy. Many governments have done it by changing funding or policies or governance structures. But change is not the same as improvement, and our interest is change strategies that create lasting improvement in terms of a broad range of student outcomes.”*

Ben Levin, 2012

Identifying and implementing change strategies that create lasting improvement at scale is the holy grail of education reform in populous low/middle income countries such as Nigeria. The grail is made more elusive by the dual challenge of multiple providers of basic education, including different sub-national levels of government and non-State actors, and a rapidly expanding school-age population.

How can providers of basic education be supported to create lasting improvement beyond introducing change interventions? What systems are required? In the context of school effectiveness, what inputs above other inputs lead to the best educational results and, therefore, what investments should providers be prioritising? How can these be sustained? These and related questions continue to engage educators, researchers and development practitioners.

This paper is aimed at contributing some insights into large scale and sustainable basic education planning in the administratively complex setting that is Nigeria. Rather than prescribing a template for systemic reform, the paper adopts a practitioner perspective and reflects on the efforts of six sub-national (State) governments in Nigeria to improve their schools, with limited external technical assistance. The technical assistance is being provided through the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) with funding from UKAid. Lessons are drawn through seven sub-sections correlating with key learning points from ESSPIN's support to the six State governments:

1. Understanding the scale of the problem
2. Early political conversations
3. The technical approach
4. Demonstration pilots
5. Evidence of impact
6. Political engagement (advocacy for resources)
7. Ongoing capacity development

It is hoped that these reflections will provide small steps towards unravelling the complex phenomenon called education systems reform.

*“Many of the problems we are trying to solve involve supporting the emergence of successful complex systems – social and political institutions, economic change and the formation of various kinds of social capital. These complex processes cannot easily be broken down into a series of steps which will predictably lead to the outcomes we want to see. Instead these solutions evolve: taking small steps, finding out what moves in the right direction, and building on progress”*

Owen Barder 2015

The paper concludes with a summary of key lessons and raises some questions for further reflection.

## 2 Background

Nigeria is a low-middle income country with an estimated population of 174 million in 2013 (World Bank 2015). It operates a federal system of government and is divided into 36 States and 774 local government areas. All three tiers of government have some responsibility for delivery of education. Nigeria has long been considered a major emerging market and its education system under scrutiny for its robustness and relevance to the needs of a modern economy.

Two major efforts to reform basic education have been made in the last sixty years. A Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme, implemented from the 1950s to the 1990s, was driven by the singular access objective of getting children into school. Ultimately, it failed to match significant increases in enrolments with requisite levels of funding, teachers and learning materials. An upgrade programme, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, was launched in 1999 and backed by an enabling Act in 2004 to build on the lessons learned from UPE. It expanded the scope of basic education from six years of primary education to nine years of primary and junior secondary education. It also enshrined concerns for the relevance and quality of basic education and indicated lifelong learning as a core objective (EDOREN 2014). It is difficult to determine the impact it has had beyond the establishment of an elaborate institutional structure for managing Intervention Funds for basic education set aside as 2% of the national Consolidated Revenue Fund. A federal commission (UBEC) and State boards (SUBEBs) have oversight of how the Funds are utilised. The social development challenges remain as daunting as ever.

Nigeria is described as Africa's fastest growing economy and it receives less development assistance than most other African countries<sup>1</sup>. This means it has to look within to address

- the high rate of poverty (with 64% of its people living below the \$1.5 per day poverty line) (DFID 2013)
- the unwanted record of being home to 10.5 million primary-age children reported to be out-of-school, out of a global total of 57 million (the majority of them located in the conflict stricken northern States), while the 23.1 million who are in school are learning very little (UNESCO GMR 2012)
- the plight of 60% of girls between ages 6-17 who are not in school in northern States (DFID 2013)
- the distressingly low levels of student achievement where only 8% of Grade 2 pupils in one State managed to attain the required curriculum standard in English language (ESSPIN baseline survey 2010), while in two other States 70% of Grade 3 pupils could not read a single word of a simple narrative text in the local Hausa language (Northern Education Initiative 2013)
- fragmented institutional arrangements for managing basic education at different tiers of government leading to lack of accountability and duplication of efforts (Humphreys and Crawford 2014)
- the reality of corruption, poor track record of budget execution, and weak financial monitoring and reporting (Santcross et al. 2009)

Underneath the macro indicators and the high level pictures of gloom, the problem is even starker. Henneveld and Craig could not have been more vivid in describing a typical semi-urban or rural African school:

*“The school consists of six to ten classrooms in two or three blocks. The blocks will vary in quality; all will suffer from inadequate maintenance; most will be surrounded by a dusty compound. Up to eighty small children will squeeze into poorly-lit rooms designed for no more*

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<sup>1</sup> Official Development Assistance (ODA), excluding debt relief, was approximately \$1 billion in 2008, making up less than 1% of Gross National Income (DFID 2013)

*than forty, and many children may not have chairs or desks. The teachers must attempt to provide instruction with only a chalkboard as an aid. Children may have notebooks, and a few, depending on the country and local economic conditions may have textbooks. The teaching process is dominated by the teacher whose delivery is usually desultory and boring. The teachers' salaries, training and work conditions dampen the enthusiasm of even the most dedicated among them. The overall effect in most schools is that a ritual is being played out in which the participants understand and appreciate little of what is happening. It is small wonder that student achievement is poor."*

Henneveld and Craig 1996

This is the exact situation of many public primary schools in Nigeria today. Where does one begin to address this cocktail of issues?

The Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) was introduced in 2008 by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to help address some of these issues. Specifically, ESSPIN was required to contribute to improvement of learning outcomes for children of primary school age in six Nigerian States – Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara and Lagos. It worked from 2008 to 2014 on a budget of £92m (c. \$140m) to develop the capability of schools, communities, State institutions and selected national agencies to support school quality improvement. Based on increased evidence of State-led reform, ESSPIN was further extended until January 2017 on an additional budget of £33m (c. \$50m). The extension was to “allow the project [ESSPIN] to continue to assist the six States technically, and through direct project support, to consolidate, deepen and embed their own school improvement reforms and strategies” (DFID 2014).

## 3 Key Learning Points

### 3.1 Understanding the scale of the problem

The first mission was to create awareness and understanding of the need for change amongst partner institutions and stakeholders. Anecdotal accounts of the scale of the educational crisis were abundant but insufficient as a basis for strategic planning and policy implementation.

Five baseline studies were conducted – a teacher development needs assessment, a headteacher survey, a classroom observation study, a monitoring of learning achievement study, and a community perception survey. In addition, a number of field studies were conducted to review teacher training and in-service provisions and support services to schools.

The *Teacher Development Needs Assessment* revealed that only a small number of teachers across the six States had adequate knowledge and competency levels to teach the primary school curriculum. Over 90% of teachers scored under 30% on tests based on Grade 4 Mathematics and English Language curricula, effectively what a 10-year old should achieve. As a result, teachers were unable to lead school based professional development activities to raise standards. (ESSPIN TDNA 2010)

The *Headteacher Survey* analysed how much time a headteacher spent each day on school leadership tasks to ensure that students were being properly taught. It found that nearly two-thirds of a headteacher's time was spent on activities unconnected to leading or managing a school. There was little evidence of development planning taking place, and, therefore, little basis for meaningful school improvement (ESSPIN baseline report 2010).

The *Classroom Observation Study* examined the behaviour of teachers and pupils in the classroom. A total of 23 behaviours for teachers and 21 for students were observed. The results showed that learners were

mostly passive and that teaching was almost totally didactic. Teachers taught the curriculum and not the children (ESSPIN baseline report 2010).

The *MLA Survey* assessed the learning outcomes of primary Grade 2 and 4 students in English Language and Mathematics using instruments based on the Nigerian Grade 1-4 curriculum. The findings showed that pupils in both grades were not performing at the curriculum level expected in both literacy in English and numeracy. Students largely lacked the foundations of learning needed to cope with the school curriculum (ESSPIN MLA Survey 2010).

The *Community Survey* assessed the quality of support to schools by communities, the role of civil society organisations, perceptions of the quality of education service delivery, and communication channels between communities and schools. The findings showed that school based management committees, where they existed, met infrequently - in one State, only 1% of parents had attended one meeting during an entire school year. Concerns were voiced over the dormant role of local government education committees. CSOs were considered as having a positive influence on school/community relations (ESSPIN Community Survey 2010).

These and other baseline research findings equipped ESSPIN with hard data for engaging and challenging State governments to embrace change.

### **3.2 Early political conversations**

Dissemination of the baseline research findings included high level discussions with principal State government officials aimed at encouraging them to sign up for a change agenda. Acceptance of the findings and, therefore, acknowledgement of the scale of the issues by the political hierarchy was an important first step.

Each State was helped to review its existing policies and strategic plans and whether those were fit for purpose for addressing the required reform.

The level of available resources that each State was ready to commit to remedial interventions determined the scale of initial pilots proposed by ESSPIN to demonstrate effective approaches to school improvement. ESSPIN would support implementation of the pilots through a combination of technical assistance and seed funding of pilot activities. Five States opted for small scale pilots comprising schools selected on the basis of criteria such as disadvantage, geographical coverage, existing administrative clusters, and, in one case, political bias (in Enugu, the selected pilot local government area was the home of the State Governor). In one State, Kwara, the government was shocked into action by the stark findings of the Teacher Development Needs Assessment and decided to commit its resources to piloting at scale. It launched a State-wide education reform campaign labelled “Every Child Counts” and included all primary schools in the ESSPIN school improvement pilot.

The political discussions included identification of specific State institutions to own and drive implementation of the reform programme. In all States, the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), with a direct mandate to manage basic education, was the institutional partner of choice. Ministries of Education were also engaged on the basis of their oversight role and responsibility for governance functions such as data management, strategic planning and budgeting, policy regulations and quality assurance services.

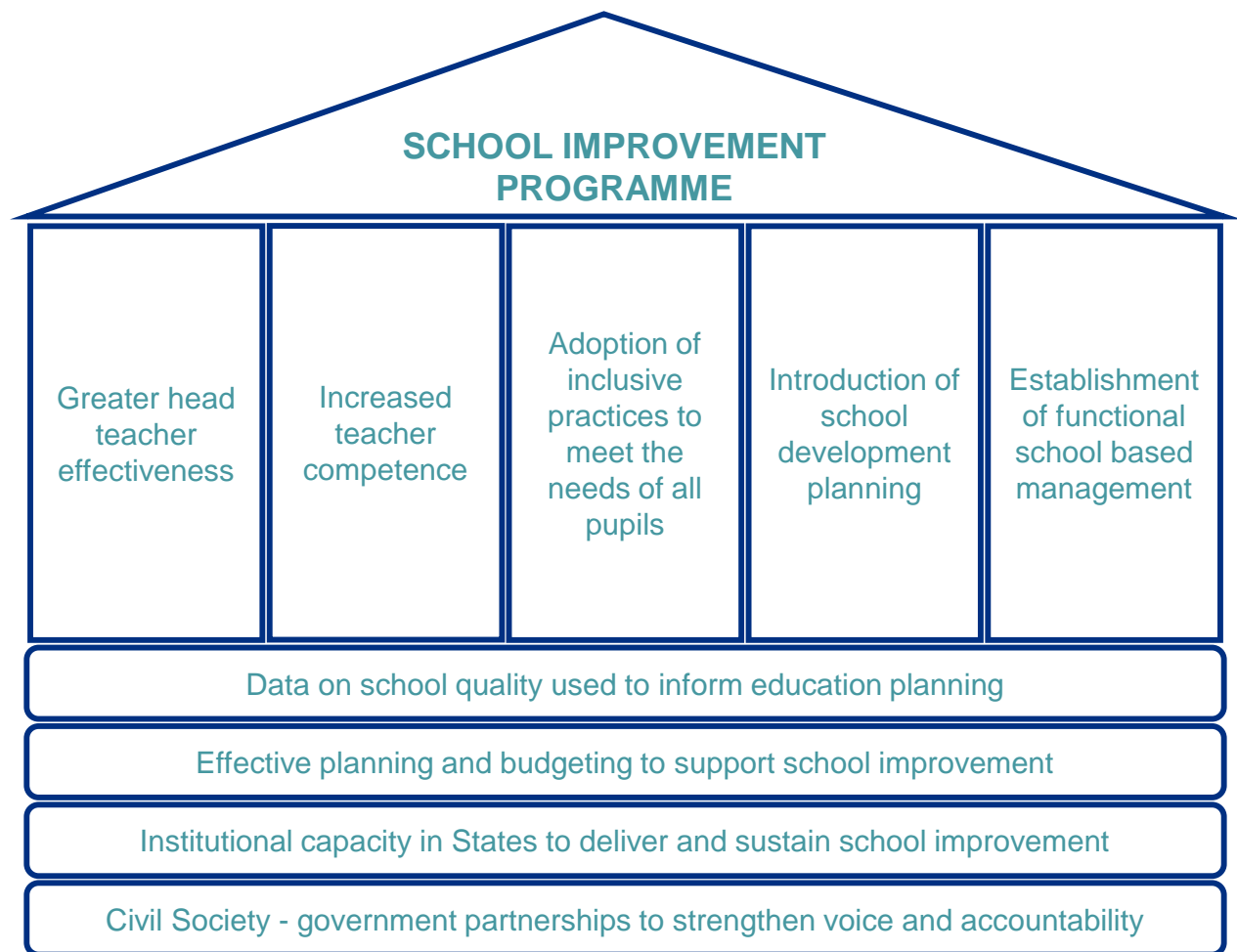
Community level conversations were also held with key gatekeepers such as traditional and religious leaders, parent groups and community based organisations. Community entry was smooth as a result and non-government actors were able to secure their critical place in the change agenda being put together.

Every State government is under pressure to show quick visible results. ESSPIN committed to delivering some quick wins to buy time for the school improvement pilot, a complex process that would only produce slow incremental results over time. A school infrastructure project was introduced as a result which involved construction of water facilities, segregated toilets, meeting the needs of girls, and renovation of classrooms.

### **3.3 The technical approach**

School improvement is complex. There is no magic bullet, only insights and signposts, concluded a Pearson report following a 50-country review on how educational inputs and outputs match up with performance (Pearson 2012). Cambridge Education, the management lead on ESSPIN, recognised from its international experience that school improvement “is not a simple task of developing and implementing a list of contributing factors thrown up by school improvement and effectiveness research, but that school improvement is a complex process, demanding an integrated approach which is sensitive to the local context” (Kay et al 2014). This understanding was brought to bear on the conception of ESSPIN’s technical approach.

ESSPIN’s *theory of change* sets out the conceptual framework for its school improvement programme. ESSPIN is helping to address the very low level of learning outcomes in Nigeria’s basic education system. This is caused by the poor quality of teaching, compounded by the constraints on access to basic education especially for the poor, for girls and for other disadvantaged groups. ESSPIN’s approach to addressing these challenges is to work strategically with all three levels of Government (Federal, State and Local) to adopt an integrated, multifaceted reform programme with improving school performance as the central focus. ESSPIN’s school improvement programme includes the following five pillars, with four cross cutting areas for capacity development:

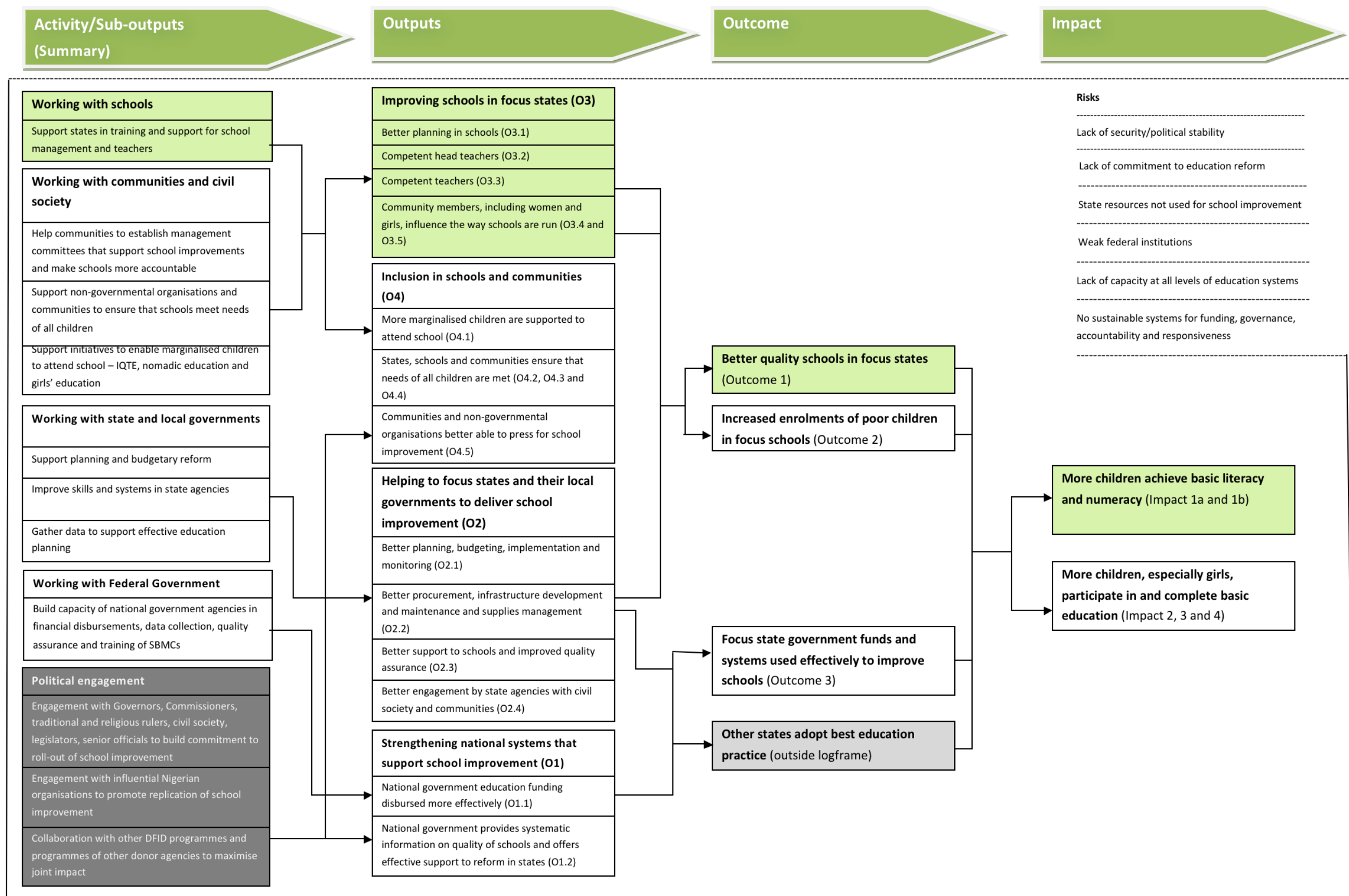


The main assumption underpinning this integrated approach is that ESSPIN, by piloting an effective school improvement model with demonstrable results, will secure state government buy-in and convince States to utilise their own considerable resources to expand the positive impact of the model to all children.

Although implementation of the SIP is necessary and essential, on its own it is not sufficient to bring about the intended Outcome. Complementary and parallel improvements are needed in the management, oversight and service delivery systems and processes which are being used by the three levels of Government. Given the particular issues around access and equity, ESSPIN helps to tackle these barriers through targeted capacity development interventions alongside its work in schools and across Governments. The strengthening of citizens’ ‘voice’ in basic education forms part of the process to improve access and to increase accountability. (ESSPIN Extension Business Case 2013)

The following results chain illustrates how ESSPIN’s project inputs are intended to achieve its medium term outcomes and long term impact.

### ESSPIN Results Chain



### 3.4 Demonstration pilots

Implementation of the full school improvement programme was introduced at two levels. On one level, the four foundational capacity development areas shown in the diagram on page 6 – school data for planning, effective planning and budgeting, institutional capacity/organisational development, and civil society/government partnerships – were delivered as State level activities and, therefore, benefitted whole systems and all schools.

On another level, the five school improvement pillars, components of ESSPIN’s integrated model – headteacher development, teacher training, school development planning, functional school based management committees, and inclusive practices – were introduced as school and community level pilots in a selection of schools (with the exception of Kwara State which piloted at scale).

The number of ESSPIN pilot schools by State and SIP package were as follows:

Table 3.1: Number of ESSPIN pilot schools by State and as proportion of all schools

State	No. of pilot schools	% of all schools
Enugu	91	6%
Jigawa	198	9%
Kaduna	165	4%
Kano	312	5%
Kwara	1,448	100%
Lagos	100	8%
Programme	2,314	14%

### 3.5 Evidence of Impact

ESSPIN commissioned a comprehensive impact study called the Composite Survey in 2012, with report of findings published in 2013. The Survey aimed at assessing the effects of ESSPIN’s integrated school improvement programme through reporting on indicators of teacher competence, head teacher effectiveness, SBMC functionality, school development and inclusive practices (ESSPIN’s school improvement Outputs); overall school quality (ESSPIN’s school improvement Outcome); and student learning achievement (ESSPIN’s school improvement Impact).

The Composite Survey complemented other sources of evidence of impact, e.g. a qualitative study of SBMC impact, annual State government reports of school progress, and trend analyses of Annual School Census data covering a three-year period.

The body of evidence established that:

- A significantly larger proportion of students in ESSPIN focus schools were in the upper learning outcome bands for English literacy and numeracy than in unsupported (control) schools
- A significantly higher proportion of ESSPIN focus schools met the standard of school quality than unsupported (control) schools
- ESSPIN-supported schools were associated with significantly more competent teachers, more effective school development planning, and better functioning School Based Management Committees which reflect women and children’s concerns



- ESSPIN focus schools accounted for a higher proportion of additional enrolments in primary schools, especially for girls, than unsupported schools over a three-year period, 2009-2012

The Composite Survey provided, for the first time, empirical endorsement of the ESSPIN school improvement model. Six out of eight ESSPIN logframe Output indicators, the pivotal Outcome indicator, and two out of four Impact indicators were found to be significantly better in ESSPIN Phase 1 schools than in control schools. These positive results included the key measures of teacher competence, school development planning, SBMC functionality, inclusion of women and children, and overall school quality. These findings were recorded in spite of the fact that the pilot programme had not fully run its course in many locations (ESSPIN Quarterly Report, March 2013).

Table 3.2: Composite Survey (2013): Output, Outcome and Impact indicator results by Phase

Indicator	Phase 1 schools	Phase 2 schools	Control schools	All schools
<b>Output indicator (5 States)</b>				
% competent teachers	80%*	72%	63%	67%
%schools with competent teachers	74%*	58%	39%	44%
%schools with effective headteachers	24%	14%	11%	13%
% schools with effective school development planning	24%*	9%	0%	3%
%schools that meet the needs of all children (inclusive)	19%	16%	17%	17%
% schools with functioning SBMC	47%*	13%	19%	21%
% schools where SBMC reflects women's concerns	39%*	10%	7%	10%
% schools where SBMC reflects children's concerns	23%*	6%	4%	5%
<b>Outcome indicator (5 States)</b>				
School quality	15%*	7%*	0%	2%
<b>Impact indicators (4 States)</b>				
% primary 2 pupils with skills for reading comprehension	8%	9%	5%	9%
% primary 4 pupils with skills for reading comprehension	8%*	9%	2%	4%
% primary 2 pupils able to perform primary 2 level arithmetic	19%*	16%	10%	12%
% primary 4 pupils able to perform primary 2 level arithmetic	8%	7%	8%	7%

Estimates marked \* are significantly different between Phase 1 (or 2) and Control schools at the 0.05 level, i.e., there is a high degree of certainty that ESSPIN intervention schools are significantly different from non-intervention schools.

Table 3.3: Change in gross enrolment in primary schools in ESSPIN states, 2009-2012 (ESSPIN Quarterly Report, March 2013)

State	Cumulative Change 2009-12			Cumulative Change 2009-12 (%)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Jigawa	25,175	37,297	62,472	9%	18%	12%
Kano	142,873	159,476	302,349	13%	17%	15%
Kaduna	68,434	77,360	145,794	12%	16%	14%
Kwara	16,907	18,425	35,332	15%	18%	16%
Lagos	10,457	3,720	14,177	5%	2%	3%
Enugu	6,468	4,766	11,234	4%	3%	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>270,314</b>	<b>301,044</b>	<b>571,358</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>13%</b>

The biggest enrolment changes and the biggest changes for girls occurred in the northern States where enrolment rates are traditionally low.

### 3.6 Political engagement (advocacy for resources)

A key assumption underpinning ESSPIN's theory of change is that evidence of impact from the pilot schools, proving that the SIP approach works, will convince State governments to invest their own resources in scale up. A concerted programme of political engagement was, therefore, embarked upon to persuade State governments to focus more of their resources on expanding the benefits of the SIP to as many more schools as was affordable. States were supported with costed workplans for exploring different expansion scenarios. A quarterly meeting of Education Commissioners from the six States was introduced to create debate, share experiences, review SIP progress and, ultimately, take responsibility for resourcing the required expansion. New SIP focus schools funded by State governments after the ESSPIN pilots came to be known as Phase 2 schools (Phase 1 being the pilots).

A State's annual budget for education was the most obvious source of SIP funding. However, budget releases were politically charged activities, with competing interests for limited resources, and only three of the six States (Kano, Jigawa and Lagos) managed to fund aspects of SIP expansion from their annual State budgets. The rest relied on federal funding.

Federal funding took the form of a non-matching grant element of the federal Intervention Funds set aside to support Teacher Professional Development (TPD) in States by UBEC<sup>2</sup>. ESSPIN engaged UBEC to clarify guidelines for accessing the funds. Significantly, UBEC endorsed the integrated school improvement programme and accepted to be flexible in allowing ESSPIN partner States to utilise their TPD allocations, in full or in proportions, on SIP scale up. The TPD funds became the most predictable source of resources for SIP scale up from 2012-2014.

ESSPIN also actively supported the efforts of some State governments to explore other sources of funding. Notably, three northern States (Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa) were supported to prepare successful applications for Global Partnership on Education (GPE) funding, a facility that will boost SIP consolidation work in each State with \$20m over three years.

UBEC itself formally adopted the ESSPIN SBMC development model in 2013 and has since rolled it out nationally – to all 36 Nigerian States and the federal capital territory – using its own resources. An estimated \$6m has been spent on this national replication work to date.

Table 3.4: Government resources leveraged for scale up of the ESSPIN School Improvement Programme, July 2012 to December 2014

Cumulative total 2012-2014		
Enugu	N668.6m (£2.6m)	\$4m
Jigawa	486.1m (£1.9m)	\$2.9m
Kaduna	N652.8m (£2.6m)	\$4m
Kano	N577m (£2.3m)	\$3.5m
Kwara	N208.1m (£0.8m)	\$1.2m
Lagos	N829.8m (£3.2m)	\$4.9m
Federal	N999.1m (£3.9m)	\$6m
<b>Total</b>	<b>N4.39bn (£17.2m)</b>	<b>\$26.5m</b>

ESSPIN has had considerable success in leveraging government resources (both federal and State) for SIP scale up from 2012-2014. This critical plank of long term sustainability will be severely tested in 2015 by planned General Elections, which will bring in new governments with new agendas; projected drops in

<sup>2</sup> The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) was set up the 2004 UBE Act to manage disbursement of special Intervention Funds for basic education sourced from an annual retention of 2% of the Consolidated Federal Revenue. UBEC monitors utilisation of Intervention Funds through SUBEBs at State level.

oil prices which will impact directly on the size and availability of UBE Intervention Funds; and ongoing conflict linked to insurgency in northern Nigeria, which will continue to see scarce resources prioritised for security.

**Table 3.5: Scale of SIP expansion by State by Phase (public primary schools), September 2014<sup>3</sup>**

State	No. of pilot schools	% of all schools	No. of Phase 2 schools	% of all schools
Enugu	91	6%	496	33%
Jigawa	198	9%	1,002	59%
Kaduna	165	4%	1,027	23%
Kano	312	5%	5,494	100%
Kwara	1,448	100%	1,486	100%
Lagos	100	8%	1,004	100%
Programme	2,314	14%	10,509	54%

### 3.7 Ongoing capacity development

The most important factor in creating change that leads to lasting improvements is people. Adequate funding is only an enabler; the quality, pace and longevity of improvement is down to people within the system. ESSPIN has, therefore, prioritised ongoing capacity development to ensure that the considerable resources provided by States are optimally utilised.

- ESSPIN's capacity building programme works simultaneously at all intervention levels – State, local government and school. By December 2014,
- State School Improvement Teams (SSITs), master trainers trained directly by ESSPIN to plan and manage SIP delivery, were leading planning and implementation of training programmes for head teachers and teachers, and providing academic leadership.
- School Support Officers (SSOs), local government based personnel with day-to-day responsibility for school supervision, were visiting schools regularly and supporting head teachers and teachers under the direction of SSITs.
- Social Mobilisation Officers (SMOs), local government based personnel with day-to-day responsibility for liaising with communities, were working in partnership with CSOs to mobilise, train and mentor School Based Management Committees (SBMCs).
- 13,000 head teachers and assistant head teachers were receiving training and support to demonstrate better school leadership, support teachers better, and collaborate more effectively with SBMCs.
- 104,000 teachers were receiving training and support to improve personal effectiveness and become more competent teachers.
- Over 950 CSO personnel had had their capacity to support SBMCs and undertake issues based advocacy strengthened.

<sup>3</sup> By December 2014, plans had been finalised to scale up to all schools in Jigawa, Enugu and Kaduna but not all the required budgets had been released. The first quarter of 2015 should see all States hitting 100% of primary schools.

The SSITs, described as “the shock troops of change” have been central to SIP delivery. They were appointed based on competitive selection, granted two-year secondments by their State governments (so their salaries continue to be paid), and personify the idea of State-led reform. They have contributed to large scale change by helping:

- States to think through and plan how to achieve the vision for schools
- LGEAs to reorient their priorities and practices for better support to schools
- Head teachers to understand their responsibility for raising school standards and fulfil this through more effective leadership
- Teachers to understand their responsibility for teaching children and to be proactive in improving their teaching (Kay and Breakell 2011)

It is essential that this training and support framework for key personnel remains in place if the delivery of SIP at scale is to be sustainable.

## 4 Some conclusions

### 4.1 Consolidation

Achieving State-wide scale up of the school improvement programme is only the start of the long journey to improve the quality of schools. This is particularly true of Nigerian public schools, currently at a very low base due to decades of neglect. Scale up is initially about numbers and coverage; the next phase of reform that is even more challenging is about consolidation, quality and depth. The imperative for the rest of the ESSPIN extension period is to adequately prepare States to plan for and implement consolidation programmes on an ongoing basis, effectively the year-on-year duty of every responsible State government.

### 4.2 A rallying point for reform

The objective of school reform has to be visible and resonant at all times, particularly to the State political hierarchy who control resources but do not necessarily possess depth of understanding of educational change. Dissemination of key messages related to implementation progress and evidence of impact is effective. ESSPIN has introduced Learning Outcome Benchmarks for literacy and numeracy to help signpost achievement levels that children are expected to reach. The LOBs also represent a public commitment by the State to pupils, parents and stakeholders about what schools will deliver.

### 4.3 Localised decision-making and accountability

Head teachers and SBMCs are at the forefront of school level improvements through their school leadership and governance roles, for which they have been trained to take responsibility. With responsibility comes the need for accountability; to enable head teachers and SBMCs to make and implement decisions on school improvement and be accountable for results, they require resources. The need to make small scale funds available to schools will continue to be part of ESSPIN's political engagement conversations with States.

### 4.4 Replicable training and support framework

The scale of SIP training and support activities is quite large and involves different cadres of personnel at State, local government and school levels. Harmonisation and organisation of support materials produced

and used to date would be an important legacy to States as they take on the challenge of consolidation. ESSPIN is compiling a bank of modular training and support materials that can be used by both ESSPIN and non-ESSPIN States with little or no external support. The bank includes literacy and numeracy lesson plans for teachers.

#### **4.5 Retention of trained personnel**

Staff deployment issues are endemic to public sector management in Nigeria. State governments have to take greater responsibility for ensuring that staff deployment patterns do not undermine programme continuity and cost effectiveness of capacity building.

#### **4.6 Balancing the technical and the political**

Working at scale requires balancing technical assistance with political engagement. Technical solutions are necessary but not sufficient in themselves to achieve large scale change. Development assistance programmes proposing to work at scale will inevitably need to address this question.

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