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## **Quality Assurance**

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### **Introduction**

School inspections provide crucial information for improving schools. Reports on what happens in schools call those providing education to account. This feeds demand for better education and strengthens backing for efforts to improve.

ESSPIN supports states in reforming fragmented and disjointed school inspection services. These reforms aim to avoid duplication and waste, and complement reforms in federal quality assurance.

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### **What is ESSPIN's approach?**

ESSPIN's approach is to introduce radical changes to help states move from inspection systems that check whether schools comply with laws, regulations and procedures to quality assurance systems that support schools in their efforts to deliver quality education and learning opportunities.

A three-pronged approach targets quality assurance at federal, state and institutional levels. The goal is to put in place complementary quality assurance processes at each level and in each institution.

### **Strategy**

ESSPIN's strategy is to help states rationalise their inspection services and focus their work on school improvement. This might be through the establishment of a single body responsible for quality assurance in place of multiple and overlapping inspection services. A quality assurance handbook, produced with ESSPIN's help, provides a solid foundation for reforming education inspection systems in states.

The aim is to ensure consistency in quality assurance inspections and reports, and capture data for education management information systems. The quality assurance bodies will also make sure stakeholders are fully informed of reports and recommendations.

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## Support to state quality assurance

As well as understanding the principles of quality assurance, those tasked with carrying out evaluations need operational guidelines and appropriate institutional frameworks in which to work. ESSPIN helps states set up committees to draft operational guidelines and, where necessary, legislation for new or reorganised education quality assurance services. These committees align quality assurance inspection practices in their respective states with federal systems. Exchange visits between states encourage this.

ESSPIN also helps states to separate the responsibility for quality assurance from the responsibility for supporting schools. Quality assurance teams make recommendations for schools to improve and school support services help schools carry out those recommendations (see also ESSPIN briefing note 4: School Improvement and Teacher Professional Development).

ESSPIN helps strengthen the quality assurance skills of state inspectors through learning-by-doing tasks, mentoring and helping them develop work routines. This goes hand-in-hand with training for school inspectors, State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) and state Ministries of Education in self evaluation and school development planning.

Training courses for inspectors in writing reports are provided or supported by ESSPIN. Short, clear reports in plain language help stakeholders – head teachers, teachers, School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs), parents, Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs), SUBEBs and others with an interest in education – understand what is needed to improve schools and foster accountability.

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## Future challenges

These vary from state to state depending on political support for improving quality assurance. ESSPIN's central message is that effective quality assurance is one of the most powerful ways of improving schools. The challenges include putting aside those vested interests that want to retain separate and inefficient inspectorates, overcoming passivity and dependency, changing mind-sets that regard inspection as a low-status function, putting in place quality assurance systems and helping organisations strengthen their reporting and data-handling skills.

Information from inspections must be combined with school census and other education management information to be used by planners and policy-makers to identify the most effective ways of improving schools.

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### ESSPIN guiding principles for quality assurance in education

Establish a single set of quality standards

Make standards, indicators and processes open and transparent

Combine school self evaluations with external evaluation

Include all learners

Ensure findings are valid, reliable and consistent

Ensure findings contribute to school improvement

Make quality assurance reports publicly available

Use evaluations to develop state policy, plans and training programmes to improve schools

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