

ESSPIN
Experiences

Raising pupil achievement through school improvement: A practice-based approach



esspin

Education Sector
Support Programme
in Nigeria



UKaid

from the Department for
International Development

Introduction

Introduction 2-3

Section 1:
The challenges of
school improvement
4-7

Section 2:
How ESSPIN supports
the states' response
and progress to date
8-11

Section 3:
Emerging challenges
and issues
12-17

Section 4:
Future goals
18-21

Conclusion
22-23

It is widely acknowledged that the **public provision of basic education in Nigeria is in a state of crisis.**

Widespread systemic failure has resulted in schools which are unable to develop literate, numerate, self-reliant pupils. It is clear that there is no 'quick fix' which will turn this round as the sector, including pre- and in-service teacher education institutions and systems, is fragmented and dysfunctional, and there is little demonstrable inclination to change.

Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria's (ESSPIN) school improvement work sits squarely within its overall education sector reform agenda in Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara and Lagos states.

Its specific approach puts **the transformation of the school at the centre of the change process.**

The reform of practice in the management and delivery of basic education in schools leads the way, and this in turn informs policy reform. School improvement approaches include a wide range of **interconnected interventions which are all directed towards raising the levels of pupil achievement.**

Much of this work involves strengthening school-level capacity through training workshops, in-school support and follow up. This process has been led by the **State School Improvement Teams (SSIT)**; small teams of carefully selected, committed education professionals who 'belong' to the individual states and work full time to address the many challenges of improving Nigeria's schools.



Far left
Nigerian children are being denied the right to quality education.

Left
ESSPIN is helping teachers acquire the necessary skills to teach effectively.

Section 1: The challenges of school improvement

Introduction 2-3

Section 1: The challenges of school improvement 4-7

Section 2: How ESSPIN supports the states' response and progress to date 8-11

Section 3: Emerging challenges and issues 12-17

Section 4: Future goals 18-21

Conclusion 22-23

The overarching challenge facing Nigeria's education system is to raise the desperately low levels of pupil achievement. Although this problem is acknowledged by government officers, teachers, parents and pupils, no one has fully understood the complexity and severity of the problem.

Learning standards

A 'Monitoring Learning Achievement' survey, conducted by ESSPIN in six states during 2010, assessed the learning achievements of Class 2 and Class 4 pupils in English language and mathematics. The survey has provided evidence of how low standards are. The survey instruments used were based on the Class 1-4 Nigerian school curricula devised by the National Education Research and Development Council (NERDC). The results show that achievement was poor in both curriculum areas in all states, but particularly in the northern states. Shockingly, students at the end of Primary 4 have difficulty in coping with the Primary 1 and 2 NERDC curricula. Clearly, little meaningful learning is happening in Primary 3 upwards.

While no one would argue that there are serious resource and infrastructure issues in the Nigerian education system, weak human capacity is undoubtedly a major factor in the failing of the country's schools. ESSPIN studies paint a picture of inadequate school leadership and management, weak teacher capacity and ineffective classroom methodology which have brought the school system close to total collapse. In addition, the support currently on offer to teachers and schools is inappropriate. An entirely new approach is required to tackle these many challenges.

Right
Weak teacher capacity and ineffective classroom methodology have brought the school system close to total collapse.

Below
Serious resource and infrastructure issues have left Nigerian schools in a state of decay.



Introduction 2–3

Section 1: The challenges of school improvement 4–7

Section 2: How ESSPIN supports the states' response and progress to date 8–11

Section 3: Emerging challenges and issues 12–17

Section 4: Future goals 18–21

Conclusion 22–23

Inadequate school leadership and management

A head teacher survey conducted in five states analysed how much time head teachers spent each day on tasks which are essential for effective headship, for example ensuring pupils are being properly taught. Nearly two-thirds of a head teacher's time is being spent on activities that are not connected to leading or managing a school. There was little evidence of development planning taking place, and therefore little likelihood of meaningful school improvement.

Head teachers lack:

Training for headship and consequently have a limited view of their role.

Necessary resources. Even the most skilled head teacher cannot improve a school without any supporting resources. Some schools are able to generate funds, but none of the primary schools observed could rely on regular income.

Proper remuneration. There is no dedicated pay grade for head teachers and they often earn less than other teachers in their school.

The challenge is obvious – to train and support head teachers to lead and manage their schools effectively.

Weak teacher knowledge and capacity

Teachers are also failing. A recent Teacher Development Needs Assessment (TDNA) showed that few teachers across all ESSPIN-supported states meet minimum knowledge and competency levels to teach the primary curriculum. In some states more than 90 per cent of teachers scored less than 30 per cent on tests based on primary year 4 maths curriculum, ie what a 10-year-old should be able to achieve. As well as not being able to read, very few teachers can play a mentoring role with less experienced teachers, or lead school-based professional development activities designed to raise standards.

To meet this challenge head teachers, teachers and school support officers (SSOs) need clear, structured guidance, introduced through face-to-face training, backed by consistent on-the-job support and simple easy-to-use reference manuals. For teachers this includes sets of structured lesson plans for literacy and numeracy.

Ineffective classroom methodology

In addition to having problems with literacy and numeracy, teachers lack even basic classroom skills. A classroom observation study recorded the activities of teachers and learners in five ESSPIN states. Broadly, the results show that learners are passive and that teaching is almost totally didactic. Teachers teach the curriculum, and not the children.

Changing teachers' perceptions about what it is to be a teacher and giving them skills to reinvent themselves is an immense task. It is complemented by ESSPIN's work on the Teacher Career Path.

Below

Teachers lack basic classroom skills, learners are passive and teaching is almost totally didactic.



Inappropriate in-service training provision

There is no shortage of in-service training for teachers in most states, and considerable funding is available for this, but it is not based on the development needs of the teachers. The usual reason given for this is the conditions imposed by the federal Universal Basic Education Commission. This represents a missed opportunity to improve teacher performance. (The issue is presently being addressed.)

Also problematic is the prevailing teacher training model, which comprises:

Short, one-off workshops which are not matched to the needs of the teachers or schools.

An ad hoc selection process for participating teachers.

Little or no follow-up after initial teacher training.

Taken together, these features make it difficult for teachers to implement any new learning in their schools. Little improvement in their performance can result. ESSPIN's challenge is to develop, demonstrate and gain approval for an improved model for in-service training, which places school-level activities at the centre of change.

Schools need support not supervision

It is clear that schools need to improve, but they need regular support. A large cadre of supervisory officers exists in generously staffed School Service Directorates and there are sections within State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) that could provide further support, that they are not doing so. The most frequently cited reason for this is the lack of resources, which keeps officers deskbound.

There are additional issues – notably the lack of a clear defined role for supervisory officers. Officers therefore regard themselves as 'inspectors', pointing out shortcomings in school performance rather than helping do anything to raise it.

There are no standards for ratios of schools to staff, and no person specification or selection criteria for these jobs, which do not appear to form part of a rational career progression for education staff.

A major challenge is to help states develop functional advisory services to support schools as they begin the daunting process of improvement.

Section 2: How ESSPIN supports the states' response and progress to date

Introduction 2-3

Section 1:
The challenges of
school improvement
4-7

Section 2:
How ESSPIN supports
the states' response
and progress to date
8-11

Section 3:
Emerging challenges
and issues
12-17

Section 4:
Future goals
18-21

Conclusion
22-23

The challenges facing Nigeria's primary schools are massive. It is clear that previous improvement strategies have not worked. There is a compelling need for change – and the work of the SSIT is part of an explicit change agenda. ESSPIN's change strategy seeks to strengthen the capacity of staff to take charge of their own school's development, and focus on raising standards of pupil achievement.

Developing the change agenda

ESSPIN began by engaging with the states to agree what the problems were and how to address them. This also clarified who ESSPIN would work with. Unlike other donor initiatives, ESSPIN is not working through a project management unit and so, initially, there was no obvious connection point within the state ministries departments and agencies (MDAs). However, quality management teams have been established in each state to lead and manage the school improvement process. These teams are made up of senior people from the different state MDAs, and bring a broad perspective to the development process. Discussions resulted in two broadly complementary strategies, which were responsive to state needs and based on their education sector plans (ESPs).

In Kwara, the results of the TDNA were immediately made public and have been used in a positive way to initiate and justify change as part of the state 'Every Child Counts' initiative. The main focus has been on raising the levels of literacy and numeracy among both teachers and pupils in all primary schools in the state – the 'better teaching' approach.

In Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos and (later) Enugu, the emphasis has been on delivering programmes in pilot schools to raise standards of pupil achievement through improving the way schools are run – the 'better leadership' approach. This approach stresses co-operation between the school and its community to strengthen school development planning, as well as strengthening the head teacher's ability to lead teaching and learning.



Left
Some states are adopting a 'better teaching' approach and others are taking a 'better leadership' approach to improving education.

Below
The main focus of SSITs has been on raising the levels of literacy and numeracy among both teachers and pupils.



Introduction

2-3

Section 1:

The challenges of school improvement
4-7

Section 2:

How ESSPIN supports the states' response and progress to date
8-11

Section 3:

Emerging challenges and issues
12-17

Section 4:

Future goals
18-21

Conclusion

22-23

Developing agents of change – the state school improvement teams (SSITs)

SSITs are a new idea for Nigeria, and have been established in all ESSPIN states. SSITs are small teams selected from the state MDAs and are responsible for delivering both the 'better teaching' and 'better leadership' programmes.

States understand that the current school system is simply not working, and doing more of the same is unlikely to bring about a positive result. The current ways of delivering in-service training give the state only limited control over managing training, at present a purely administrative function. Professional decisions are made by tertiary education institutions, to which training is outsourced. These institutions – and their staff – have variable understanding of the needs of state primary schools and may base decisions on the operational needs of the institution, rather than the state.

Developing the SSITs has given control to the state. They can ensure that training:

Addresses state needs and is responsive to the situation in schools.

Is delivered by a skilled team of practitioner-educators who 'belong' to the state, and who are trained in interventions which are likely to make a difference.

There are a few minor differences between different SSITs, but overall their selection and their approach to work make it clear much needed reforms are on the way.

Below

SSITs provide a school support system which ensures that training is implemented in practice.



SSIT members are:

Selected on merit against transparent criteria. This has given them enormous credibility and self-belief. In Kwara, this reform set a precedent for the appointment of other key education staff.

Redeployed on a full-time basis to the SSIT (initially for a two year period) and continue to receive their normal salary. The message is that they are carrying out state work in a professional way, rather than additional tasks in a transient project. When they speak of school improvement matters, they speak with the authority of the state.

Managed by the state quality management teams tasked with institutionalising the school improvement initiatives, and for ensuring that the states take responsibility for future funding through sector plans and budgets.

Being developed as skilled practitioner-educators, receiving intensive personal and professional development. This has given them fresh perspectives on school and teacher development, and is enables them to overcome entrenched barriers to improvement.

Proven to be effective. Documented feedback from schools, LGEAs and communities is providing evidence of positive impact.

Respected and acknowledged as professional leaders. Each SSIT has a clear sense of purpose, works as a team, and supports each other to achieve. In each state the SSITs have gained the respect of senior staff in the SUBEB and Ministry of Education and are seen as an essential resource for future school and teacher development.

Improving literacy and numeracy – the 'better teaching' approach

This innovative programme has been driven by the Kwara SSIT, working with 290 SSOs, 1,460 head teachers (together with 1,449 assistant head teachers) and 5,802 primary class teachers. The SSIT has developed high-quality, carefully structured lesson plans for literacy and numeracy. These have been introduced into every primary school in the state. These plans lead the teacher carefully through what to do during a lesson and are designed to incrementally build generic teaching skills, as well as steadily developing the teacher's own literacy and numeracy competence alongside that of the pupils.

This level of change needs training and support. The SSIT has helped establish an extensive school support system which ensures that the training is being embedded in practice. There is early evidence that the lesson plans have been well received by the teachers and pupils alike, with feedback from schools and LGEA staff showing that teachers are starting to adopt different teaching methods and pupils are becoming more involved in their learning.

Improving school leadership and management – the 'better leadership' approach

In Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano and Lagos, the SSITs have so far reached more than 4,000 teachers, head teachers and SSOs. Through a mix of modular workshops and in-school support, this programme aims to make schools more effective by improving two of head teachers' leadership and management roles:

Improvement planning – SSITs encourage head teachers to work together with their school-based management committees (SBMCs) to carry out a school self-evaluation exercise, and from this to develop school development plans. This includes introducing sound financial planning and management practices to the heads and SBMCs.

Academic leadership – SSITs help heads to promote better standards of teaching and learning in their schools. Linked with this, the SSITs are developing a critical mass of class teachers with improved classroom skills within selected schools. These schools can be used as centres of improved practice that can be spread to a cluster of local schools.

Section 3: Emerging challenges and issues

Introduction 2-3

Section 1:
The challenges of
school improvement
4-7

Section 2:
How ESSPIN supports
the states' response
and progress to date
8-11

Section 3:
Emerging challenges
and issues
12-17

Section 4:
Future goals
18-21

Conclusion
22-23

Both the 'better teaching' and the 'better leadership' approaches have now developed sound foundations. Reflecting on what has been learned to date helps to consolidate the progress made, and then move forward.

Getting everyone on the same page – using benchmarks to raise pupil achievement

In Kwara, the Honourable Commissioner for Education's 'Every Child Counts' campaign provided a rallying point for the reform agenda. In other states this role will be filled by learning outcome benchmarks for literacy and numeracy. The value of every intervention can be measured against how it will help children achieve the benchmarks. Most excitingly, they represent a commitment by the state to pupils and parents about what schools will deliver, helping to explain to parents what their children should be able to achieve each year.

Below
New lesson plans
have been well-
received by teachers
and pupils.



Right
Benchmarks represent
a commitment
by the state to
pupils and parents
about what schools
will deliver.



Benchmarks:

Represent a simple, understandable guide to what a child should achieve by the end of each primary grade.

Set consistent standards for learning across the state.

Act as simple assessment tools for teachers, heads and support officers.

Measure impact, which is useful for programme monitoring and painting the big picture of improvement for decision-makers such as commissioners.

Introduction
2-3

Section 1:
The challenges of school improvement
4-7

Section 2:
How ESSPIN supports the states' response and progress to date
8-11

Section 3:
Emerging challenges and issues
12-17

Section 4:
Future goals
18-21

Conclusion
22-23

Developing a comprehensive and replicable training framework

An enormous amount of effective training has already happened but now it must be replicated. A training review will harmonise and revise all ESSPIN trainings. This will produce a comprehensive framework covering all interventions that impact on pupils and the school, from both the 'better leadership' and the 'better teaching' models. (Work piloted in Kaduna to ensure the inclusion of disadvantaged children in receiving basic education will also be covered.) This framework will enable states to expand and adapt the programme, tailoring it to meet their specific needs and modifying it for wider use, including with Islamic schools and the private sector.

To support all the existing training programmes, a great deal of material has been piloted. Feedback on this material has been received from trainers, SSOs, heads and teachers. This feedback is mostly positive but there is still room for materials to be refined and improved. The aim is to develop a consolidated bank of user-friendly modules which can be linked together in different ways to meet differing needs. Developing this bank of training and support material will enable states to expand their programme with reduced external support, and will facilitate easier expansion of the school improvement model into other non-ESSPIN states.

Below
School leadership and governance is also the responsibility of the local community. ESSPIN is strengthening SBMCs to achieve this.



Promoting school-level decision making and accountability – direct funding to schools

Introducing the school improvement cycle has been a large element of the SSITs' work. The final element of this cycle is granting the school a small sum of money which enables head teachers and SBMCs to implement their learning about reformed school leadership and governance. This is enabling heads and SBMCs to make real decisions and act on them as they implement some of the agreed improvement activities in the school development plans. In this way, it is hoped the funds will make a direct contribution towards raising quality standards. It is imperative that states are convinced of the value of this small-scale funding.

Right and far right
SSIT support officers will help teachers focus on school plans.



Improving the school improvement cycle

The challenge for the first year of the programme was to complete the school improvement cycle and this was largely successful. The next step is to learn lessons from the problems encountered:

Schools finding the process difficult.

Support officers and SUBEBs centrally misunderstanding their roles.

Resorting to fault finding.

Head teachers acting as arbiters of what should appear in the school plans, rather than as managers of the process.

Challenges with monitoring and implementation.

Ensuring funds are correctly managed and transparently accounted for.

Learning these lessons will help to streamline the process so that the SSIT, through the support officers, can help improve the quality and focus of the school plans.



Planning school with the community

Introduction

2-3

Section 1:

The challenges of school improvement
4-7

Section 2:

How ESSPIN supports the states' response and progress to date
8-11

Section 3:

Emerging challenges and issues
12-17

Section 4:

Future goals
18-21

Conclusion

22-23

'I have been working in education for the past 20 years and this is my first time doing a school self evaluation, which helps me and the community write a school development plan. I called the community together and they came to plan for the school. I did not think they cared until I invited them to discuss the school's progress.'

Mohammed Abdul, Head Teacher, Kuguji LGEA School, Kwara



Above
Mohammed discussing his school's self evaluation form with the SSO, Kuguji LGEA School, Kaiama LGA.

Support officers and head teachers learning how to improve schools

'For the past six years in my school the community didn't care about the school activities or about sending pupils to school. Before, the community withdrew their pupils from my school to the Islamic school. The community also took their female pupils away from school. Now they have seen the school change, the community is involved and the school has a larger population. Pupils are returning and they allow female pupils to finish school.'

Danlami Dogo, Head Teacher, Jajan Mila, Kudan LGEA, Kaduna

'Teachers go for in-service training in turns. If you are lucky you will attend once in three years. ESSPIN's regular and continuous head teacher and teacher in-service training and support will be of tremendous help. Teachers will be able to help children to learn better and measure up to expectations. Our head teachers also need training in school management and leadership to be able to encourage and carry all of us along.'

Mr Udeh, Teacher, Central Primary School, Nachi

ESSPIN helping more children to stay in school

Sarah Gwom, a 7-year-old Primary 2 pupil at Chori School in Kauru LGEA in Kaduna State says: 'I now attend school regularly and I'm punctual at school because I always look forward to seeing my teacher use broomsticks, stones and empty cartons and cans to teach me. I now know how to do my maths at home and help my mother calculate change in her trade, I am really excited.'

Before, Sarah says she dreaded going to school – she preferred to help her mother do some home chores or sell ground nuts and kola nuts. Even then, when it came to calculating the sales she and her mother very often didn't get it right.

So what has changed? Sarah says: 'Now I can help myself and my mother to do these small calculations. Not only did I not like school because of calculation, but because of my teacher. I used to think she doesn't like me as she flogged me at any mistake, but now she takes her time to listen, teach and correct me, she is more friendly now, so I like to come to school.'

Sarah is not the only child from Chori School to see change. About 20 other children from the same school have reported similar experiences. Sarah is also able to influence her friends in a positive way.

She has used her experience to encourage other children: 'As I now enjoy going to school, I have also encouraged my friend Asabe to come to school with five of my other friends. We are all in the same Class 4. There are more girls now in my class. This is because my teacher now teaches me in a different way. I can express myself, and even when I'm wrong I am not shouted at but corrected. Things are really changing in this school and my village.'



SSIT members have personally embraced change

'I was a head of department before I joined the SSIT, but there were many things I did not understand about teaching. I thought that lecturing was good, but didn't realise that most students only understand very little of what they hear in a one-hour lesson. If I asked questions I used only closed questions, but now I use open questions to provoke thinking and analysis. I used to demonstrate in my lessons, only using materials myself. I now understand that students learn more by using materials themselves. I was not even aware that copying from the blackboard did not involve thinking and I used to give students notes to copy. I now understand the need for students to be thinking for themselves. I really wish that the SSIT could expand to work with more schools.'

Markus Ali Shinkut, SSIT member working in Kudan LGEA, Kaduna

Left
SSITs are promoting a more positive approach to teaching and learning.

Section 4: Future goals

The next step is to intergrate the ‘better teaching’ and ‘better leadership’ approaches developed so far.

Introduction 2–3

Section 1:
The challenges of school improvement
4–7

Section 2:
How ESSPIN supports the states’ response and progress to date
8–11

Section 3:
Emerging challenges and issues
12–17

Section 4: Future goals 18–21

Conclusion
22–23

Better lessons for improved schools

Recently developed lesson plans can now be incorporated into the school improvement programme. The lesson plans will enable all teachers to deliver two sound and enjoyable one-hour lessons every day. Observations of the plans being used in Kwara indicate that many teachers are not currently using the lesson plans as a whole. They start by picking the parts that they understand and use those as the entire lesson. Teachers develop a foundation of knowledge and understanding which can then be built upon in further training as they gain in confidence. The integrated model will begin by focusing on critical teacher competencies to teach key concepts which pupils must master, for example how to use:

Number lines for basic number operations such as addition, division, etc.

Letter sounds and blends for early reading and spelling.

Improved schools for better lessons

Developing the lesson plans was an enormous task. Developing the systems needed to enable teachers to use them properly was arguably an even greater task and, as the diverse school improvement initiatives are integrated and expanded, the overall approach to basic education reform can be strengthened.

School- and cluster-level support must be carried out effectively. A main feature of the integrated programme will be a shift away from workshop training towards increased school- and cluster-based support. Changing the way SSOs work is vital for this. In Kwara they are responsible for five schools and can visit them regularly. Both Kaduna and Enugu are working towards reforming the job descriptions of the SSOs, emphasising their role in bringing support closer to the school.

The reformed in-service training model has to be embedded into the state’s systems and structures. school advisory units have been established in all ESSPIN states. These units will develop coherent approaches and systems for school support – within the LGEAs and SUBEBs as well as at school and cluster level. This requires further work to reform the system within SUBEBs and the LGEAs, as well as training for the SSOs themselves. Kaduna has led the way in this, developing integrated job descriptions which focus on school improvement, together with a framework for capacity building. Kwara overcame problems with more senior officers ‘blocking’ reform underway at school and cluster level, by developing new style support officers’ reports for heads of school sections, which focus on improving teaching and learning.

Stakeholders in the wider education system need to fully understand the proposed changes. In Kwara workshops have been held between the SSIT and Oro College of Education to ensure consistency between in-service and pre-service training. As a result, student teachers are better prepared for going into schools.



Left

Literacy and numeracy lesson plans can now be incorporated into the school improvement programme.

Introduction
2-3

Section 1:
The challenges of school improvement
4-7

Section 2:
How ESSPIN supports the states' response and progress to date
8-11

Section 3:
Emerging challenges and issues
12-17

Section 4:
Future goals
18-21

Conclusion
22-23

The future of the SSITs

The SSITs were established to be the 'shock troops' of change, to fill an obvious void. There was every danger that they might fossilise in their role to become part of the problem. To guard against this they were appointed without a proper institutional home and for just a two-year period. What will then become of such highly-trained and skilled groups? The SSITs have performed beyond expectations and the ESSPIN states have expressed the need to retain and even expand them.

The challenge for the states is to further develop the SSITs as a resource for school improvement, and to institutionalise them as part of the state in-service or advisory structures. This will take different forms in the different states. Kaduna's SSIT members, for example, were all drawn from the State College of Education, so the SSIT could be institutionalised within the college as its in-service arm, and offering professional advice and support to the SUBEB's newly-established School Advisory Unit.

In Kwara the SSIT secondment finishes before those of other states but there is an ongoing need for the SSIT's skills. Kwara's State Management Team and School Support Services are planning to position SSIT members in different capacities around the state. They will strengthen the advisory teams at LGEA level, the Oro College in-Service Unit and the School Improvement Unit, after a carefully planned transition period.

Funding issues appear on the surface to be straightforward. ESSPIN has agreed to fund activities for an initial period, during which time the state management teams ensure that state funding is allocated to continue or expand school improvement work. In all states this has happened. However the experience of Kwara, which has been responsible throughout for all SSIT-related costs, shows that actual budgetary release does not necessarily match budget allocations. It is likely that most of the costs of actual training in all states will need to be met using Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) funding. This issue needs to be addressed at both state and federal level so that UBEC supports the training and development needs of the state.

Below
ESSPIN is supporting better teaching and child-centred learning.



Conclusion

Introduction 2-3

Section 1:
The challenges of
school improvement
4-7

Section 2:
How ESSPIN supports
the states' response
and progress to date
8-11

Section 3:
Emerging challenges
and issues
12-17

Section 4:
Future goals
18-21

Conclusion 22-23

In a very short period of time the SSITs have had a big impact in the states in which they operate. They have brought about change, helping:

States to **rethink the vision they have for their schools**, and how they can plan to achieve this vision.

LGEAs, including the SSOs, to **reorient their priorities and practices** towards support for schools.

Head teachers to understand that they are **responsible for raising standards** in their schools and to know how to do this through better leadership.

Class teachers to understand that they are **responsible for teaching children, not the curriculum**, and to make improvements to their teaching.

Although progress is at an early stage, parents and pupils have responded to these improved schools – enrolment has already increased and attendance is up.

There are still many challenges but results to date are very positive. Perhaps most encouraging is the **determination and commitment of the SSITs as they solve problems and drive activities forward**, even when circumstances might make this seem impossible.

State School Improvement Teams – Delivering a better quality of basic education

‘I am happier now, better fulfilled, and no longer bored. The pupils are happy with my new teaching methods, and they are really learning better’ says Mrs Awharota RE, a Primary 5 teacher in Jimoh Ojora Primary School I, in Ajeromi Ifelodun Local Government Education Area of Lagos State.

The new skills she has acquired as part of the ‘better schools’ programme carried out by the Lagos SSIT, with ESSPIN’s backing, have positively changed her. Workshops and follow-up visits help teachers to develop good classroom relationships and understand why enhancing the self-esteem of their pupils will help them learn. They cover the use of varied teaching methods, including encouraging the children to work together and to participate actively in lessons.

Prior to joining the programme, Mrs Awharota described herself as having a poor attitude to work and to her pupils. Now, her story is different as a result of her participation in the School Improvement Programme. She feels more skilled, enjoys her work more and has greater self-esteem. She has become more punctual, is using child-centred teaching methods, and prepares and uses educational materials. She is happy to teach.

Her pupils also appreciate the impact of the School Improvement Programme. They learn better and are more interested in classroom activities. Their confidence has grown and they are now enthusiastic about coming to school.

Mrs Awharota enjoys better working relationships with her head teacher, other colleagues and the community. Parents have noticed the positive impact of all these changes on their children and are more willing to send them to school. Parents have named the school a ‘model school’, are much more involved in school activities and pay regular visits. Their response to school meetings is better than ever before and the Traditional Chief is always ready to attend school-based management committee meetings.

Mrs Awharota is just one of the 1,000 class teachers and 100 head teachers supported by the SSIT in pilot schools in Lagos State. With clear evidence that these teachers have improved the quality of teaching and learning in their schools, there is great interest in other schools throughout Lagos State, and many want to join the programme.

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.

Contact

ESSPIN Abuja

Orji Uzor Kalu House
1st Avenue
Off Ahmadu Bello Way
Central Business Area
Abuja

Telephone

080 5800 8284

SMS

070 6347 9077

Email

info@esspin.org

Website

www.esspin.org

Photography

Page 16
Gbenga Adebola

All other images
Jide Adeniyi-Jones