

### Community Engagement and School Governance

#### Introduction

The attitudes that parents, communities, employers and the media have towards schools, and the support they can give, can make an enormous difference to the quality of education children receive. Where communities are encouraged and allowed to take an active role, the quality of teaching and learning in schools, and school environments, can improve significantly.

ESSPIN helps parents and communities to develop skills in school governance and in holding schools to account. Communities and schools are a crucial part of the educational system, so this is part of ESSPIN's simultaneous action on multiple fronts to improve the quality of education.

#### What is ESSPIN's approach?

ESSPIN takes a four-pronged approach to encouraging communities to take an active role in improving education.

The first part of the approach is to tell communities what is happening in their schools – to make information on how schools are performing freely available in ways that parents can understand.

Once communities are better informed, a second element is to encourage them – and arrange training – so they can get involved in planning how to improve schools and putting plans into action.

A third component is to help communities forge links with media and civil society organisations to make demands for better education heard.

Lastly, and in parallel with these other thrusts, ESSPIN encourages governments to listen to the demand side of education – to set up ways to consult communities and take their views into account.

#### Strategy

Communities have an important role to play in raising standards in teaching and learning in schools. To involve communities in school management ESSPIN works with schools and communities to set up school-based management committees (SBMCs).

**esspin**

Education Sector  
Support Programme  
in Nigeria



**UKaid**

from the Department for  
International Development

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## Mobilising communities

Communities play a vital role in setting educational standards and fuelling demand for quality education. But getting communities to realise that they have a unique and valid role in making schools work, and in holding schools accountable for delivering quality education, means first changing mindsets. Communities need to appreciate that they can do more than just raise funds through parent teacher associations.

ESSPIN partners with civil society organisations (CSOs) and the DFID-supported Strengthening Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI) to mobilise and train communities to get involved in school management. CSOs organise advocacy visits and community meetings to encourage communities to set up school-based management committees (SBMCs). ESSPIN also informs and sensitises communities of their rights, responsibilities and roles through different mass media.

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## School-based management committees

School-based management committees, formed and functioning in the right way, can be a key link between the demand and supply sides of education. ESSPIN works to set up SBMCs that are voluntary and truly representational. Important aspects of this are helping SBMCs learn how to avoid being high jacked by interest groups and how to steer clear of raising unrealistic expectations (see also ESSPIN Briefing Note 7: Access and Equity).

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## Support for school-based management

ESSPIN helps state oversight and advocacy teams organise consultations on policies for school-based management. Working with these teams, ESSPIN helped produce a simple user guide and training manual for school-based management. Local government social mobilisation units and civil society organisations use these when working with groups to set up SBMCs (see also ESSPIN Briefing Note 8: Islamiyya, Quranic and Tsangaya Education).

Once the school-based management committees have been established, the teams train SBMCs and continue to make regular visits to help them develop the skills to monitor school performance and set targets. The goal is that they will become an integral part of the school governance system.

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## Future challenges

Aligning policy and practice in school-based management is a major challenge. Much depends on institutional changes elsewhere in the education system that will decentralise resources to schools (see also ESSPIN Briefing Note 3: Organisational Development and Management). The aim is to keep state policies on track and to develop school-based management to a point where it can function without support to make schools work better and become more accountable.

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### ESSPIN support for strengthening community involvement in school improvement

Reviewing the functionality of social mobilisation departments and helping them raise their profile and motivation

Assessing the capacity of civil society organisations to mobilise communities for school improvement

Strengthening the skills in civil society organisations and social mobilisation units to train, mentor and monitor school-based management committees and position communities to take part in planning and budgeting for school improvement

Facilitating discussion and debate between stakeholders – from senior state officials to children – to build a foundation of trust for engagement and to design state-specific school-based management policy guidelines and structures and Ministries of Economic Planning and Finance.

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### ESSPIN support for school-based management

Helping set up state oversight and advocacy teams to liaise between policy makers (State Ministries of Education and State Universal Basic Education Boards) and those who implement the policies (State Universal Basic Education Boards, Local Government Education Authorities, school-based management committees)

Helping states, local governments, schools and communities to develop state policies for school-based management

Encouraging states to extend community involvement beyond pilot schools by making it a priority in Medium Term Sector Strategy plans and budgets

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