

Community Engagement and School Governance

Introduction

The attitudes that parents, communities, employers and the media have towards schools, and the support that these groups can give, can make an enormous difference to the quality of education children receive. Where communities take an active role, children's access to education, the quality of teaching and learning, and school environments can improve significantly. ESSPIN helps parents and communities to develop skills in school governance and in holding education providers to account.

What is ESSPIN's approach?

ESSPIN takes a five-pronged approach to encouraging communities to take an active role in improving basic education:

Information on the rights of all children to quality education and on how schools are performing is made accessible to communities.

Encouraging communities – and arranging training – so they can get involved in planning how to improve schools, and putting plans into action.

Help communities to forge links with media and civil society organisations (including traditional and religious institutions) to make their demands for better education heard.

In parallel with these other strategies, ESSPIN encourages governments to listen to the demand side of education – to set up ways of consulting communities and of taking their views into account.

ESSPIN partners with federal government agencies to replicate best community participation practices and to leverage resources nationwide.

Strategy

Communities have an important role to play in ensuring all children are educated and for raising teaching and learning standards in schools. To involve communities in school management ESSPIN works with communities, schools and government to set up School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs).

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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 local government to mobilise and train communities to get involved in school management. Advocacy visits and community meetings encourage communities to set up SBMCs. ESSPIN also informs and sensitises communities of their rights, responsibilities and roles through different mass media.

School-Based Management Committees

SBMCs, formed and functioning in the right way, are a key link between the demand and supply sides of education. ESSPIN works to set up SBMCs that are voluntary organisations and representational of local communities. Important aspects of this are helping SBMCs learn how to avoid being hijacked by interest groups and how to steer clear of raising unrealistic expectations (see also ESSPIN briefing note 7: Access and Equity).

Support for School-Based Management

ESSPIN helps state and federal government teams have oversight of School-Based Management (SBM) policy and advocate best practice. CSO experience informs this process. ESSPIN helped these teams produce a simple user-guide and training manual for SBM and helped the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) revise its SBMC guidelines and adopt the ESSPIN trainers' manual nationally. Local government social mobilisation units and CSOs use these when working with groups to set up SBMCs (see also ESSPIN briefing note 8: Islamiyya, Qur'anic and Tsangaya Education).

Once the SBMCs have been established, the teams train SBMCs and continue to make regular visits to help them develop the skills to monitor school performance and assist all children to attend school. The goal is that SBMCs become an integral part of the school governance system.

Future challenges

Aligning policy and practice in SBM is a major challenge. Much depends on institutional changes elsewhere in the education system that will decentralise resources to schools and also promote the involvement of civil society in SBM development (see also ESSPIN briefing note 3: Organisational Development and Management). The aim is to keep state policies on track and to develop SBM to a point where it can function without support to make schools work better and become more accountable.

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| <p>ESSPIN support for strengthening community involvement in school improvement</p> | <p>Reviewing the functionality of social mobilisation departments and helping them raise their profile and motivation</p> <hr/> <p>Assessing the capacity of CSOs to mobilise communities for school improvement</p> | <p>Strengthening the skills in CSOs and local government social mobilisation units to train, mentor and monitor SBMCs and position communities to take part in planning and budgeting for school improvement and inclusive education</p> | <p>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 SBMC policy guidelines and structures</p> <hr/> <p>Engaging with UBEC to replicate SBM best practices</p> |
| <p>ESSPIN support for school-based management</p> | <p>Helping set up state oversight and advocacy teams to liaise between policy makers – state Ministries of Education and State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB) – and those who implement the policies – SUBEB, Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) and SBMCs</p> | <p>Helping states, local governments, schools and communities to develop state policies for SBM</p> <hr/> <p>Encouraging states to extend community involvement beyond pilot schools by making it a priority in Medium-Term Sector Strategy (MSSSs) plans and budgets</p> | <p>Supporting UBEC to replicate SBM nationwide with an approved budget for replication</p> |