

Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN)

Annual Education Sector Performance Report: Rationale, Progress and Challenges

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Manos Antoninis

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Manos Antoninis	Task Leader, Monitoring & Evaluation

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- JG Jigawa
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AESPR	Annual Education Sector Performance Report
AESR	Annual Education Sector Review
ASC	Annual School Census
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ESSPIN	Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria
FME	Federal Ministry of Education
IT	Information Technology
LGEA	Local Government Education Authority
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOE	Ministry of Education
MTSS	Medium Term Sector Strategy
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NEMIS	National Education Management Information System
PATHS2	Partnership for Transforming Health Systems (Phase 2)
PRS	Planning Research and Statistics
SAVI	State Accountability and Voice Initiative
SLP	State Level Programme
SMOE	State Ministry of Education
SPARC	State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability

Abstract

1. This report presents the rationale behind the ESSPIN activities to support the preparation of annual education sector performance reports (AESPR) as part of the planning and budgeting cycle in six states in 2010; the progress made; and the main challenges in terms of building a sustainable process.

Executive summary

2. While education sector performance report and review processes are common around the world, there was no history of a sector performance monitoring process in Nigeria. However, in the six states supported by ESSPIN, there was a desire to introduce a process to monitor the results from the implementation of the two key strategic documents, the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) and the Medium-Term Sector Strategy (MTSS).
3. ESSPIN supported the preparation of education sector performance reports as a regular stock-taking exercise within the context of an annual planning and budgeting cycle. Their objective was to pull together evidence on sector performance (with emphasis on results rather than inputs), compare it to the ESP and MTSS targets and use it to re-prioritise.
4. The report structure and preparation process proposed by ESSPIN aimed at strengthening ownership and facilitating sustainability. All six states prepared an annual education sector performance report in 2010, while in at least one case there was a deliberate attempt to involve external stakeholders.
5. However, there are challenges involved in ensuring that this new process becomes sustainable. First, there is no clear performance assessment framework: it is not always understood by government stakeholders what results they should be held accountable for. Second, high-level stakeholders were not sufficiently engaged. A manifestation of this low level of involvement was the fact that many of the priorities identified in the AESPR were not reflected in the MTSS and, vice versa, that many of the priorities of the MTSS were not mentioned in the AESPR. Third, sustainability is at risk by the lack of a sector performance monitoring function and the low capacity of officers who might be assigned to this task.

Introduction

6. ESSPIN supported the preparation of annual education sector performance reports (AESPR) in six states in 2010 as a basis for an annual education sector performance review process, which is an integral part of the annual planning and budgeting cycle.
7. These activities were consistent with the Structured Approach Paper of the State Level Programmes on monitoring and evaluation. This document explains:
 - the objective of the sector performance review process
 - the characteristics of the report as a central feature of the review process
 - the challenges encountered and the possible solutions

Rationale

Sector performance reports

8. Ministries of education in middle- and high income countries often prepare annual reports which focus on the key achievements against the targets set in the national strategies or the government budget. These reports may be:
 - formally required by the legislature as part of standard accountability processes;
 - commissioned as part of spending reviews by ministries of finance or audit offices; or
 - targeted at the general public, as part of communications and outreach.
9. In low-income countries, sector performance report and review processes are mainly associated with sector wide programmes, where groups of donors pool their funds to support government strategies and budgets (instead of setting up individual projects with separate reporting requirements). In this context, the driving force behind the reporting process may not be the government itself but the development partners who need to account to their constituencies. Several countries in Africa and Asia have well documented processes that tend to culminate in joint review missions (for example, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nepal etc.). Some low-income countries produce annual reports on their own initiative but these tend to be more statistical yearbooks with relatively little reference to the achievement of targets set in policies and programmes.
10. The challenge in introducing a sector performance review process in Nigeria was that there was neither a strong internal pressure through established reporting mechanisms nor a strong external pressure through an active donor community. However, the impetus in each of the six ESSPIN states was provided by their own Education Strategic Plan (ESP), a set of long-term strategic documents prepared in the period 2006-2008, which had anticipated the introduction of a sector review mechanism. For example, the Kaduna ESP (§2.3.4)

stated that: “A Joint Annual Review involving key stakeholders ... will be established in 2009 to review challenges, progress and resource allocation for education”. The Medium-Term Sector Strategy (MTSS) documents, which were introduced in 2009 to operationalise the implementation of the ESP and make the resource allocation process through the budget more strategic, defined the indicators to be monitored.

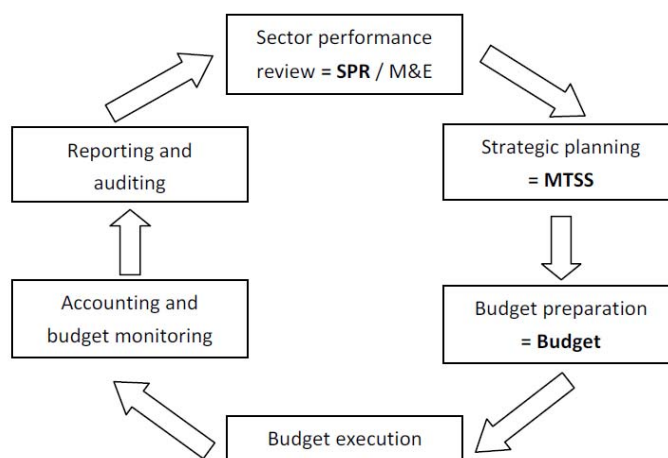
11. The objective of the sector performance review process is to:

- Introduce a regular stock-taking exercise as part of the *annual planning and budgeting cycle* that pulls together evidence on sector performance (with emphasis on results rather than inputs), compares it to the targets of the principal strategic documents (ESP and MTSS) and uses it to re-prioritise.
- Involve all *stakeholders*, including those that are outside government, to enhance accountability and transparency within the sector.

Annual planning and budgeting cycle

12. The ESP documents considered that the review should be a regular feature of the annual planning and budgeting calendar: “*The Annual Sector Review (ASR) will be scheduled to ensure school year performance assessment and to complement the budgetary cycle so that informed decisions can be taken prior to budget preparation. Likewise the review will take place prior to revision of the annual rolling work programme*” (Kano ESP, §8.1).

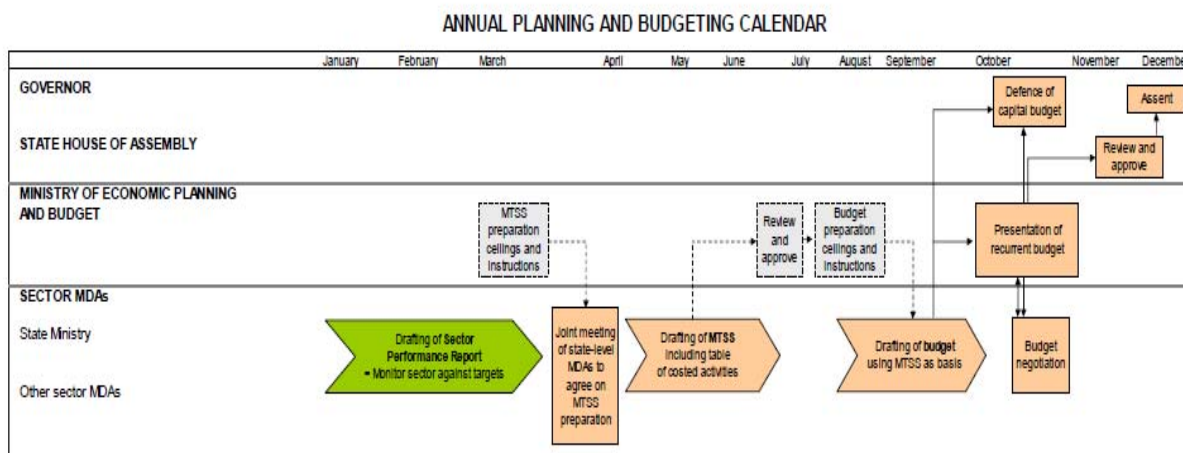
13. The sector performance review has a clear place in the standard planning and budgeting cycle, as described in the graph below:



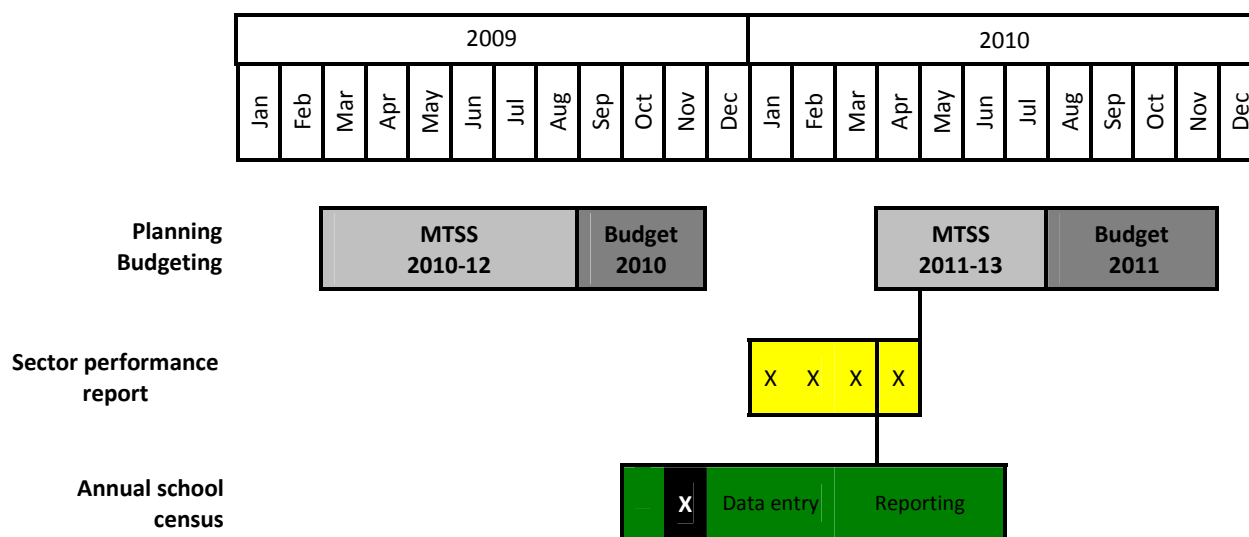
14. The ESP and MTSS documents imply that, in accordance with this standard public financial management cycle, the most suitable time for an annual performance review is the period:

- *After the approval of the annual budget*: This period (i.e. from January onwards) is suitable for the sector performance report and review activities to begin because key staff is no longer pre-occupied with budget preparation.

- *Before the beginning of the MTSS process:* The completion of the sector performance report and review by this period (i.e. by April/May) will provide the necessary evidence base regarding where the state stands relative to the MTSS targets. The sector performance report will summarise the key lessons and present a short list of priorities that the new round of MTSS needs to address.



15. In addition, the process is greatly strengthened if it can incorporate the latest information on the educational system. The date of the annual school census has been shifted to November to capture in time information on the current school year and have it processed and reported by March.



16. In summary, the most appropriate timing of the sector performance report and review process is the period January-April so that the conclusions are drawn in time to inform MTSS preparation, which is expected to begin in May.

Stakeholders

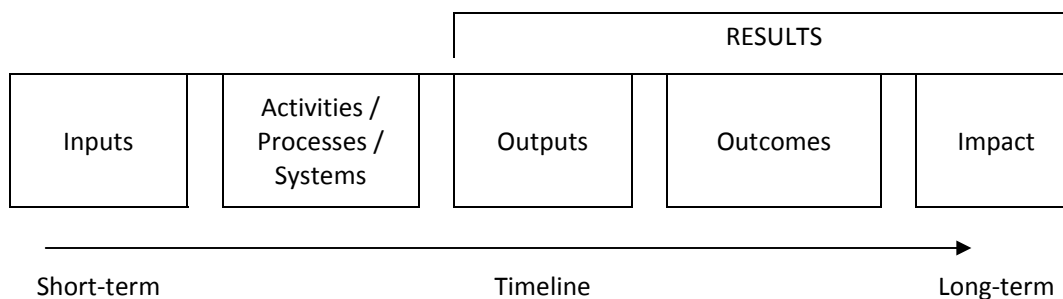
17. The ESP documents anticipated that the Planning, Research and Statistics (PRS) Department in the State Ministry of Education (SMOE) would lead the process: *“SMOE through the monitoring and evaluation function in PRS, will produce a comprehensive Annual Education Sector Performance Report, including assessment of progress towards meeting indicators and targets, and implementation of [the MTSS]”* (Lagos ESP §8). However, it was recognised that the review would be meaningful only as an open and public exercise: *“The process of accountability, to which the SMOE is committed, dictates that there should be a regular review of education sector performance. This review will be conducted by SMOE and by its internal and external development partners”* (Kwara ESP §6.2).
18. All State Level Programmes encouraged the involvement of a broad set of stakeholders to bolster demand for performance information.
- SPARC would help central MDAs commission a government-wide (top down) monitoring process focusing on budget performance and progress towards state development targets. ESSPIN and PATHS2 would help implement these processes (bottom up) at the respective sector level.
 - SAVI would complement these efforts through working with:
 - State House of Assembly committees to strengthen external accountability
 - selected education and health NGOs to improve their engagement

Progress

19. ESSPIN introduced the annual sector review concept in late 2009 in Kano and Kwara with the objective to establish a *structure* for the report and, understand the potential bottlenecks in the *preparation process* and draw lessons to standardise the approach in other states.

Structure

20. The structure of the annual education sector performance report follows results-based management logic. Its chapters deal successively with the chain of events that lead from inputs to results:
- **inputs**, i.e. resources made available, released and used
 - **activities**, i.e. measures taken and processes improved (e.g. teacher training reforms)
 - **results**, in other words
 - short-term **outputs** (e.g. number of teachers trained)
 - medium-term **outcomes** (e.g. teaching quality) for the beneficiaries
 - long-term **impact** (e.g. learning outcomes) for the beneficiaries

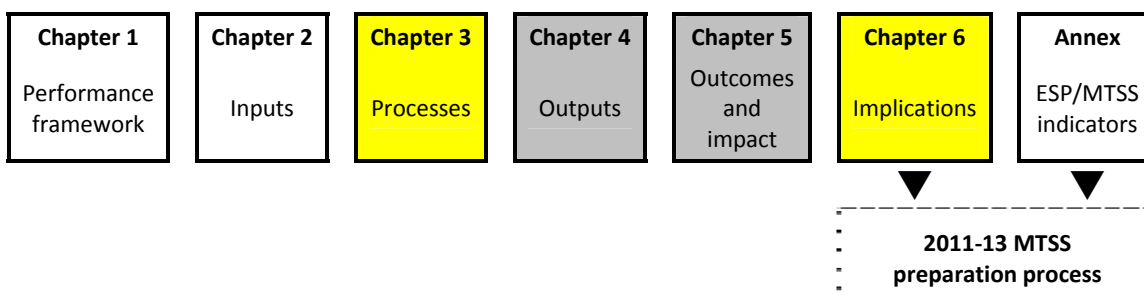


21. In other words, its structure tries to link programme implementation (inputs-activities-outputs, which depend on government) with sector performance (outcomes-impact, which depend only partly to government) through the use of sector performance information:
- Chapter 1 determines the key expected results, based on the ESP and the MTSS. In other words, it sets the framework against which the sector's performance is being assessed.
 - Chapter 2 discusses the progress on expenditure against the budget, providing summary information on spending by type (personnel, overheads and capital), level of education, and local government authority.
 - Chapter 3 discusses the education sector systems and processes, focusing on policy/strategy and organisational development issues respectively.
 - Chapter 4 presents the evidence on outputs, focusing in turn on facilities, teaching-learning materials and teachers; a selected subset of tables from the annual school census report was used as a basis.
 - Chapter 5 presents the evidence on outcomes and impact, focusing in turn on access, efficiency and learning.
 - Chapter 6 summarises key findings and draws a short list of the main implications to inform the planning process.
 - Annex 1 lists the main monitoring indicators of the ESP and MTSS and reports the baseline, latest and target figures, where possible.
 - Annex 2 reports the population assumptions, which are critical for many of the performance indicators.
22. The reports cover the entire education sector although relative emphasis has been given to the presentation of results from the basic education sub-sector.
23. The 2010 reports captured education system information from the 2009-10 school year (e.g. enrolment) but financial information from the 2008 financial year (as expenditure figures are only cleared by the office of the auditor general with considerable delay).
24. Particular care was taken to keep the reports short (about 30 pages) to ensure that they would be read by stakeholders and their preparation process would be sustainable.

Preparation process

25. The following institutional structure was used to prepare the annual education sector performance report:
- A **report team**, usually led by the Director of the PRS Department at SMOE, was responsible for ensuring that annual report is produced at a satisfactory level of quality according to agreed timetable. The team tended to be equivalent to the MTSS Planning and Management Working Group in the state. Its tasks included the following:
 - Assign responsibility to individuals for each section
 - Set deadlines for submission of relevant inputs
 - Explain content of inputs required and provide support to individuals assigned
 - Follow up with and collect specific inputs from individuals assigned
 - Follow up on comments of Review Team on drafts of the report
 - A **review team**, usually led by the Permanent Secretary of SMOE and consisting of department directors from the MDAs, was responsible for reviewing report drafts and submitting the final draft to the steering team. Its tasks included the following:
 - Propose annual report outline, workplan and timeline to the steering team
 - Assign membership of report team for preparation of annual report
 - Evaluate progress against achievement of milestones and targets
 - Extract implications for drafting the concluding chapter of the annual report
 - Follow up on comments of steering team on the full draft of the report
 - Disseminate final report to education sector stakeholders and ensure that any recommendations of are taken into account for the preparation of the MTSS
 - A **steering team**, led by the Honourable Commissioner, usually coinciding with the state Education Sector Steering Committee, was responsible for approving the annual report and ensuring that the annual review process was undertaken.
26. The following steps were taken to prepare the education sector performance reports:
- Priority was given to two sections were prioritised to be led by the state governments:
 - Chapter 3, the narrative description of the main progress made in terms of systems and processes, was prepared in two steps: first, a meeting of the report team assigned responsibility for specific sub-sections to particular individuals or departments; and, second, one or two drafting workshops were organised where the identified individuals contributed a short paragraph on the relevant issue focusing on three questions: What is the logic of the intervention? What was the main activity that took place in 2009 (with emphasis on any changes and improvements)? What were the main proposed activities that were either happening or were about to take place? ESSPIN helped to facilitate the workshops and edit the inputs.
 - Chapter 6, in other words the key implications for planning, would be drafted by the review team and cleared by the steering team.

- Two sections, namely chapters 4 and 5, were based on work completed by state governments as part of the capacity building programme for the annual school census. Support was needed by ESSPIN in terms of incorporating and interpreting external information (for example, in Enugu, Kwara and Lagos, where the school census does not cover private schools in a satisfactory way).
- Two sections required direct inputs from ESSPIN:
 - Chapter 2, in other words the presentation of basic tables on budget and expenditure, required ESSPIN technical assistance: the financial information reporting mechanism is very weak across states.
 - Annex A, in other words the summary of ESP and MTSS monitoring indicators, also required ESSPIN technical assistance: these indicators had not been systematically recorded in many of these documents.



27. The preparation process started between January and March 2010 except for Enugu where it started in June. In general, progress in each state picked up as the annual school census data were being released gradually between March and May. In all states, full drafts were completed prior to the start of the process for the preparation of the MTSS. By September 2010, the steering team had considered the final draft of the report in all six states and in four of these they had approved the document. Two states (Kaduna and Kwara) had printed the document.

Table 1 Status of education sector performance reports, September 2010

Stage	State					
	Enugu	Jigawa	Kaduna	Kano	Kwara	Lagos
Steering team meeting	X	X	X	X	X	X
Approval		X	X		X	X
Publication			X		X	
Public launch					X	

Challenges

28. There was considerable progress over a relatively short period of time in introducing a results-focused monitoring and evaluation mechanism in six states with the potential to strengthen accountability in the education sector. However, it is recognised that several challenges need to be overcome in the coming years if the process is to be sustained.

Performance assessment framework

29. The weakness of the existing strategic documents and planning processes means that it is not clear against what targets states are supposed to be benchmarking their performance:

- The development of the *ESP* documents had been led by international or national technical assistance. In some cases, this meant that the *ESP* was not owned by the state. More commonly, major policy initiatives identified in the *ESP* were no longer on the agenda.
- In the first iteration of the *MTSS*, the strategies were not comprehensive (as they focused on capital expenditure), yet – in the absence of an overall sector ceiling – their proposed resource envelopes were unrealistic. As very few of the activities envisaged in the *MTSS* could actually be implemented, state stakeholders were concerned whether the *MTSS* was a valid basis against which to assess performance.
- This is exacerbated by the weakness of *budget* formulation and implementation. A budget does not guarantee that the resources will be released and, if released, that they will be used for the original purpose.
- The indicators in the *ESP* and *MTSS* documents were generally poor, as they rarely met the usual quality standards.
- While significant progress was made in 2009-10 with the school census process, the past legacy means that the quality of baseline information is low, which undermines the ability of a state to assess whether any progress has been achieved.

Engagement

30. While the desire to introduce a sector performance report was expressed in the *ESP* of the respective states, there was low engagement at the top level during the report preparation process in most states. Steering team meetings were difficult to organise in the first place. In the actual meetings, members tended to appoint representatives with the result that substantive discussions could not take place and decisions were deferred.

31. However, even in those states where there was strong engagement in distilling the main implications of the report for the planning process, there were gaps:

- Many of the priorities identified in the *AESPR* were not substantively reflected in the 2011-13 *MTSS*, raising questions about the quality of the stakeholders' engagement:

were the AESPR priorities not priorities after all or was the MTSS not sufficiently strategic in not adopting these AESPR priorities?

- Conversely, an early analysis suggests that the 2011-13 MTSS documents prioritised activities that did not feature at all in the AESPR, raising the question why stakeholders could not see the need for the two documents to be fully consistent with each other.
32. Kwara State was exceptional in demonstrating commitment to not only review these links but also to involve non-government stakeholders in the process by inviting them to a conference and soliciting their views on state priorities. Other states were more cautious in adopting the report as a record of achievement.
33. Note that in two states (Kaduna and Lagos), state governments adopted guidelines for a government-wide review process with support from SPARC. However, in neither state did the government demand from SMOE to produce a sector performance report, which means that there was little demand from the top.

Institutionalisation and capacity building

34. ESSPIN technical assistance for the preparation of the AESPR was necessary in 2010: while annual sector reviews were anticipated in the ESP, there was no guidance (for example as with the MTSS from the federal authorities) on where to start from.
35. However, state ministries of education in each state now need to establish a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) function so that the report and review processes can be sustained. M&E in Nigeria is associated with school inspection (located in SUBEB M&E departments) or capital projects (located in 'physical planning' or 'project' units at the SMOE PRS departments). While these are relevant functions, they are narrow interpretations of M&E. What is missing is the concept of sector-wide monitoring, in particular monitoring the results from the implementation of the key strategic documents: the ESP and the MTSS.
36. With the exception of Kwara, which is planning to introduce a state M&E policy, there has been no progress in introducing a sector performance monitoring function in state ministries. Steps have been taken to establish M&E units in SUBEBs through institutional strategic plans. However, to this date, no members of staff have been assigned to these units. This is necessary so that ESSPIN can begin supporting capacity building activities. The task is large because the relevant skills are scarce.
37. The Federal Ministry of Education expressed interest in 2009 in coordinating sector performance reports across states with support from ESSPIN. A strong role for federal authorities would contribute further to the institutionalisation of the process.