

**Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria
(ESSPIN)**

Input Visit Report

**Barriers to Pursuing Secondary Education: Lessons from
ESSPIN IQTE 2014 Cohort**

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Contents

Report Distribution and Revision Sheet	iii
Disclaimer	v
Note on Documentary Series	v
Acronyms and Abbreviations	vi
Background.....	1
The Method	2
Findings and Issues Arising.....	4
Conclusion	8
References.....	9

Tables

Table 1: Student Retention among Traced Children	4
Table 2: Predicted Reasons for Leaving.....	6
Table 3: Additional Reasons Noted for Dropping Out.....	7

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The documentary series is arranged as follows:

- ESSPIN 0-- Programme Reports and Documents
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- ESSPIN 2-- Support for State Level Governance (Reports and Documents for Output 2)
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- ESSPIN 4-- Support for Communities (Reports and Documents for Output 4)
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Reports and Documents produced for individual ESSPIN focal states follow the same number sequence but are prefixed:

- JG Jigawa
- KD Kaduna
- KN Kano
- KW Kwara
- LG Lagos
- EN Enugu

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CUBE	Capacity to Universal Basic Education
DFID	Department For International Development
ESSPIN	Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria
IQTE	Islamiyah, Qur'anic and Tsangaya Education
JSS	Junior Secondary School
LGA	Local Government Area
LGEA	Local Government Education Authority
SUBEB	State Universal Basic Education Board

Background

1. In the summer of 2014, close to 670 children from ESSPIN first IQTE cohort in Kano, which was launched in 2010, passed the primary transition exam conducted by the Kano state government. Since these children had passed the government administered primary transition exam, they were eligible to join Junior Secondary School (JSS) starting from September 2014. ESSPIN being a primary education programme was not obliged to keep track of these children from the first cohort after they had passed the transition exam. However, as part of its knowledge management activities, ESSPIN committed to monitoring the progress of these children through the JSS cycle to see how many can survive in the junior secondary system.
2. The rationale for trying to keep track of the progress of the children from the first cohort in the JSS schools was two-fold. One, such an exercise was viewed to be a useful mechanism to enrich broader understanding of the challenges children from vulnerable communities' face in completing secondary education. Secondary school completion remains a major educational challenge in the developing world. The development community thus is keen to better understand the mechanisms that hinder children from completing secondary school education. Primary education though indeed empowering has limited impact on changing long term life opportunities. There is thus a widespread recognition that for individual well-being as well as for improving the human capital within the society, development programmes must find ways to overcome the challenges of secondary school retention.
3. The inquiry, into factors that contribute to dropout from secondary schools, becomes even more important in case of children who transition from non-formal schooling model (as for the case for the children who transitioned in 2014 through securing education in ESSPIN IQTE model). In case of such children there is the additional possibility of children dropping out due to a mismatch between the teaching methods used in the non-formal and formal schooling models. The non-formal models often operate as one teacher, one room school with the teacher using multi-grade and child centred teaching methods. The regular state schools, however, use more traditional methods and the school environment and the background of the children is quite mixed. For improving our general understanding of the challenge faced by children in completing secondary school education as well as for understanding if children from non-formal primary school model face special challenges on transitioning to JSS, keeping track of the children from ESSPIN 2014 cohort was viewed to be quite useful.
4. Equally importantly, such an exercise was meant to help inform designing of future educational interventions in northern Nigeria. Qualitative interviews carried out with

these children in early 2015 had already started to identify certain challenges, which were restricting their ability to remain regular in attending their classes in junior secondary school. It was thus planned that before ESSPIN finishes in early 2017, a survey would be carried out with all the 670 children who had taken the primary transition exam in 2014 to see how many are still enrolled in JSS schools and those who never joined JSS or dropped out, did so for what reasons.

5. This report presents an analysis of the core challenges faced by the children from ESSPIN cohort 1 in pursuing secondary education after successfully completing the primary schooling cycle with ESSPIN. It is important to note that this report exclusively focuses on documenting the reported challenges to securing secondary education. A much more detailed report on the socio-economic profile of all the children from ESSPIN cohort 1 already exists¹. Readers are requested to consult that report for more detailed analysis of the background of these children. This brief report is exclusively focused on mapping the factors that are contributing to dropout of children from JSS after they had successfully completed primary education cycle with ESSPIN IQTE schools.

The Method

6. A follow up survey was implemented in the summer of 2016, i.e. almost two years after the JSS transition exam results were received by 670 children from ESSPIN cohort 1 in Kano. The plan was to trace as many of these 670 children as possible. Since ESSPIN Kano team had tried to support the process of securing JSS school joining instructions from SUBEB for these children, it had maintained a record of the JSS schools to which most of the children from the 2014 cohort were assigned. This record could potentially help trace the children. Further, since the community teachers who had taught these children when they were in the ESSPIN IQTE schools, were from the same communities they were aware of the home location of many of these former students. Both these factors helped determine the feasibility of this follow up survey.
7. ESSPIN engaged these community teachers to implement the follow up survey during the summer of 2016. The teachers were encouraged to try to trace the child by visiting the JSS school to which he or she was assigned. Failing to find the child in the school, they were encouraged to trace them by visiting their homes or making inquiries about them from the school administration and the broader community. This approach was, however, only viable for those children for whom ESSPIN had some record of the JSS joining instructions they were given by the SUBEB. In case of the other children, the teachers were required

¹ ESSPIN Report No. 430: Making Tsangaya Children Transition to JSS: What Helps? Learning from ESSPIN IQTE Experience in Kano (2008-2015) <http://www.esspin.org/reports/download/393-file-IQTE-Tsangaya-Transition-Study.pdf>

to mainly draw on their own knowledge of the child's home location or ask members of the broader community.

8. In order to keep the survey manageable in terms of time commitment and cost, the questionnaire itself was kept very short and focused exclusively on identifying barriers to retention in JSS schools. This was viewed to be sufficient given that the socio-economic profile, family context and educational and professional aspirations of these children were already recorded in earlier ESSPIN reports, especially the ESSPIN study referenced above.

Development of the questionnaire

9. Since the ESSPIN IQTE team had carried out some initial field visits in January 2015 to assess whether the children who passed the primary transition exam were actually joining the JSS schools, at the time of developing the questionnaire for this survey, the team had already identified seven possible factors that were seen to be restricting children access to JSS schools. These factors were identified during interviews carried out with the children, parents, and malams. Three of these factors had in fact been brought to ESSPIN attention as early as October 2014 by the teachers and students as they related to securing basic access to the JSS schools. These three factors were: one, difficulty in securing school joining instruction letter from SUBEB which informs the child of the JSS school to which he or she has been assigned; two, admission fee being charged by some JSS schools even though officially government schools are meant to be free; three, cost of school uniform.
10. These challenges were particular severe for the children from Albasu (the rural LGA) where the poverty levels were particularly high. ESSPIN had tried to support the cost of school admission fee and uniforms for some of these children but in the long term this was expected to remain a challenge for these children. Thus, the questionnaire developed included these and the other factors which were raised during the qualitative interviews. These expected factors for dropout were recorded in questionnaire. Children were asked if any of these factors contributed to their dropout:
 - Did not get the school joining instruction letter from SUBEB
 - Did not have the money to pay school fee
 - Did not have the money to buy uniform
 - Did not like the teaching method in the new school
 - Found the lessons very difficult
 - The JSS school was too far and I did not have the transport money
 - Did not have books and teaching material

11. Finally, in addition to presenting these seven options, the questionnaire also gave the children the option to identify other factors (if any) that might be restricting their access to secondary school.

Findings and Issues Arising

Results

12. Below is an analysis of the survey data.

Section 1: The Number of Children Traced and the Dropout Rate

13. The survey team was only able to trace 431 of the 670 children. This was despite using the community teachers. 36% of the children from cohort 1 were thus untraceable. This means that either these children had moved away from their original community or were temporarily unavailable when the follow up survey was being implemented. We cannot assume that all of these 36 % of children are out of school because from the responses we have received, it appears some children who were traced had changed schools. It could thus be that a child has been assigned to a different school than what was recorded in the ESSPIN records and thereby the community teacher was unable to trace him or her. However, it is quite likely that majority of the children in this untraced group might actually have dropped out. The analysis below focuses on the responses from the 431 children who the survey team were actually able to trace.

Table 1: Student Retention among Traced Children

Is the child in school?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	326	76.1
No	102	23.83
Total	428	100

14. As can be seen in Table 1, out of the 431 children who were traced during the survey, 326 were still in the JSS schools. This means that out of the total of 670 children who successfully completed primary school cycle with ESSPIN IQTE programme and passed the primary transition exam in 2014, 48.6 percent were confirmed to be in the JSS school two years on from passing the transition exam. If we just look at the response rate within the traced children then the average retention has actually been quite impressive, i.e. 76%.

Section 2: Predicted Reasons for Dropping Out

15. The most important factors that are restricting children's access to secondary education are indeed from among the factors that were listed within the questionnaire options. As can be seen in Table 2, an overwhelming number of children (41.5%) who are not in school attribute it to the failure to secure school joining instructions from SUBEB. This means they were not assigned to any JSS school despite the children and their families trying to secure this admission. This as noted above was a major challenge brought to ESSPIN attention very early on. Given that ESSPIN tried to resolve the issue by taking it up with SUBEB officials repeatedly, it shows how serious a challenge this is. ESSPIN was a major development partner for Kano state and even then SUBEB was not able to respond to the request of assigning JSS schools to all the children. For poor parents especially in rural communities, securing the JSS joining instructions for their children on their own thus remains a serious challenge.
16. The second major reason for dropping out after joining the JSS school was the distance from the school with 12.7% of the children reporting this to be the key challenge. This challenge was also recorded in many of the qualitative interviews. The JSS schools to which a child was assigned was often too far and the child's family or the malam did not have the money to cover the public transport cost. Especially in the case of female students, distance also created security concerns.
17. Cost of admission and tuition fee imposed by some JSS schools, even when officially these costs are not allowed, restricted access of close to 5% of the children interviewed. It is to be noted that this figure is relatively small in the survey data mainly because ESSPIN had helped many of the children cover these costs. In future years when ESSPIN is not there, for many of these children this recurrent cost will become a potential cause of dropout.
18. Another 7% of the children noted the lessons being too difficult while 4% noted that they did not like the style of teaching in the JSS school. A 7% dropout due to JSS being challenging cannot be considered a serious concern given that junior secondary education is more demanding than primary education. The children who passed the primary transition exam with low scores can be expected to struggle in JSS especially those who came from families where no one was educated. The fact that only 4% of children recorded challenges in adjusting to the style of teaching in the JSS schools also is reassuring. It shows that the adjustment challenges for children who transition from non-formal schools to formal government schools are not very severe.

Table 2: Predicted Reasons for Leaving

No.	Reasons for leaving	Frequency	Percent
1.	Did not get the school joining letter	49	41.53
1	Did not get the school joining letter	49	41.53
2	The JSS school was too far	15	12.71
3	Found the lessons very difficult	8	6.78
4	Did not have the money to buy uniform	5	4.24
5	Did not like the teaching method in JSS	5	4.24
6	Did not have the books and the teaching material	2	1.69
8	Others, please explain	33	27.97

Section 3: Additional Reasons Noted for Dropping Out

19. In addition to the predicted reasons for dropout or failure to access JSS schools, 27% of the children who had dropped out noted additional reasons for such a decision. As can be seen in Table 3, seven additional reasons were noted by these respondents: student death, got married or going to get married (in case of female students), got transferred to another school, father chose to change the school, student's family migrated to another location, and dependency on ESSPIN support with uniform and school materials in order to carry on with further education.
20. Out of all these factors, as we can see the most critical factor for dropout is marriage of female students; 11 out of the 33 children who reported other reasons for dropping out noted marriage as the main factor. Interestingly, as can be seen in Table 3, it seems girls can dropout from school as soon as there is a decision taken about their marriage given that 6 out of the 33 girls noted dropping out because they were about to get married. Further, as noted above, many of the children currently in school can face challenges when ESSPIN closes as they will struggle to find support for buying uniform and learning materials. ESSPIN actively lobbied SUBEB to develop a fund to offer scholarship to support such children but given the overall dire financial situation, this remained a lesser priority.

21. It is, however, important to remember that the percentage presented in the table below appear high because this table is summarizing results for the 33 children who had dropped out and marked the response (others, please explain). Thus, while marriage remains a major challenge for female students in completing secondary education, out of the total of 102 who had dropped out, only 10% recorded that as a challenge. In the table below, the percentage appears much higher because the table captures responses only of those children who chose to identify additional factors for dropping out as opposed to those predicted in the questionnaire.

Table 3: Additional Reasons Noted for Dropping Out

No.	Reasons	Frequency	Percent
1	Got married (in case of female students)	11	34
2	Going to be married (in case of female students)	6	18
3	Got transferred to another school (by SUBEB or the LGEA)	5	15
4	In school but still needs ESSPIN funds to buy uniform and books	5	15
5	Father transferred the child to another school	3	9
6	Student died	2	6
7	Migrated	1	3
	Total	33	100

Conclusion

22. The survey results show that transition from primary to junior secondary school remains a major challenge for children in northern Nigeria. The main challenges remain institutional whereby state agencies often pose (rather than resolve) many of these challenges. The biggest challenge to carrying on to JSS schools remains securing a school joining instruction letter from SUBEB that assigns a child to a specific JSS school. For children from poor families securing such a letter from SUBEB remains a major challenge. Most poor parents especially in the rural LGAs don't even know how exactly to secure such a letter. Even though ESSPIN Kano team tried to help many children secure this letter, as the responses show many children never managed to secure this letter. These children thus have their access to junior secondary education entirely cut off unless their parents can afford private school tuition.

23. This thus point us back to the same challenge faced in many developing country contexts: how to expand the number of middle and secondary schools? Non-formal schooling models are viable at primary level but become less suitable for providing middle and secondary education where the teachers need to have more specialised knowledge of specific subjects. Unless state capacity to expand middle and secondary schools is enhanced, for many children in the non-formal schooling model, secondary education will remain out of reach. Even when they perform well in primary exams, there are just not enough schools available to absorb them. More attention needs to be paid to bridging existing gaps between primary and secondary school provision.

References

Published documents and other materials with copyrights should be properly referenced to provide details of publication for easy access. Website references and web links should also be appropriately indicated. The 'Harvard System' of referencing is recommended:

Author last name, Author first name. (Year of publication). Title. Place of Publication. Publishing organisation.

For example:

Bano, Masooda. (2008). Islamiyya, Quranic and Tsangaya Education (IQTE) Integration Strategy. Kano. Kano State Government/CUBE – DFID