



## PSIPSE Regional Themes and Challenges: Learning Outcomes in Nigeria

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The **Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE)** aims to accelerate innovation in secondary education programming, research, and development. It is led by a group of private donors and donor advisors, including Central Square Foundation, ELMA Philanthropies, Human Dignity Foundation, Intel Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Marshall Family Foundation, MasterCard Foundation, and an anonymous donor. Project durations are one to three years, and are located across East Africa (encompassing Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda), India, and Nigeria. Results for Development has been selected as learning partner, and will work with three local learning partners to monitor the funded projects, draw out and share important learnings from the efforts, and use these learnings to inform future programming.

The **Education Partnership Centre (TEP Centre)** is Nigeria's pioneer education partnership consultancy, specialising in research, design, implementation, support and evaluation of education programmes, projects and initiatives across the public, private, and non-profit sectors. TEP Centre's vision is to establish radically enhanced education systems by leveraging the strengths of stakeholders for effective and sustainable partnerships. Their mission is to improve the overall design implementation, and evaluation of education initiatives through effective, enduring, and scalable partnerships. TEP Centre serves as the Nigeria local learning partner for PSIPSE.

## Background

One of the primary functions of schooling is to enable children to learn enough to become useful and productive members of society. Education is largely accepted as being contributory to human capital development and it has been established that learning outcomes from formal education are a useful indicator of future economic growth and productivity. From the evidence available however, it is clear that the general quality of learning – as measured by pupil achievement and teacher competence – is pervasively low in Nigeria.

The country currently accounts for close to a fifth of the estimated 60 million children out of school globally – 10.5 million Nigerian children are not enrolled (British Council, 2012). Those that are in school record pervasively low primary completion rates and there are persistently high levels of pupil dropout at primary level. In Nigeria, it is estimated that only 70% of children complete a full primary cycle of six years (Olaniyan and Obadara, 2008). Children that are able to access schools typically learn little. Some of the most recent national examination results in Nigeria indicate disturbingly low achievement levels. Four million pupils sat for the national West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) in 2009. Of these, only 26% obtained in one sitting the minimum number of credits (in Mathematics, English Language and at least three other subjects) to gain consideration for entry into tertiary institutions. In 2010, this figure was marginally lower at 24.9% and in 2011 marginally higher at 30%.<sup>1</sup>

These dismal results are indicative of low levels of learning in the nation's public schools, and are closely related to teacher quality. A teacher development needs assessment (TDNA) carried out by Johnson (2008) in Kwara State, Nigeria, revealed that only 7 out of 19,000 public school teachers (that is, 0.03%) were competent in Mathematics and English Language teaching. Besides teacher quality, teacher shortages are rife with projected estimates suggesting that 65,000 additional teachers are needed annually in order to realise Universal Basic Education targets.

This poor performance is exacerbated in public schools, which account for a vast share of pupil enrolment in the country. The decline in learning outcomes in Nigeria has been traced to a number of public sector inadequacies including insufficient and poorly administered sector funding, ineffective monitoring mechanisms, unmotivated teachers, and teacher shortages. The pervasive failure rates in the country have attracted the concern of several private and civil society stakeholders, spurring several non-state interventions aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning. These interventions include the introduction of digital learning technologies, remedial and private tutoring [referred to as shadow tutoring in Bray (2007)], infrastructure and resource provision, scholarships and capacity development for stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [www.waecnigeria.org](http://www.waecnigeria.org). Accessed 20 June 2012.

## Programs Addressing Learning Outcomes

Two interesting examples of non-state programs which aim to strengthen learning outcomes, are those implemented by **Zaccheus Onumba Dibiaezue Memorial Libraries (ZODML)** and the **United Africa Company (UAC) Goodness League**. ZODML, through its Oasis Libraries, provides children in public schools with free access to an array of books and other reading resources. The organization not only builds and resources libraries in public schools, they also recruit personnel who loan out the books and support pupils to improve their reading skills. UAC Goodness League is a volunteer-driven tutoring program held once every year. For the past six years, around 40 senior staff of a large corporate organization, UAC Nigeria, volunteer to spend six consecutive Saturdays every summer teaching eight curricular subjects to public students in Lagos State, intensively preparing them for Grade 12 school leaving examinations.

Grantees supported by the Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE) are also tackling the learning deficit in secondary schooling in a number of ways. One grantee, **Co-Creation Hub**, has developed a mobile phone application, which is targeted at improving learning experiences and outcomes. The app, **Efiko**, is a novel technology tool focused on *social testing* amongst secondary school students. It is currently being piloted in four states of Nigeria (Lagos, Kano, Jigawa and Rivers). The driving force behind the development of this app is gross dissatisfaction with the didactic and uninspiring manner in which many public school students receive their lessons. Leveraging mobile phone technology, Efiko provides an opportunity for learners to engage directly with the national education curriculum by taking short, timed tests. With each 'play', users are encouraged to beat their previous time record. This motivates self-led learning, personalizing the learning experience in a subtle but highly engaging way. The self-testing platform embedded in the app allows users to post their scores on a leaderboard, and top students on the leaderboard are celebrated monthly by featuring them on the Efiko website. The fact that answers to tests are not provided means that the students have to go back and revise their study material if they desire to play faster. Efiko has been developed to work on multiple platforms, which allows any mobile device with Internet connection to access content. The program has been piloted in 75 schools in Nigeria, of which 52 are in Lagos, and recent feedback collated from an assessment survey and social media commentary reveal that this app is truly helping to improve learning in secondary schools.<sup>2</sup>



**The first ZODML Oasis library**

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<sup>2</sup>Co-Creation Hub *Efiko* internal monitoring reports

**Development Research and Projects Center (dRPC)**, another PSIPSE grantee, is based in Northern Nigeria; a region characterized by the worst learning achievement levels in the country. dRPC is working to redress failure in the lowest achieving demographic - girls - by supporting sector officials, school principals and teachers in Kano and Jigawa States to implement the newly revised national secondary school curriculum in a manner that promotes learning for all, especially girls.<sup>3</sup> One of the innovative ways through which this is done is by peer learning at the state level, where education sector officials in the target states are able to engage with other states where the curriculum has already been fully implemented. dRPC is also working to change negative attitudes about the relevance of secondary school education by implementing a counseling and career development program, a mobile library unit and mentoring visits system to help girls understand the importance of staying in school. The program is targeting 3,600 girls at senior secondary school level. Whilst it is yet early to identify outright successes, there are certain indicators that these programs are working. As at June 2013, Efiko had 7,835 registered users and had recorded 106,785 plays of Efiko, showing high interest in the app. dRPC has carried out a number of state-level seminars which are strengthening the capacity of state officials to implement the new national curriculum.

### **Implementation Challenges**

The implementation of these and similar programs has not been without challenges. For example, many public school students are unable to afford mobile phones and as such, cannot directly access digital apps. The widespread implementation of technological innovations is therefore dependent on the affordability of internet-enabled devices such as mobile phones. Another challenge to access is the fact that the possession and use of mobile telephones is frowned upon in many schools in Nigeria, with such devices viewed as distractions to learning. The long-term results of programs like Co-Creation Hub and dRPC are implementing depends to a large extent on the will of the states to implement the new methodologies being introduced. In addition, working with public schools in materially poor communities can pose a risk to the overall success of pilot initiatives given that baseline performance levels are quite low and may be unresponsive to a short-term intervention. For learning outcomes to improve significantly, teacher development, curricular enrichment, and the adequate provision of instructional aid and equipment need to be prioritized more than they currently are.

### **Recommendations**

Given that indications of success have thus far been observed, it is apparent that these two programs require support and strengthening by various stakeholders. Co-Creation Hub plans to enter into partnerships with textbook publishers and the agency responsible for developing the national curriculum (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council) in order to access curriculum-based content. Co-Creation Hub also recognizes the need for state ministries of education to support the widespread implementation of Efiko by granting access to more schools and permitting the program to be timetabled in public

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<sup>3</sup> The implementation of the new senior secondary school curriculum began in September 2011. This curriculum represents a revision of the previous curriculum. This revision is focused on ensuring that learners gain an array of skills which would enable them pursue careers in the technical and vocational sectors.

schools. dRPC aims to secure the commitment and support of the respective state governments through signed MOUs and strong, personal and professional collaborative relationships with the Ministry of Education. By tying innovative non-state work aimed at strengthening learning outcomes to state and national level governments, more effective system-wide change can occur.

## References

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