



PSIPSE Nigeria Convening Synthesis

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The aim of the Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE) is to accelerate innovation in secondary education programming, research, and development in selected countries. It is led by a group of private donors and donor advisors, with grants awarded to innovations that can help inform the imminent expansion and transformation of secondary education. PSIPSE seeks to increase the knowledge base in this area, and draw out and apply important lessons which can inform programming and policy making. From 2013-2014, Results for Development Institute (R4D) served as the Learning Partner for PSIPSE, and collaborated closely with a local learning partner in each of the three regions where the donors' grantees are based.

The PSIPSE Nigeria Convening, coordinated by R4D and The Education Partnership Centre (TEP Centre, the Nigeria local learning partner), brought together stakeholders engaged in the secondary education space in Nigeria, and sought to share knowledge and experiences, discuss best practices, and encourage peer-to-peer collaboration.

Overview

The convening had five stated goals:

- i. Share information, results, and lessons in innovation in secondary education initiatives across Nigeria.
- ii. Explore possible solutions for addressing challenges and constraints in this space.
- iii. Identify areas of collaboration among education organizations in Nigeria, and support peer-to-peer networking, particularly across key thematic areas.

- iv. Provide organizations with targeted support and assistance around technical areas such as monitoring and evaluation and scale up.
- v. Build relationships with key actors and stakeholders in the secondary education space in Nigeria.

The PSIPSE Convening in Lagos, spanned two days. The first day of the event was a private space for PSIPSE donors, grantees, prospective grantees, and learning partners to discuss their models, share their successes and challenges in working in secondary education, and identify areas in which they might collaborate in their work. This was accomplished through a World Café session, breakout sessions on M&E and research dissemination strategies, and a panel discussion on influencing policymakers.

The second day of the event brought together influential stakeholders of secondary education policy and implementation in Nigeria. Attendees engaged in lively discussion during plenary and break out panel sessions on some of the most prominent topics in secondary education in Nigeria, namely public-private partnerships, girls' education, curriculum development, vocational education, teacher training, and ICT. Most importantly, the convening explored how all education stakeholders can leverage their independent strengths to come together and make accessible, quality secondary education available for all.

Overarching Themes

Over the course of the event, several themes emerged during discussions on the challenges of demonstrating project success, as well as ensuring that secondary education is available to all. The following section outlines the major themes from panels, presentations, and participant discussion.

1. The secondary education space in Nigeria is tasked with preparing students for an increasingly complex future. Trust, communication, and transparency between the public and private sectors are key in ensuring that Nigeria's adolescents can confidently enter the world of work and higher education.

- Before planning any project, it is vital to review the state's education sector plan to understand pre-existing government priorities and policies that may support – or hinder – project implementation.
- NGOs and research projects would benefit from reaching out to local, state, and federal government counterparts at a project's outset. Be prepared to involve government in decision-making and communicate progress at every stage of implementation.
- NGOs have the unique positioning to serve as ombudsmen, promote value for money, and lobby for transparency and accountability in the public education sector.
- In projects with high potential for policy influence, both public and private actors should feel ownership of the project's implementation, and ultimately, its success. The public and private sectors should not view each other as competition, but rather as partners in progress.

2. Nigerian youth, especially girls and marginalized youth, face multiple, complex, and interrelated barriers to education, both inside and outside school. Poverty, social norms, and religion all prevent girls from accessing secondary school. Programs must work to understand community context and norms, rather than immediately attempting to change attitudes.

- Families find it difficult to send their adolescent girls to school if they have not learned to read and write in primary school and if there are no quality, affordable secondary schools nearby. Therefore, success at the secondary level hinges on accessible, high-quality primary education.
- Providing gender-sensitive training for teachers is key to ensuring that girls do not face sexual harassment within school.
- Education can be costly in many senses of the word – in money, in time, and in opportunities for income-generating activities. In order for girls and marginalized youth to value education, families and communities must value girls' education too.
- Both the public and private sectors must acknowledge the education expectations of girls – to be literate, to serve her community, and to become somebody – and factor these expectations into program and policy goals.

3. Today's world increasingly relies on technological and computer skills. However, many schools and programs lack access to technology, while those that do have technology are always not equipped or trained to harness its potential as a teaching tool. Mobile technology provides an accessible, flexible, portable alternative to computers.

- Programs should set goals for using ICT before technology is introduced to a classroom setting. ICT programming is not a replacement to the classroom experience, but rather an enhancement of it. Teachers must also be adequately trained in how to use effectively incorporate such technology to strengthen pedagogy.
- Mobile-based education projects must look beyond the usual implementation partners to ensure project scalability and sustainability. Technical education experts can work with telecommunications companies and device manufacturers to ensure a wider program reach.
- Although mobile technology offers the potential for flexible, learner-centered education, a key assumption is that a basic understanding of reading and writing already exists. It may therefore also be important to consider how such technology can cater to those without a basic education.

4. Teachers are the best, most direct way to reach students, but lack of teachers, shortage of effective teacher training programs, and teacher absenteeism contribute to a learning crisis in Nigeria.

- Identifying and hiring qualified secondary school teachers is difficult, especially in northern Nigeria. Teachers should ideally possess learner-centered pedagogical training and subject expertise, a rare combination in low- and no-resource areas. However, technology is a useful tool to help develop and scale the efforts of Nigeria's teachers.

- Once in the classroom, teachers face many constraints in facilitating learning. It is important to identify and address these constraints while developing an action plan in order to maximize teachers' impact on student learning and achievement.
- Nigeria needs dedicated, passionate, talented teachers, but more importantly, needs to know the best approaches for recruiting, training, and retaining teachers.
- Gaining commitment and engagement from teachers is a difficult but essential first step for every teacher training program.

5. Best practice in secondary education has shifted from a purely academic focus to a curriculum that promotes relevant, transferrable non-cognitive skills. Today's secondary school curriculum must be flexible enough to give students options to prepare for higher education or the world of work.

- Nigeria has good existing policies and secondary school curriculum in place – many of the gaps and problems occur at the implementation level.
- For many students, secondary education is often the bridge between formal education and the world of work. Graduating secondary school alone is no longer enough – graduates must have critical thinking and entrepreneurial skills prized by employers. In order for education to be relevant, both pedagogy and curriculum must be relevant to today's students.
- The new secondary school curriculum is flexible enough to be implemented in situations without a similar curriculum before, including Islamic schools, private schools, and extracurricular programs.

6. Developing a strong, flexible monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan at a project's outset prepares the groundwork for demonstrated impact, as well as education policy engagement and influence.

- Understanding the project's progress as it happens allows for flexibility in responding to project's challenges and course-correction.
- M&E is a continuous process and successful projects build in specific markers and milestones for when to share results with project stakeholders.
- Project stakeholders, including policymakers, respond well to success stories supported by data and evidence. These can also serve to inform other projects and initiatives operating in the same space.
- A focus on project sustainability – from both policymakers and implementers – is crucial. Deeper commitment and impact comes from being cognizant of long-term goals and the eventual net positive change anticipated from an initiative.

Contact

For more information on R4D's work as learning partner for the PSIPSE collaborative, please visit <http://r4d.org/focus-areas/partnership-strengthen-innovation-and-practice-secondary-education>. For further questions on R4D's work within PSIPSE, please contact Shubha Jayaram at sjayaram@r4d.org or Jordan Worthington at jworthington@r4d.org. For questions on TEP Centre's work within PSIPSE and the broader education arena in Nigeria, please contact Modupe Adefeso-Olateju at mo.olateju@tepcentre.com.