



Scaling Up Educational Interventions in Nigeria: A Call to Action

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By



“I reaffirm my belief that it is the right of every Nigerian child to have access to quality and affordable education, as well as healthcare and other basic necessities for a good life, in a peaceful and secure environment.”

- President Muhammadu Buhari, May 27, 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This white paper calls upon education-sector stakeholders to ensure that every child in Nigeria benefits from successfully tested education interventions by focusing on efforts to scale up their impact. There is no lack of innovations¹ in Nigeria that demonstrate how education quality and access can be improved. The problem is that although project implementers and researchers may hope for large-scale adoption of successfully tested innovations, typically they are not expanded to reach larger student populations and rarely are institutionalised in policies and programmes. In cases where expansion or institutionalisation has been achieved, the systematic process adopted is often unclear or undocumented. Much has been learned over the last several decades about what makes scale up succeed. Frameworks as well as guidance now exist to support implementers and decision makers who wish to ensure large-scale and lasting impact of innovations. This white paper describes a general approach, and related guidance tools, that have been used by a number of education sector actors in Nigeria to enhance the likelihood of scale-up success. It highlights key challenges faced in scaling up educational innovation in Nigeria and proposes a process to help overcome them. The paper argues that systematically designing and implementing projects with scaling up in mind, and strategically planning and managing the scaling-up process, will lead to greater promise of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for education.

Keywords: education, scaling up, innovation, guidance, expansion, institutionalisation

INTRODUCTION

Despite efforts to improve the educational system in Nigeria, learning outcomes have shown little progress for the country as a whole. Nigeria is ranked as one of the least performing countries in the now-expired Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). An estimated 10.5 million Nigerian children are out of school - one-fifth of the global population of out-of-school children. The public sector education system suffers from insufficient and poorly administered sector funding, ineffective monitoring mechanisms, poorly motivated teachers and teacher shortages. Given these constraints, Nigeria has some of the worst indicators in terms of progress towards achieving educational goals as reported by the 2015 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report:

“Despite significant progress, the goal of universal primary education by 2015 has not been met and even the limited aspiration of getting all children into school is unfulfilled. In 2012, nearly 58 million children of primary school age (typically between 6 and 11 years of age) were not enrolled in school. The reasons include demographic pressures, conflict situations, and a lack of adequate commitment in certain countries with large out-of-school populations, such as Nigeria [and Pakistan].” (UNESCO 2015).

On the international scene, there is widespread concern that the vision to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all, as articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and multiple other international agreements to which Nigeria is a signatory, are not being achieved as quickly and effectively

¹This paper uses the term “innovation” to imply something that is new to an area, region or community, even if it has been tried elsewhere or is already considered a proven best practice. This usage is consistent with the literature on “diffusion of innovation” as laid out by Everett Rodgers.

as hoped. Using data from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Perlman et al. project that by 2030 (the deadline for implementing the SDGs) only 39 percent of Africa's 20 to 24 year olds will have completed secondary school. Current efforts and investments need to be multiplied several times over to meet the challenges of the 21st Century and they will need to be far more effective.

However, despite and possibly because of these negative development indicators, a growing number of innovative and promising approaches have emerged over the last decade from interventions designed to improve access to and quality of education in Nigeria. For example, Co-creation Hub's Efiko application is a creative use of mobile technologies to provide direct-to-student curriculum-based learning opportunities. Some initiatives such as the project to *Strengthen the Implementation of the New Trade Subjects Secondary School Curriculum*,² carried out by the development Research and Projects Centre (dRPC), support secondary schools in northern Nigeria by working to expand the capacity of teachers to provide instruction related to the new vocational-based curriculum requirements. And many others, such as Girl Effect Nigeria, are identifying effective ways to work with communities to keep girls in school and learning for the longest duration possible.

Yet, even with creative innovations being designed and tried regularly, there remain³s a chronic inability for many to move beyond initial testing sites to reach larger populations and become embedded in more permanent programmes, such as the public sector educational system. While most implementers and researchers may hope for such large-scale adoption, the fact remains that they are only taking the first step in what is a much longer journey. The major purpose of this white paper, and of the convening it was first presented at, is to set in motion a process of ensuring that education innovations have greater impact to benefit more children, and foster policy and programme development in sustainable ways. In other words, innovations and innovators need to give explicit focus to the issue of scale up, and this white paper draws attention to guidance for how this can be accomplished. It provides links to the existing guidance and provides examples of how this guidance is already being applied effectively in Nigeria by actors in the education. The paper is directed at decision makers for education development projects including implementers, researchers, policy-makers, programme managers, technical-assistance providers, donors, community leaders and advocates. The hope is that it will serve as a call to action to focus systematically on scale up and to use existing guidance to best accomplish necessary strengthening of Nigeria's education system.

Since mid-2014, The Education Partnership (TEP) Centre, has been working with ExpandNet to support Nigerian educationists to work systematically on scaling up successfully tested interventions to benefit more children and to foster educational improvements in a sustainable manner. ExpandNet is an informal network of global health and development professionals working to advance the science and practice of scale up; while TEP Centre is an organisation focussed on strengthening public-private partnerships in education. The goal of this collaboration – which is supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation - is to facilitate a shift in which Nigeria's education community begins dedicating major effort towards ensuring successful expansion and institutionalisation of promising intervention. This white paper draws on ExpandNet's broad experience with supporting scale-up activities and TEP Centre's deep understanding of the context and challenges facing the educational system in Nigeria as well as pathways to effective education programme delivery and scaling up.

² dRPC supports secondary schools in Kano and Jigawa states in the northern region of the country to transition to the recent trade subjects secondary school curriculum.

³ This white paper was first presented at the Nigerian Education Innovation Summit (NEDIS) 2016 which held July 18th and 19th 2016 in Abuja. The theme of the summit was "Scaling Up Education Interventions: A Call to Action"

Scaling Up Defined

The following definition identifies the critical components of scale up:

“Deliberate efforts to increase the impact of successfully tested pilot, demonstration or experimental projects to benefit more people and to foster policy and programme development on a lasting basis” (ExpandNet/WHO 2010).

First, the definition stresses that for scaling up to succeed it must be guided, since it has become clear that leaving the process to chance is not having the intended impact. The definition also stresses that interventions must be backed by evidence of effectiveness and feasibility. Furthermore, although an approach may be considered a best practice for the field, the “how” of its implementation in any particular setting still requires exploration. Lastly, in order for innovations to have lasting and sustainable impact, they must focus both on expansion to benefit more people and on becoming institutionalised in policies and programmes.

Systemic Challenges for Scaling up Education Innovation in Nigeria

Several hurdles in Nigeria’s education system influence how rapidly any education innovation can expand and be institutionalised. These include:

1) the complex, multi-layered (and sometimes competing) set of policies and frameworks that shape delivery of basic education at local, state and federal levels. Education is on the concurrent legislative list in Nigeria as is stated in the 1999 Constitution. This implies that both Federal and State governments have legislative jurisdiction and corresponding functional responsibilities with respect to education. “The thinking behind the 1999 constitution was that in the concurrent functional areas, the federal government only provides policy direction, determines norms and standards and monitors achievement, it will leave implementation in the hands of the states. Furthermore, it (the Federal government) will let each state determine the nature and extent of the involvement of the Local Government Authorities in the delivery of services” in the concurrent list (Orbach, 2004).⁴

In practice however, this has led to roles and functions for the delivery of education to be extremely fragmented, reducing the level of interest in and responsibility for essential functions and entirely neglecting others (Majoku et al, 2005).⁵

2) below standard learning outcomes and widespread illiteracy. Data from public education in Nigeria affirms that quality of education is generally low. Issues range from the high number of out-of-school children to low levels of competence among teachers. Children that are in school record pervasively low primary completion rates, with persistently high levels of dropout at primary level. Children that are able to access schools typically learn little. Some of the most recent national examination results indicate disturbingly low achievement levels. These dismal results are indicative of low levels of learning in the nation’s public schools, and are closely related to teacher quality (Adefeso-Olateju, 2013)⁶.

⁴Orbach, E. (2004). *The capacity of the Nigerian government to deliver basic education services*. World Bank.

⁵ Majoku et al. (2005). Education Sector Analysis Unit, Federal Ministry of Education. *Education Sector Diagnosis – A Framework for Re-Engineering the Education Sector*, p30.

⁶ The Education Partnership Centre (2013). Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE) *Regional Themes and Challenges: Learning Outcomes in Nigeria*

3) **inadequate number of teachers in the system, as well as their low motivation, insufficient resources and poor view of their profession.** While non-state schools are often able to leverage progressive incentive structures to engage and retain experienced and motivated teachers; the public sector, which should have the highest access, is overwhelmed by factors such as lack of resources, low levels of respect for the work and insufficient training (Walker et al, 2014)⁷.

4) **limited capacity of civil society to implement innovations long-term and at scale and the challenges they face in working with other stakeholders** in order to implement innovations collaboratively.

5) **predominant “project” paradigm, mindset and timelines** which are not conducive to successful scale up (ExpandNet/WHO 2009, 2010, 2011).

The above-mentioned systemic hurdles are present in varying degrees in different regions of Nigeria, and always make scaling up education interventions more difficult. This may be one of the main reasons why innovators prefer to focus on small-scale innovations rather than scaling up. However, these hurdles do not imply that scaling up is not occurring. Quite the contrary. Evidence is emerging from Nigeria and abroad⁸ of circumstances when a systematic effort to work on scale up has helped advance the field.

THE CASE FOR BEING SYSTEMATIC ABOUT SCALE UP

As stated earlier, education researchers and programme implementers who develop education innovations commonly assume that if well-designed and successfully tested, that the model/approach will automatically be adopted for wider replication. This faulty assumption has resulted in substantial investment in projects whose potential is left unfulfilled. There are many reasons why this is the case. First and foremost is that implementers are often not familiar with what makes scaling up succeed and therefore do not build on this understanding when designing and implementing their projects. Another reason is that education sector funding – similar to other global health and development fields - has historically emphasized the development of innovations rather than the process of scaling up their impact. Once a concept has been “proven”, donors and implementers typically move on to whatever innovation is next.

Other reasons why scale up has not been achieved include the fact that an approach that is designed and works well when implemented in a “project mode” with substantial resources, may be unrealistic for implementation in the routine programme settings of the public sector education system. For this reason, education innovations should be designed jointly with members of the system that will implement them on a large scale. If the system lacks the infrastructure or capacity to implement the new approach, then one must test how to build that capacity as part of the intervention, and consider this a key component of what needs to be scaled up.

The above considerations are all embedded in the ExpandNet framework and approach, which has helped drive a movement towards applying a systematic approach to scaling up. A working definition for such a systematic approach would be:

⁷Walker J., Adefeso-Olateju M., Cruz-Zuniga M. (2014). Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE) *The Role of Research in Teacher Training and Development: Case Studies from Nigeria*

⁸ See for example Ghiron et al 2014 and Keyonzo et al 2015

“a process to guide scaling up that is based on an established framework, method, plan or approach that takes into account the multiple factors that determine successful outcomes”

The evidence base showing that the application of a systematic approach to scale up yields better results than an ad hoc one is growing.

ExpandNet/WHO Guidance for Scaling Up

In the early 2000s ExpandNet made an effort to assemble decades of experience and learning on what makes scale up efforts succeed and fail. Since then they have produced several guidance tools and other resources to support policy makers, programme managers, implementers and technical assistance personnel to have greater impact for their innovations. These tools are being used to strengthen the design and implementation of projects as well as to support strategic planning and management of the scaling-up process. Although initially working primarily in the public health arena, ExpandNet has since 2011 been actively supporting the application of its guidance tools in other areas of development such as environmental conservation and education. The tools are either based on or draw upon a scaling-up framework which is guided by four key principles. This framework offers a road map that helps one analyze all the elements that must be understood and the choices that have to be made in order for scaling up to be successful. The framework is laid out in detail in two key ExpandNet/WHO tools:

- [*Practical guidance for scaling up health innovations*](#)
- [*Nine step guide for developing a scaling-up strategy*](#)

These two tools help one understand the entire system in which scale up is taking place and how to plan effectively for it, but this assumes that one already has an effective model in place that has been successfully tested and there is a measure of support for scale up. However, ExpandNet has also learned that it is never too soon to think about scaling up. Therefore projects that are designed with the hope for large-scale sustainable impact, should use the scale-up learning that exists and embed it into the design and implementation of the model or approach that is being tested. ExpandNet/WHO developed a tool to support such efforts entitled:

- [*Beginning with the end in mind: Planning pilot projects and other programmatic research for successful scaling up,*](#)

ExpandNet and TEP Centre have been working collaboratively to support education-focused project teams in Nigeria, and more recently East Africa, with application of these guidance tools for designing and implementing sustainable, scalable innovations and to support their scale up.

Some examples of successes with application of scaling up guidance in Nigeria are presented in the next section.

Examples of changed practice in Nigeria as a result of applying systematic guidance for scale up

Case Example⁹ 1 – the Centre for Girls Education in Zaria, Kaduna

The Centre for Girls' Education (CGE) leads the Transitions Project which is a "safe space" afterschool educational enrichment programme for girls in government secondary schools. After being introduced to the ExpandNet framework during pilot implementation, the project team realised that while they were highly successful at tailoring the innovation to the local socio-cultural setting, they had not given sufficient attention to testing their model with and within the institutions who would have to adopt and implement the model on a larger scale. This led the CGE team to intensify interactions with officials representing the local government education authorities and zonal offices to strengthen sustainability and ensure the continuity of the effort by the local education authorities after the CGE team's exit. This effort proved invaluable for connecting with key stakeholders and garnering greater commitment for scale up. The ExpandNet framework also helped the resource team complete a self-assessment to identify capacity gaps in key areas such as dissemination and advocacy.

Case Example 2 – development Research and Projects Centre in Jigawa and Kano:

The development Research and Projects Centre (dRPC), an organisation with over twelve years of experience in implementing community-based education projects in Northern Nigeria, leads a secondary school initiative in Jigawa and Kano States. The focus is on supporting schools to transition to the new trade subject curriculum which features 34 trade subjects and civic education in addition to the traditional compulsory subjects. dRPC piloted the project with great success in both Kano and Jigawa states and was planning to expand the project to more local government areas (LGAs) when they were exposed to the ExpandNet/WHO framework and approach. They subsequently reviewed results from implementing the pilot in this new light and embarked on a more participatory approach for deeper engagement around scale up with key stakeholders and then modified plans for expansion to simplify the model and make it more effective. For example, the initial plan was to supply secondary school students with tablets pre-loaded with relevant content. This plan was altered upon engagement with representatives of the state ministries of education, who provided the team with invaluable information: the state governments had already purchased tablets for the students but the students were unable to use them because their teachers lacked training on the technology and its applications. The deeper engagement with key stakeholders resulted in a learning that helped prevent dRPC from implementing an irrelevant innovation. dRPC describes working with the scale-up framework as "very simple and implementable". They emphasized the need for flexibility and reflection in the process of designing and implementing education interventions.

"Our organisation already had a plan but the framework helped shape the plan better for the states we were targeting."

⁹ The three case examples presented are derived from interviews conducted by TEP Centre with lead project implementers who participated in one or two TEP Centre – ExpandNet workshops on scale up.

Case Example 3 – Mercy Corps in Kano State:

Mercy Corps' Girls Opportunities for Advanced Literacy (GOAL) project seeks to improve the financial agency and labour-market relevant skills for 1,800 marginalised female secondary school students (ages 15 to 19) in Islamiyya¹⁰ schools run by the Kano State Ministry of Education. The biggest takeaway from exposure to the ExpandNet framework and approach for the Mercy Corps team was the need to work within existing socio-cultural and institutional settings. They remarked:

"The ExpandNet framework, which recommended institutionalisation, really worked for Mercy Corps, as involving stakeholders and government at the local level plus working with the existing systems and structures (for example by supporting government with EMIS¹¹), made the project easier to institutionalise".

The project team became convinced of the need to engage in a participatory process of planning and implementation with all key stakeholders. They organised a stakeholder-driven workshop to institutionalise the financial literacy curriculum in Kano state. Project donors were pleased with this progress and approved funds for Phase 2 - the scale up phase. The scaling-up framework helped to properly situate the GOAL project within its socio-cultural and institutional context and led Mercy Corps to more effectively involve policy makers and public partners.

While the above-mentioned shifts in approach towards a scaling-up focus may appear small initially, they represent a move in the right direction towards a change in mindset that over time matters significantly. Such approaches have been successful at generating public sector buy-in to the innovation and strong political will to support its adoption and scale up. Even while these three initiatives, and the institutions leading them, show good promise to influence education policy and programmes in the regions where they are working, there are many more organisations whose capacity to focus systematically on scale up requires strengthening.

Moving Ahead in the Face of Challenges

Action on several fronts – and involving many actors - will be required if innovations for the Nigerian education system are to improve the lives of many more children and families and be successful over the long term. Facilitating the necessary changes in approach is a process that must begin immediately by a broad multi-disciplinary group of engaged stakeholders from the grassroots to the highest levels of decision-making.

One path to achieving such broad coalition-building is to adopt a scaling-up focus that not only considers gaps in the system, but one that also engages a wide range of stakeholders who share responsibility for solving these problems. Participatory processes of decision making are essential for scaling up because when working in meaningful coalitions, the likelihood of success is higher. This is true for the earliest stages of project design and throughout implementation, which is a thread running throughout ExpandNet's guidance on "Beginning with the end in mind". This idea is also supported by Perlman et al (2016) who state that "Going to scale must be designed for from the outset. This does not imply limitless scale, but rather, a clear vision of what the end game is."

In addition to designing scalable models that are compatible with the public sector system intended to adopt them, we must ensure that the transition from pilot to programme is an explicit phase recognized

¹⁰Islamiyya schools open educational opportunities for girls (especially married girls)

¹¹ Education Management Information Systems

as worthy of support, and not simply leaving the process to chance. Perlman et al (2016) call this the “middle phase” that lies between pilot testing and full programme implementation. This transition can only be managed if and when the donor community extends the typically short project timelines of 1-3 years and also commits to supporting the scaling-up process. Some donors still consider this phase to be the responsibility of government, failing to understand that the array of activities required to support successful scale up are far from routine.

The current funding paradigm in development has consistently prioritized investment in: a) proving that a concept works; and b) implementation of the intervention in isolation from a concern for what happens in the post-pilot period. As such, innovations often have a short lifespan and rarely go on to influence the larger education system. It is only once innovations are successfully institutionalised within the larger system that the need for donor support will be eliminated because adequate resources from within the system will be ongoing.

CONCLUSION

There is no shortage of effective models of innovation in Nigeria’s education sector. However, their impact often remains limited to original target areas and their results are often not sustainable. To change this pattern, the education community needs to incorporate attention to future sustainable scale up of educational interventions into its programming and funding approaches from the very outset. The guidance tools and approaches presented here can provide a road map for how project implementers can work towards successful scale up of education interventions. It can also assist donors and implementers to assess the scalability of a given model or approach and advise them on how to be more strategic in their efforts. Providing proof of concept alone should no longer be enough for any of us.

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