

# Enhancing the Capacity of the Ministry of Education

The experience of the Quality Education Strategic Support Programme (QESSP)



Ministry of Education  
Federal Democratic  
Republic of Ethiopia

This is the second results paper documenting experiences and lessons learnt from support provided to the Ministry of Education (MoE) by QESSP.

## ABOUT QESSP

The Quality Education Strategic Support Programme (QESSP) aims to enhance the capacity of the education sector in Ethiopia to improve outcomes for learners. We support partners to implement reforms, enhance policy dialogue and improve the evidence base to inform education policy by providing technical assistance, management support and flexible funds.

We focus on these areas: teacher education, school leadership, inclusive education, curriculum development, and system wide strengthening. QESSP is a four-year programme funded by UK aid from the UK government and managed by the British Council.

[www.ethiopia.britishcouncil.org/QESSP](http://www.ethiopia.britishcouncil.org/QESSP)



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## KEY MESSAGES

**Technical assistance was demand driven and focused on key areas where capacity gaps were identified.**

**QESSP core advisors were assigned to work with individual staff, heads of directorates, and top management in the Ministry. This 'shoulder-to-shoulder' approach resulted in a more effective model of technical assistance.**

**The vast experience of the core advisors, coupled with the existing well-established partnership between QESSP and the Ministry, resulted in the greater uptake of skills.**



## THE CHALLENGE

The educator sector in Ethiopia has benefited from a series of sector wide reform programmes, including the Education Sector Development Programmes (ESDPs) and the General Education Quality Improvement Programme (GEQIP). These programmes have led to key changes in the education sector with regards to access, quality, equity, and efficiency.

Despite such improvements, sector assessments have revealed that some challenges still exist and can be attributed to the technical capacity within the Ministry, including:

- **Policy formulation and review:** Limited expertise to ensure the quality of sector policies, strategies, standards and programmes.
- **Planning, performance measurement and reporting:** Gaps in the harmonization of long-term sector wide programmes and short-term initiatives.
- **Partnership and relationship management:** Weak coordination with stakeholders and international donors.
- **Organisational management:** Less efficient organisational structures in some directorates and minimum cross-directorate linkages.
- **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E):** Lack of M&E systems to evaluate reform programmes and projects.
- **Feedback from non-state actors:** No feedback mechanism from non-state actors.
- **Procurement and contract administration:** Backlog in the procurement plan linked to GEQIP II and gaps in contract administration.
- **Documentation and information sharing:** Lack of institutional memory and a knowledge management platform for information sharing.
- **Communication:** Absence of a sector-wide communication strategy.

# THE RESPONSE

## Evidence-based decision making

QESSP supported the Ministry to conduct a capacity assessment. Five key areas of support were identified where technical assistance was required. Terms of reference were prepared for each area and nine core advisors were recruited/deployed to the respective directorates and offices.

## Roles and responsibilities

Core advisors were responsible for the following tasks:

- Conduct a need and capacity assessment
- Review draft policy, strategy and programme documents
- Advise heads of the Ministry on technical policy matters
- Support the development of strategic and operational plans and programmes
- Follow-up and review the implementation of reform programmes
- Prepare a report on the performance of reform programmes
- Facilitate sector review meetings, including the documentation and follow-up of agreed actions
- Contribute to proposal development and grant application activities
- Support MoE's consultation and negotiation with international donors
- Train and mentor individual staff
- Participate in high-level meetings to provide feedback, input and advise
- Support the preparation of tender documents and bid evaluation reports, and advise on contract administration
- Support communication activities implemented by the Ministry

## Management structure

The core advisors worked under the close supervision of the heads of the respective directorates/offices. Technical backstopping was also provided by the QESSP Management Unit.

The core advisors introduced new systems, procedures, tools, and practices to improve the performance of the respective work units, including:

- Annual plan template for the Ministry and the Minister
- SMS as a means of information sharing and communication
- Templates/spreadsheets for taking attendance, minutes and action points
- M&E tool to track the progress of strategic and operational plans
- Data system for staff capacity development programmes
- Project proposal appraisal guidance note and checklist
- In-house training based on participatory peer-to-peer capacity development
- Handover system for change in staff
- Corporate strategy for the education sector
- Sector-wide communication strategy
- New participatory approach to procurement to address complaints
- New filing and documentation practice for contract administration

**Figure 1:** Our approach to capacity development within the education sector



# THE RESULTS

## Individual capacity development

**Increased capacity of staff** through in-house training and peer-to-peer mentoring

## Organisational capacity development

**Improved relevance and workability** of sector-wide policies, strategy and programme documents

**Updated strategic plans** with operational components

**Improved internal and external knowledge sharing and communications**

**Improved policy dialogue and cooperation** between the Ministry and development partners

**Enhanced informed decision making** by heads of the Ministry

**Improved documentation and institutional memory**

**Projects appraised, negotiated and approved** to support general education and TVET

**Improved performance of reform programmes**, such as ESDP V and GEQIP II

**Improved performance of the directorates/offices** within the Ministry

## Institutional capacity development

**Standardised practice for appraisal** of NGO projects

**Harmonised sector-wide programmes**

**Integrated NGO projects** with sector-wide strategies and priorities

**Increased rate of budget utilisation** of reform programmes

In order to be effective and sustainable, technical assistance should be demand driven.

QEESP team member





## LESSONS LEARNED

The following are the key lessons learned about teacher education reform and the generation and use of evidence in support of reform.

**System-based support** (such as new working systems, tools and procedures) helps to embed and sustain new capacity.

**Demand-driven interventions** that combine evidence (i.e. capacity assessment) and technical assistance are an effective model for change.

A Ministry that is **willing to reform** is key to a successful technical assistance programme.

**'Learning by doing'** (i.e. shoulder-to-shoulder with core advisors) is an effective approach for technical assistance.

If not **demand driven** or **backed by evidence**, technical assistance could become a gap filling solution, rather than a sustainable model for change.

Changing behaviour and the status-quo does not happen overnight. **Sufficient time, follow-up, and support** is required to embed change and ensure sustainability.

A **sector-wide capacity development strategy** is required for the Ministry to build on this momentum.

Any technical assistance intervention should be **aligned with the broader strategy** of the Ministry.

**Monitoring and evaluation is key** to the effective implementation of the sector plan.

Quality assurance processes should be **factored in at the design stage**, and later routinely tracked, monitored, and evaluated.

Technical assistance experts need to be **flexible, tolerant and positive** in order to work effectively with a range of people on diverse, politically sensitive, and delicate issues.

**Learning from good practice** in countries that have demonstrated success in their education systems and adapting it for the local context is an effective model for development.