



# SABER IN ACTION: NIGERIA

## STRENGTHENING EDUCATION POLICY REFORM

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Nigeria's use of SABER tools and methods exemplifies how SABER can help change policy and develop new program initiatives based on global best practice. The governments of Bauchi, Ekiti, and Anambra states in Nigeria used the key policy challenges identified through the use of SABER in the preparation of a World Bank-financed State Education Program.

In 2010 about 11 million Nigerian children were out of school. Net primary enrollment rates remained low, at about 60%, and secondary enrollment rates hovered at 26%.

## Nigeria and SABER

In coordination with the World Bank/DFID Partnership for Education Development, Nigeria used SABER diagnostic tools in policy areas such as teachers, school autonomy and accountability, early childhood development, private sector engagement, and school health and school feeding. The SABER framework and background documents on SABER- Student Assessment, SABER-Education Management Information Systems have also been used in Nigeria, helping in policy dialogue and diagnostics. Based on SABER analyses, state education commissions in Bauchi, Ekiti, and Anambra identified four key policy bottlenecks:

1. The education system struggles to create a teacher workforce that matches economic and geographic needs. This is often because of the absence of incentives for teachers to work at hard-to-staff schools or to teach subjects that suffer critical shortages. Analysis shows sharp disparities in the allocation of teachers by region. In Ekiti some schools had twice as many teachers as needed. But in Bauchi rural schools had only language teachers rather than those versed in science or mathematics. In Anambra many rural schools did not have even one science or mathematics teacher.
2. Standard information on student learning and achievement is lacking. The Nigerian Ministry of Education applies some learning assessments but they are not standardized. Nor does Nigeria participate in any international learning assessments. Additional information on student learning and achievement would greatly support efforts to improve education quality.
3. Communities and school-based management committees have weak roles in keeping schools accountable for results. In all three states communities have little control over school budgets and no conduit to report difficulties to education authorities.
4. Data are not provided in timely and user-friendly ways to inform decisions by schools or states. These data are critical if schools and states are to make informed, effective decisions.





## SABER in action

SABER supported a structured and effective policy dialogue with Nigerian decisionmakers at local, state, and federal levels, helping identify the four policy challenges just listed. But SABER’s biggest contribution was creating space for in-depth and frank discussions on the strengths and weaknesses of federal and state education policies. Using SABER as a framework, state officials could compare and contrast their relevant policies across the three states. They could also benchmark their policies against international experience.

According to the World Bank’s Michel Welmond, “the Nigeria case is unique because the reforms identified by SABER in Bauchi, Ekiti, and Anambra were formally incorporated into the government’s policies. SABER findings became the basis for a Bank-funded project that releases funds as the government implements reforms and that has been elaborated on the basis of SABER.”



SABER did not dictate which policies to change, given that not all reforms—even best-practice ones—may be feasible or timely. SABER and related studies showed that although decentralized decisionmaking would be ideal in most areas of education policymaking, the Nigerian government did not agree if this could be applied in the area of teacher policy. According to government officials, school-based management committees would not be able to oversee recruiting, hiring, and monitoring teachers.

But the governments of these three states did agree on other areas of the SABER analysis that became part of the policy recommendations in the project. For example, thanks to SABER, the space for community-driven solutions was widened, and the three state governments agreed to make more local funds available and to keep parents active in shaping school policies. They also committed to a geographic distribution of teachers more in line with student needs. Nigeria now expects to participate in international learning assessments, thus informing strategies to improve education quality. And the three state education commissions agreed to make education system data collection more transparent and the information more available to decisionmakers and the general public.

## Continued engagement of SABER in Nigeria

Current plans call for SABER to be part of the project monitoring system in Nigeria. No other country in Africa (and few elsewhere) has such a comprehensive tracking system in place or is implementing more SABER tools. And although SABER alone will not solve the education reform challenges in Nigeria, it is helping guide the policy dialogue based on global best practice and inspiring its citizens to identify new ways to promote better education outcomes and establish quality learning environments for all.

