# Teacher Development Programme (TDP) Formative Research on Output 1:
## *In-Service Teacher Training Activities*

Zara Durrani  |  February, 2017



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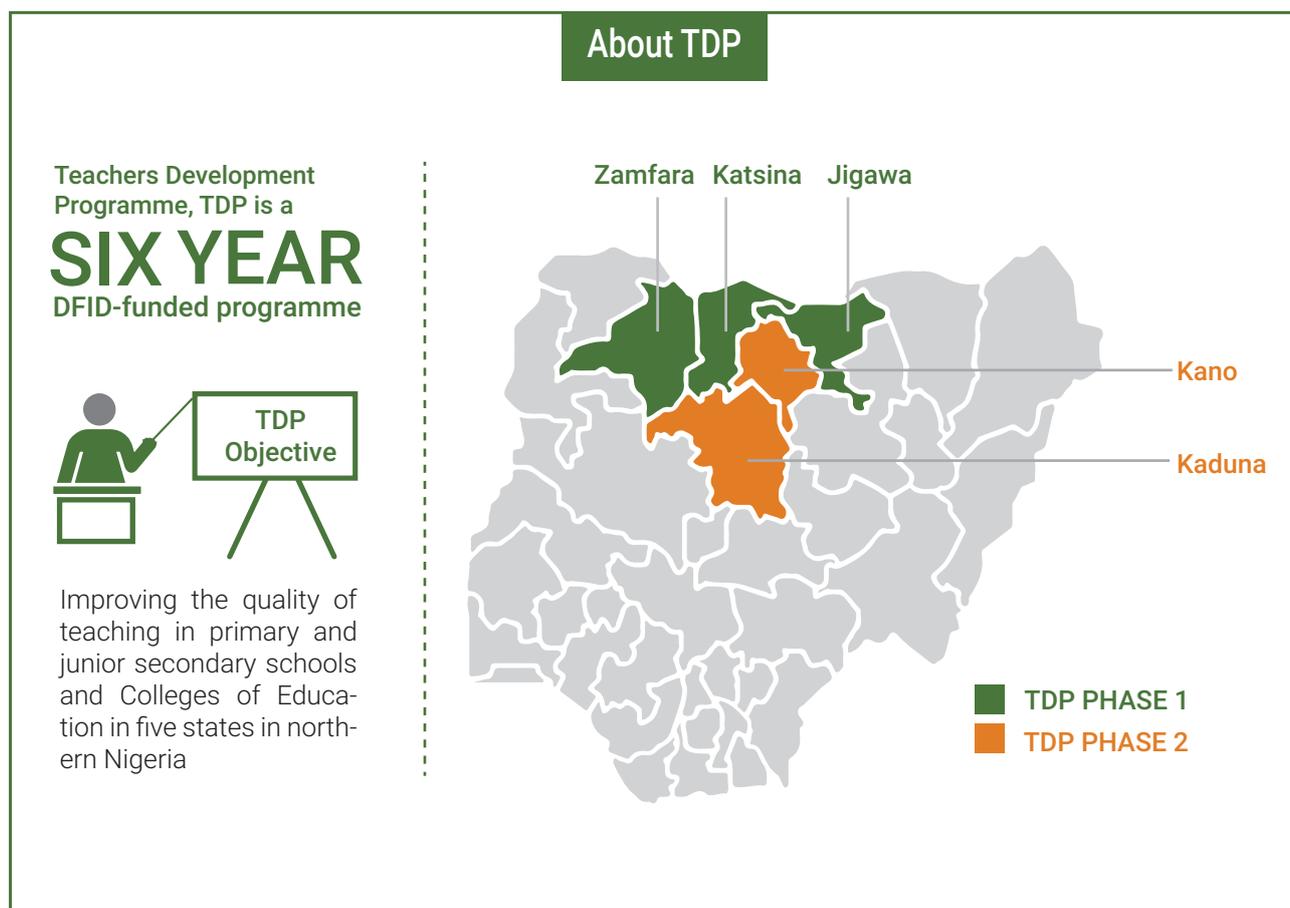
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## Introduction to TDP and background to the study

TDP is a six-year (2013–19) education programme that seeks to improve the quality of teaching in primary and junior secondary schools and Colleges of Education in five states in northern Nigeria. Implemented by Mott MacDonald, Phase I (2014/15) of operations covered Jigawa, Zamfara and Katsina states, with extension to Kano and Kaduna states during the second phase in late 2016. TDP's in-service training model (ISTM) is multi-pronged and provides training and support to teachers both within and outside the school. It aims to create effective teachers by combining the delivery of pedagogical training with the promotion of a supportive teaching environment through head teachers' mentoring and supervision to teachers; peer interaction among teachers; school support visits by trainers; and the provision of learning materials.

This formative research study was commissioned from March-September 2016 in order to provide an in-depth qualitative description and analysis of how TDP's in-service activities have been implemented in Phase I, with the development of a series of formative lessons and recommendations to inform design and implementation of Phase II of the programme.



### About TDP

Teachers Development Programme, TDP is a

# SIX YEAR
**DFID-funded programme**

**TDP Objective**

Improving the quality of teaching in primary and junior secondary schools and Colleges of Education in five states in northern Nigeria

Zamfara   Katsina   Jigawa

Kano

Kaduna

■ TDP PHASE 1
■ TDP PHASE 2

## Study Methodology

This research study was formative rather than impact-focused (i.e. it was not intended as a mid-line report) and as such the analytical emphasis was on perceptions and processes. However, the Baseline Report did identify some key findings that shaped the direction of this study and scope of the research questions and detailed sub-questions.

In particular, the following three overarching research questions underpinned the formative study:

**1** Given the low levels of baseline subject knowledge and pedagogical skills among TDP teachers, how can TDP make its cluster training more effective?

**2** In what ways can TDP improve its printed and audio-visual training materials to make them more useful and more used – in terms of content, language and usage?

**3** Given the weak leadership and management in TDP schools at baseline, how can TDP (a) establish the head teacher as an academic leader and mentor in the school, and (b) ensure the effectiveness of its school-based interventions (such as school support visits (SSVs))?

Primary qualitative data was collected in nine schools across the three Phase I states (three schools per state) which comprised the sample for this study. Stakeholders engaged during the research included teachers, head teachers, pupils, school-based

management committees (SBMCs) and other state and local government representatives. Secondary data sources reviewed included teacher training guides and handbooks, activity assessment reports and frameworks, and other technical programme evaluation documentation.

## Evidence on TDP's in-service cluster training activities

Cluster training is a primary means of TDP's out-of-school support to teachers. The meetings are scheduled monthly, spanning two days, and generally involve TDP teachers from schools within a local government area (LGA) meeting in a centrally located school to receive classroom-based training on pedagogical material and subject content (English, math and science) for that month. These training sessions are led and conducted by teacher facilitators (TFs) who themselves are trained and supported by TDP 'master trainers' (TDTs) at the state level.

Research findings show that attitudes and perceptions towards cluster trainings are generally positive, and administrative and logistical aspects run mostly smoothly. However, poor communication with regards to notifying teachers of cluster training appeared a general problem, with inadequate

**KEY POINT**

**Cluster Trainings have positive perceptions generally**

Attitudes and perceptions towards cluster trainings are generally positive. However, certain administrative and logistical issues, low levels of teacher subject knowledge, language barriers, and limited gender inclusivity in cluster trainings require further attention.

advance notice particularly affecting female teacher attendance. This coupled with distance/transportation issues meant that while the level of teacher attendance is reportedly high, punctuality is poor at cluster trainings. As a consequence of sessions starting late, they also close late and teachers complained about training sessions running too long. TFs, in turn, also face some challenges in preparing for cluster trainings mainly due inadequate notice from TDP and some felt their remuneration was not commensurate with their preparation time required. In addition, the introduction of e-payment system has led to widespread issues with the delivery and timeliness of payments and the possibility of gradual negative impacts on attendance, punctuality and overall motivation of stakeholders should not be underestimated.

Low levels of subject knowledge amongst teachers is problematic, particularly in cases where teachers are trained in a subject they previously have not been teaching/ studying. In addition, findings suggest that teachers find it easier to understand training content when a whole day is dedicated to a subject and participation is enhanced by the use of group work techniques. However, gender inclusivity while attempted is not adequate. With relatively few female teachers in attendance and their struggle to balance training with child-care and household responsibilities, a level of shyness is experienced by female participants. Furthermore, participation and understanding of both male and female teachers is hindered by language barriers, with teachers often struggling to understand training in English. As such, teachers mainly use Hausa during group work and prefer it as the language of instruction.

In terms of application of learning from cluster trainings to classroom settings, teachers face some challenges due to low subject knowledge, limited proficiency in English, large class sizes and lack of materials. Nonetheless, despite challenges with class size, the child-centred approaches teachers learn from TDP has made it easier for them to engage the whole class. In general, the notion of peer-to-peer learning has caught on and knowledge sharing takes place, both between TDP teachers during cluster training, and between TDP and non-TDP teachers at school level.



KEY POINT

**Peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing takes place after cluster trainings**

### Evidence on TDP materials used both inside and outside of schools

An integral aspect of TDP's ISTM is the provision of printed and audio-visual materials to head teachers and teachers at TDP schools. Some of the materials provided are designed for use by teachers outside the classroom, in order to facilitate their lesson planning, improve their pedagogical skills and deepen their subject knowledge. Other materials provided, such as flashcards and posters, are designed to be used in the classroom during lessons in order to facilitate child-centred and activity-based learning.

While evidence suggests that TDP is promptly supplying recipient schools with most TDP materials, there is a lack of basic science kits and apparatus, insufficient supply of textbooks (especially in the face of large class sizes), and challenges posed by the provision of only an SD card but not a mobile phone to some teachers.

### There's lack of basic science kits and textbooks

TDP promptly supplies schools with most TDP materials– teachers especially appreciate lesson plans and the emphasis on using no-cost and low-cost materials.

Teachers seem to use most of the ISTM materials, placing particular importance on the teacher's guide, lesson plans and trainer in the pocket  designed to help them prepare for lessons. However, evidence on the extent to which teachers appropriately use the materials is mixed. In addition, usage is also constrained by other factors such as lack of referenced textbooks; issues with lesson plans' length and scope; and a lack of electricity in the majority of schools rendering it difficult, and costly, to charge and use TDP-provided amplifiers.

Shortages of certain government-provided materials (e.g. textbooks), issues with provision of TDP's audio-visual equipment, and inappropriate use of some materials hamper teacher effectiveness

Furthermore, poor security in the schools is also problematic for safe storage of materials. Interestingly, the study found that low-cost and no-cost materials, such as stones and bottle tops for counting, were widely used in schools as they allow for child-centred activities in the classroom and are easily obtained.

Another positive finding in the majority of schools was the culture of knowledge sharing, formalised through post-training feedback meetings between the TDP teachers and non-TDP teachers. For example, non-TDP teachers in a number of schools used improvised flashcards in the classroom, which they had been taught about by TDP teachers.

Feedback on materials was usually communicated during cluster training and through interactions with the TFs, however most stakeholders were reportedly unware of how TDP management used this information and did not often receive a response on progress of their feedback. This is certainly an area TDP could address to ensure that the cycle of feedback is completed.

Feedback cycles should be complete with progress on feedback clearly and promptly communicated to stakeholders

## Evidence on school leadership and management:

### a. The head teacher as academic leader and mentor

Findings from *TDP's Impact Evaluation Baseline Survey* conducted in 2015 suggested weak school leadership and management (SLM) practices in the sample schools. As such, enhanced head teacher leadership and management was identified as a key output within the ISTM theory of change. In addition, it is assumed that teachers will require appropriate leadership support from head teachers to be motivated to learn and adopt new teaching practices.

In exploring the ISTM's school-based interventions towards enhanced SLM, the formative research showed that head teachers are generally perceived as having multiple roles and responsibilities relating to both school management and facilitating teaching and learning. There was somewhat mixed evidence in terms of the extent to which SLM training and materials equip head teachers to deal with the constraints they face in their schools. The main challenges related to teacher attendance and motivation; limited role for head teachers in teacher recruitment and

posting decisions; political interference in teacher management processes; issues with pupil attendance and punctuality; and limited resources and poor school infrastructure. Nonetheless, there was some positive indication of head teachers identifying and attempting to resolve problems internally at the school level. Furthermore, stakeholders in most schools reported some form of improvement in the head teacher's leadership and management practices since programme inception, which has been associated with head teachers becoming better aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Likewise, in terms of academic mentorship, the study found head teachers have a role in encouraging teachers to use new teaching skills and materials by assisting in lesson planning, understanding the content or language of topics, and in some cases advising on the use of instructional materials. All sampled schools were found to have a system of lesson observations, however, the exact nature of lesson observations varied by school, suggesting a need to enforce greater standardisation of protocols through improved monitoring and accountability. Lesson observations were generally followed by a feedback session with the teacher in which head teachers picked up on aspects of both the teacher's subject knowledge and pedagogy and classroom administration.

**KEY POINT**

### Head teachers have Multiple roles

Application and success of SLM strategies vary considerably between schools, but head teachers' academic leadership and school management functions seem to have improved overall since programme inception

**KEY POINT**

All sampled schools had a system of lesson observations, however, there is need to enforce greater standardisation of protocols through improved monitoring and accountability

While schools have different, at times multiple, approaches for peer-to-peer learning, head teachers were almost always mentioned in relation to this knowledge sharing process which is facilitated by good relations and cooperation amongst teachers

Head teachers, on the whole, had attended more than one ISTM leadership training session over the course of the previous year, with those at several schools also reporting having receiving previous or ongoing leadership training from the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) and the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs), or programmes like Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) in Jigawa. While head teachers referred to the usefulness of reinforced learning in terms of overlapping/ complementary trainings, there still appears to be considerable room for better coordination and communication in terms of training content and scheduling between various head teacher trainings.



KEY POINT

Reinforced learning from overlapping/complementary head teacher trainings is seen as useful, but requires better coordination and communication on content and scheduling of various trainings.

There is also general openness to a role for, and capacity building of, wider community actors (such as the SBMC, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and key leaders within the community) for improved management and accountability of local schools – in particular towards enhancing SLM. There is evidence of SBMCs, parents and/or community members helping to mitigate pupil absenteeism, liaising with/observing teachers, and taking responsibility to address challenges faced by schools by providing inputs (financial or otherwise) to, for example, resolve infrastructural problems or providing textbooks and chalk etc. However, these are not consistent practices and the effectiveness of community interventions is highly variable at present, with many meeting irregularly and being in need of further capacity building. More critically, while the SBMCs and PTAs are involved in school initiatives, they are not included in, or aware of, TDP activities leading to disconnect and lack of knowledge on roles. This requires urgent attention to utilize the full potential of the relationship.



KEY POINT

There is general openness for involvement and capacity building of wider community actors for improved management and accountability of local schools. However, community actors are not currently aware of, or included in, TDP activities leading to disconnect

## b. Effective school support visits

School Support Visits (SSVs) are meant to take place twice per term in each TDP-supported school. They are mainly conducted by TFs (with TDTs having a supervision and support role) and serve as a channel for providing ongoing support to teachers and head teachers in schools through observation and structured feedback.

The research noted that SSVs seem to coincide closely with the scheduling of the

cluster training, which indicates a regularity and sequencing, along with an expectation of the timing of SSVs on the part of schools. The processes around SSVs appear to be largely established, with most TFs following a similar pattern. This includes initial consultation around the school timetable and pleasantries with the head teacher, followed by lesson observations, which take up the bulk of the visit. However, lesson observations vary in their delivery in terms of length and the interaction of the TF with the teacher and pupils which potentially indicates a lack of consistency in terms of established/known protocols in this regard.



**KEY POINT**

While processes around SSVs are largely established and visits are well-received by stakeholders in schools; protocols around lesson observations, head teacher interactions and collection/usage of information are in need of review

Feedback processes following these classroom observations were found to be well established, with all TFs giving verbal feedback to teachers. An additional positive finding was the systematic nature of this feedback, which was pedagogical and reflective of the needs observed by TFs during their observations. Head teachers and teacher responses were all appreciative of the feedback given by TFs. However, head teacher observation was found to be clearly very secondary and less well-defined during the SSVs, and this deserves further attention and streamlining.

In addition, challenges around the tangerine

tablet used to capture data came through consistently and shattered screens and the absence of SIM cards were reported. Paper forms appeared to be the norm and there was overall satisfaction with their structure. Despite the data capture challenges, the data generated from the SSVs appears to be channelled through a clear system of capture and digital upload that goes to the TDP central office. However, as with other activities, responses were minimal, although largely positive, on how the data were being used.

Although SSVs were found to be primarily conducted by TFs, with TDTs occasionally accompanying them, some mention was also made of LGEA Quality Assurance officers visiting schools for monitoring purposes. As such, teachers and head teachers seemed to place higher value on the quality of SSVs in terms of process and feedback than on the LGEA quality assurance visits and the potential of how to partner these processes more formally could be explored.

## Key formative lessons and programme recommendations

Formative research into TDP's in-service teacher training activities shows quite significant process strengthening and functionality near the conclusion of Phase I of the programme. Nonetheless, as the programme prepares to roll-out Phase II, the following key adjustments have been identified based on overarching lessons learnt and trends emerging from the findings of this formative study (targeted recommendations dedicated to each research question are available in the individual chapters of the TDP Formative Research Report):

1. **Feedback and utilisation of data:**

Spaces for feedback across the ISTM have clearly been well thought-through and crafted. Building on this by strengthening feedback mechanisms in certain areas, while also having greater transparency around feedback utilisation will be an important step forward.

2. **Language:**

The challenge of language barriers came through clearly in relation to both cluster trainings and TDP learning materials. The language of instruction needs to be carefully considered given the low levels of English competence amongst many teachers. More broadly, a key suggestion is having English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes for teachers to improve their fluency. This will enable them to better take instruction in English (closing the cognitive gap that currently exists with the training materials that are also in English) and also improve the quality of their teaching in a subject.

3. **Technological applications:**

The use of technology within TDP's ISTM has been innovative with regards to materials (both for learning and for data capture) and as part of the teacher and head teacher support process. However, given various operational challenges, a more detailed review of the technological innovations is needed to assess the ongoing relevance of their functionality, appropriate usage and processes, and corrections or alternatives needed going forward.

4. **Knowledge sharing:**

Knowledge sharing between TDP and non-TDP teachers appears to be occurring regularly overall. To build on this evident good practice two key areas need further

improvement. The first is to introduce a more efficient system of peer learning and knowledge sharing between head teachers across TDP schools. The second is to address the apparent current lack of knowledge sharing between TDP and non-TDP teachers during the SSV process.

**Programme needs beyond the current remit of TDP:**

In line with the findings at baseline, this research highlights various challenges outside of TDP's control that affect the work and potential success of the programme, such as the absence of key in-school materials (such as textbooks and science kits), and shortages/poor classroom infrastructure affecting the quality of the learning environment. While these areas are the responsibility of other actors, such as SUBEBs and the LGEAs, TDP should consider what role it can actively play going forward to help address them – particularly if gains made by the programme are not to be lost when TDP exits and responsibility for the ISTM approach is handed over.

6. **Leadership around harmonising wider ISTM approaches in TDP schools:**

A consistent finding of the research was the overall positive perception of stakeholders towards TDP's ISTM approach. Given this, it is recommended that TDP consider the possibility of playing a coordinating and harmonising role across its target states in key areas of the ISTM, by working with other partners currently delivering activities such as Jolly Phonics and MDG. Harmonising activities at the state and school level has the potential, in time, to contribute to easier ownership of activities by state actors when the programme finishes in 2019, leading to greater sustainability.

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House 2, 16 Mafemi Crescent,
Utako, Abuja, Nigeria
Phone: +243 (0)810 727 8718 | +234 (0)817 667 8243
Website: www.edoren.org | Email: info@edoren.org