

# DEVELOPMENT OF AN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR UGANDA

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The management of an education department is traditionally complex and fraught with detail. Various approaches are followed in different countries, and even if the core structure is fairly well established and standardized throughout the nation, the implementation of the educational experience, the setting, the facilities, the instructional materials, and the quality of teachers vary dramatically. An effective Educational Management Information System (EMIS) can go far to support the development of a management framework. Such a system is currently being implemented in the districts and head office of the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sport.

The approach is based on previous similar projects active in three countries, and focuses on providing a sustainable information system once the initial intervention has ended. This is achieved by ensuring that the users share a common vision and participate in planning, developing and implementing the system.

The approach recognizes that successful systems are built around People, Practices and Technology: sustainable systems require that all three of these elements be addressed and be successful in order for a system to work.

The People element is usually the most crucial, should ensure that staff feel familiar with the system are competent and confident in its use, believe that it supports their efforts, and they need to understand how the system links to prior successful efforts. Training is therefore crucial.

Practices have to do with the concepts, stages, and standards that any good EMIS requires. As an evolutionary activity, the system helps a Ministry to reengineer its processes based on the best of international and regional practices so that, according to objective criteria, timeliness, accuracy, and accessibility of information will improve. This is tightly linked to training, and to new alternatives that technology itself makes possible.

Technology has provided many new tools and options for Ministries and schools, but can very easily be misconstrued as being the final product. The approach followed in Uganda is built around readily available technology that can be locally supported, and which will be upgraded through commercial initiatives. Part of ensuring the sustainability of a system with more advanced technology is to ensure that there is redundancy, maintenance, supplies, and a plan of operation.

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Experience gained in Uganda will be presented, and lessons provided on how education management can be improved in similar countries.