A Summary Brief of Findings from an Independent Evaluation of STiR Education's Programme in Karnataka State, India

Study Context and Methodology

STiR Education commissioned an independent research evaluation to investigate long-term trends and impacts from their programme over 4 years in Karnataka, India. STiR's research and learning partner for this evaluation is Ichuli Institute, an independent research organisation headquartered in Kampala, Uganda which offers technical, comprehensive strategic development services to clients in the education, research, and monitoring and evaluation sectors.

The overarching question of the longitudinal study is: **How does STiR's approach, focused on strengthening intrinsic motivation, contribute to sustained improvements in the foundations of lifelong learning among ELs/ELMs, teachers, and students?**

A total of 104 primary schools were representatively sampled across Kolar and Chikkabalapur districts in Karnataka state to partake in the evaluation. Head teachers and selected teachers and students from each school participated in data collection as well as the ELs/ELMs* assigned to each district.

Overall Findings and Conclusions

Findings from Year 1 of the study are presented in this brief to provide a **lens on the progress made by Year 2 of STiR's intervention in Karnataka.** Overall, the findings demonstrated that **stakeholders within the education system have established routines within each of the foundations of lifelong learning** – the overarching achievement expected by Year 2, according to STiR's progress pathway.

Specifically, the evaluation found that **the concepts of mentoring, role modelling and trying out new practices are beginning to happen with some regularity** – key to this year's focus of helping key stakeholders establish routines. The evaluation also found that these **practices often lacked appropriate time allocation and/or peer feedback** and additional efforts are needed to **ensure that stakeholders are critically engaging through deeper reflection** on practice.

Going forward, STiR should focus on helping stakeholders to **create a feedback process and role modelling approach** that combines content knowledge with an effective, repeated cycle for effective mentoring and observation. STiR, with the support of state and district officials, can also do more to **ensure that EL institutes are being organised as planned** to ensure that knowledge transmission does not get bottle-necked with ELMs and that it gets passed down to ELs and, subsequently, to teachers.

*EL stands for Education Leader and ELM stands for Education Leader Manager in STiR's programme. In Karnataka, ELs are Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) and ELMs are Block Resource Persons (BRPs).

Specific Headline Findings

Intrinsic Motivation

Finding 1

Teachers and head teachers overwhelmingly reported liking teaching and the majority of them would like to stay in their current positions in education. However, 44% of teachers, 36% of head teachers and 37% of ELs/ELMs reported being only "somewhat motivated" or "not motivated" at work on most days and 41% of teachers and head teachers and 61% of ELs/ELMs self-reported being absent at least one time in the past two weeks.

Teachers and head teachers overwhelmingly reported liking teaching and the majority of them would like to stay in their current positions in education...

however...

and...

44% of teachers, **36%** of head teachers and **37%** of ELs/ELMs reported being only "somewhat motivated" or "not motivated"

41% of teachers and head teachers and **61%** of ELs/ELMs self-reported being absent at least one time in the past two weeks.
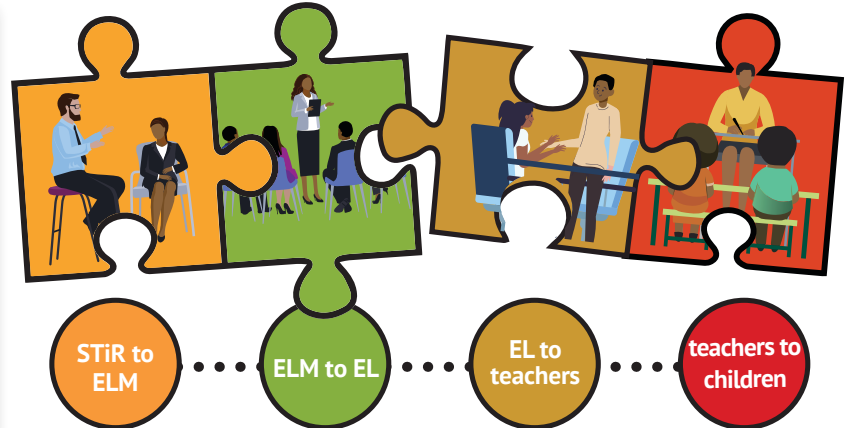
Finding 2

Between 79% and 84% of teachers reported participating in sharing meetings in 2018 and 2019, which is on target for the participation rate STiR expects. Teachers, ELs/ELMs and independent observers rated the quality of these meetings as a 3/5, on average.

Finding 3

83% of ELMs reported attending an ELM institute, but only 65%-68% reported organizing an EL institute in 2018 and 2019, potentially preventing or bottlenecking the transmission of knowledge from ELMs to ELs and finally to head teachers and teachers. However, 90% of ELMs reported observing a sharing meeting in 2018.

STiR to ELM · · · · ELM to EL · · · · EL to teachers · · · · teachers to children

Engagement

Finding 4

Head teachers reported frequently observing their teachers, and teachers reported that they are regularly observed by their superiors. Teachers and head teachers reported being routinely observed by both ELMs and ELs.
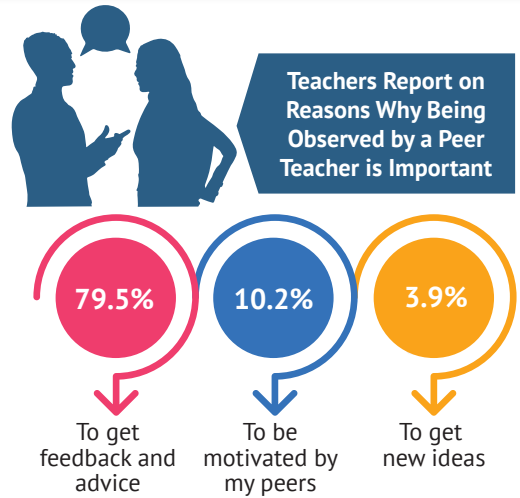
Finding 5

Teachers and head teachers reported receiving useful feedback from observations. However, teachers and head teachers admitted that the coaching provided during feedback sessions is often positive and focused on offering praise, rather than constructive advice to improve instructional practice. Despite this, teachers reported that they feel they have developed as a result of the feedback they receive.

Finding 6

Teachers reported meeting other teachers from their school or block to learn from each other and expressed an interest in continuing to do so even after the STiR programme ends, indicating a self-reported willingness for professional growth. This willingness for professional growth corresponds to the high self-reported regularity of peer observations although improvement is still needed to ensure all teachers engage in it.

Teachers Report on Reasons Why Being Observed by a Peer Teacher is Important

79.5%	10.2%	3.9%
To get feedback and advice	To be motivated by my peers	To get new ideas

99.5% of students reported liking school 'very much'

Finding 7

Students report liking school and were observed being positive in class and participating in classroom activities, though there is room for improvement in how they readily embark on assigned activities as well as how they collaborate with their peers. Teachers were observed greeting students and calling on them by name, thereby encouraging engagement, though they sometimes praised students unequally and treated boys and girls differently.

Learning Time and Intentional Teaching

Finding 8

Some teachers reported applying instructional methods promoted by STiR and trying them in their classrooms, however many reported not having learned some of the methods at all. The majority who had learned the teaching methods could not accurately describe how to apply them. However, teachers were observed frequently using other good teaching practices such as linking lesson content to students' lives and checking students' work.

✓ teachers trying new practices
✓ improvement in application needed

Foundations of Curiosity and Critical Thinking

When in class, teachers were on-task 89.5% of the time.

Finding 9

Independent observations found that teachers are on task the majority of class time, however, they primarily engage students in teacher-centered activities such as lecturing or whole group work rather than student-centered activities such as hands-on work or small group work. This corresponds to observed limitations in teachers' ability to develop the critical and creative thinking abilities of their students during lessons, despite their demonstrated ability to deliver relevant content and information through lecture-based learning techniques.

Safety

Finding 10

Teachers self-reported and were observed being welcoming and friendly towards students and calling on them by name. Students reported liking school and feeling safe in their academic environment. But, conversely, both teachers and students reported that corporal punishment is a common method of discipline with a high percentage of students believing it is the best means of discipline, indicating a disconnect between purported feelings of safety at school and normalized physical punishment practices. Verbal punishment was identified by teachers and ELs/ELMs to a lesser extent than physical punishment, but it also contributes to an overall unsafe environment at school for children.

There are high reported rates of corporal and verbal punishment

Self-Esteem

Finding 11

Students reported high levels of determination and grit related to their academic learning and also reported excitement to learn more when faced with a difficult problem and the ability to apply problem-solving strategies. Teachers were observed encouraging and role modelling behaviours that promote self-esteem such as providing students with corrective and specific feedback during lessons and having a positive attitude towards helping students address their learning challenges, although there is still room for improvement.

32% of students reported feeling frustrated by difficult exercises

More than **87%** said they were determined to solve a problem

Recommendations for STiR and its Government Partners

STiR works to **strengthen the education system** and **empower stakeholders** including teachers, head teachers and ELs/ELMs to **perform their respective functions** so all children develop a love of lifelong learning.

Going forward STiR and its government partners should focus on ensuring that:
- Teachers are both routinely and effectively implementing good teaching strategies in their classrooms;
- There is a clear framework and standardised tool for peer teachers, head teachers and ELs/ELMs to utilise when observing teachers;
- Feedback mechanisms between teachers, head teachers and ELMs improves and progresses from mainly positive praise to more constructive feedback for professional development;
- Time be made in each teacher's school schedule so that they can be observed frequently, receive substantial feedback from their observers and reflect upon it so that they can implement it into their teaching routines;
- EL institutes are organized as frequently as planned; and
- Steps are taken to improve the physical and emotional safety for all students.