

A Summary Brief of Findings from an Independent Evaluation of STiR Education's Programme in Uganda

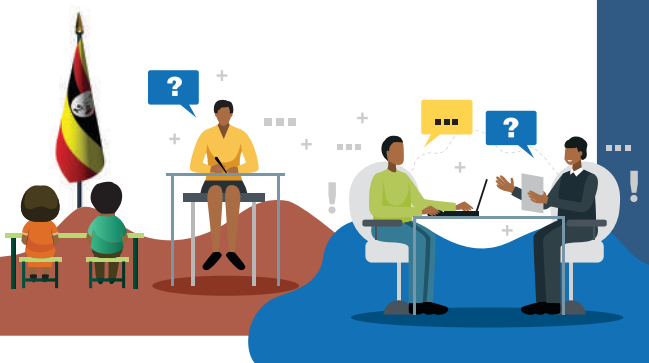


Study Context and Methodology

STiR Education commissioned an independent research evaluation to investigate long-term trends and impacts from their programme over 4 years in Uganda. 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 education officials, teachers, and students?

A total of 103 primary and 20 secondary schools were representatively sampled across five districts in eastern Uganda to partake in the evaluation. Head teachers and selected teachers and students from each school participated in data collection as well as the local education officials 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 Uganda**. 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 currently often lack substance and depth** 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, observation and coaching. STiR, with the support of local and district education officials, can also do more to **ensure that teacher network meetings are occurring as frequently as planned**, and that they have the **substance required to create a culture of performance** and growth in schools. More support will ensure that teachers have adequate opportunities to learn, solve problems and improve together.





Specific Headline Findings

Intrinsic Motivation

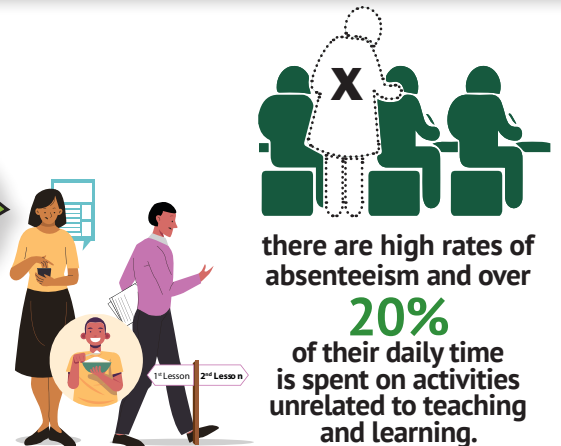
Finding 1

Positively, teachers, head teachers and education officials report high levels of intrinsic motivation and satisfaction with their participation in the STiR programme. However, these self-reported attitudes are contradicted by high rates of absenteeism from work and at least 20% of overall daily time spent on tasks unrelated to teaching and learning.



Education actors report high levels of intrinsic motivation and satisfaction...

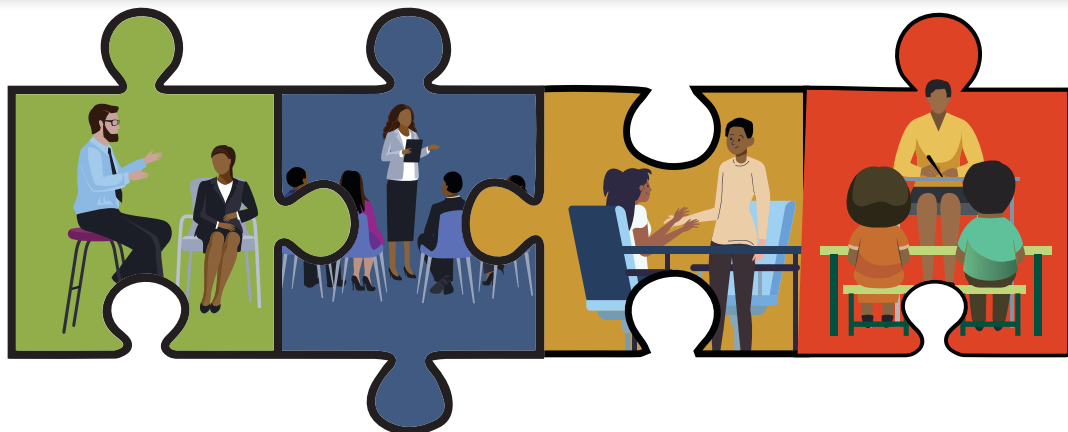
however...



there are high rates of absenteeism and over **20%** of their daily time is spent on activities unrelated to teaching and learning.

Finding 2

Independent observations of STiR's programme activities indicate they are high-quality and well received by stakeholders, who actively engage in institutes, reflection and network meetings, and demonstrate significant levels of autonomy, mastery and purpose in their delivery of these activities. These findings were corroborated by teachers, head teachers and education officials who reported appreciating and readily participating in STiR activities to grow their skills and capacities.



Engagement

Finding 3

Students report liking school and are observed actively and readily engaging in classroom activities. This positively links to the observed actions of teachers in the classroom, notably regarding student praise and the equal engagement of boys and girls in lesson activities.

95% of students reported liking school 'very much'



Finding 4

Routine observations of teachers and head teachers by education officials is positively related to reports of head teachers frequently observing their own teachers, and teachers reporting that they are regularly observed by their superiors. Direct, corresponding connections across this chain of stakeholders is a positive sign that observation processes are streamlined under the programme and highly prioritised by education actors.



Finding 5



Teachers and head teachers reported receiving useful feedback from observations. However, teachers, head teachers and education officials admitted that the coaching provided during feedback sessions was primarily positive and focused on offering praise, rather than constructive advice to improve instructional practice. Despite this, teachers and head teachers reported that they are inspired by receiving praise and recognition from their superiors and consider it a critical driver of their intrinsic motivation.

Learning Time and Intentional Teaching

Finding 6

Teachers overwhelmingly reported applying the instructional methods introduced by STiR and trying them in their classrooms, which aligns with observations of student engagement during lessons and teacher use of LIC themes in class. Teachers accurately described how they apply methods related to creating a positive learning environment, using learning aids, providing praise, checking for understanding and spacing practice to engage their learners. However, they were not as adept at correctly explaining how they promote a growth mind-set in their students, use effective and elaborative questioning techniques, or integrate retrieval practice in their lessons.



95%

of teachers felt there was a positive change in their classroom teaching practices since they started using STiR's LIC teaching strategies



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



Finding 7

Teachers reported that they are regularly observed by their peers and that feedback from these visits helps them to improve their practice. Unlike the coaching and feedback provided by head teachers and education officials, which is primarily focused on praise, peer-to-peer learning within the programme appears to be highly appreciated by teachers and provides a stronger basis for constructive support.

Foundations of Curiosity and Critical Thinking

Finding 8

Teacher time on task in the classroom is high and devoted to relevant, subject-related teaching and learning activities. But, most class activities are teacher-led and primarily involve whole 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.



When in class, teachers were on-task

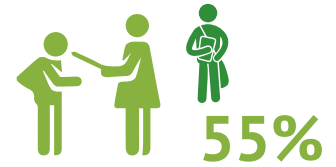
94%

of the time.

Safety

Finding 9

Teachers self-reported and were observed being welcoming and friendly towards students and calling on them by name. This corresponds to students reporting 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, indicating a disconnect between purported feelings of safety at school and normalized physical punishment practices.



55% of students reported seeing other students being physically punished either daily or weekly

Self-Esteem

Finding 10

Students reported high levels of determination and grit related to their academic learning. This is connected to observations of teachers encouraging students to set goals, providing them with corrective and specific feedback during lessons, acknowledging their efforts, and having a positive attitude towards helping students address their learning challenges.



70% of students reported feeling frustrated by difficult exercises



More than 80% 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 education officials 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 education officials to utilise when observing teachers;
- Feedback mechanisms between teachers, head teachers and education officials 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;
- Teacher network meetings are organized as frequently as planned; and
- Steps are taken to improve the physical and emotional safety for all students.



Researched, Reported and Designed by:
Ichuli Consulting
Plot 2690, Ntinda-Kigowa Road
PO Box 56, Ntinda, Kampala, Uganda
www.ichuli.africa



Programme Implemented by:
STiR Education
Plot 1673 Bukasa Close
Kayongo Zone, Kampala, Uganda
www.stireducation.org