



MID-TERM EVALUATION

School Management Simulation Training (SMST)

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

27 March 2017

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Executive Summary

Mid-term evaluation of the School Management Simulation Training (SMST) in Malawi in 2016.

Link was awarded a grant by the Scottish Government in 2015 for the INSPIRE project, working in partnership with the national Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS) and with practice-based training in Mchinji and Dedza Districts. School Management Simulation Training is one intervention within the INSPIRE Project. Link Malawi delivered the SMST to representatives of 94 schools in Mchinji district, Malawi in 2016.

The overall aims of the INSPIRE project are to improve the performance of Malawian schools and the impact of the Malawian Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) and District Education Offices (DEO) on school performance, by improving integrated planning, multi-stakeholder accountability and the provision of effective support.

Headteachers and community members viewed the SMST as highly **relevant** to their ambitions to improve their schools and the skills they need to achieve these ambitions. **99%** of community members and headteachers were **satisfied or very satisfied** with the SMST. One community member commented that *“the training was more like we were playing, but it was a reality of what is happening in schools”*.

The training had a significant positive impact on the **capacity** of headteachers, teachers and community members to bring about school improvement by providing a professional development opportunity, increasing their knowledge of management techniques, and clarifying the roles of various stakeholders in school management. **87% of headteachers** and **93% of community members** felt that the SMST was **very important** in enabling them to support school improvement.

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Just three months after the SMST was delivered, beneficiaries were able to identify a number of specific improvements in the **management and performance** of their schools as a direct result of the training. These included improvements in community engagement, school management and School Improvement Planning. Improved attendance of learners as a result of these improvements was also noted.

It is highly likely that both the content of the training and its unique delivery method contributed to these results.

The majority of community members (82%) and (head)teachers (55%) reported that they had encountered no challenges in **implementing what they had learned** during SMST. However, interviews with stakeholders also indicated that the potential of the SMST to influence school improvement had not been fully realised, largely as a result of the limited time for delivering the training, and revealed a small number of unintended negative consequences. This report contains a number of recommendations to address these points.

Introduction

Overview of the School Management Simulation Training

Link's School Management Simulation Training (SMST) is a training tool developed in partnership with Business Today. It trains stakeholders on how to make effective decisions on the use of funds, staff and resources to bring about school improvement. It enables school management teams, school governing bodies, teachers, learners and community members to 'simulate' managing a school using real scenarios. This collaborative decision making, where everyone has a say and everyone works together, creates strong school management teams able to make better decisions for more effective planning to improve learner outcomes.

This training uses a high quality board game developed specifically to train schools. It is 'hands-on' giving experience in making decisions about real challenges schools face and the consequences of those decisions. The training is delivered to teams of 4 or 5, made up of government staff, parents, learners, community members and teachers. Everyone playing gets directly involved. The training allows groups to discuss the reality of their own school and learner performance. Scenarios can be adapted to reflect what is happening in their actual school. Finally, the training brings the teams back together for a collective process to develop a 'whole school' inclusive and effective school plan.



Training delivery in Malawi

As part of the INSPIRE Project, Link Malawi delivered the SMST to representatives of 94 schools in Mchinji district, Malawi in 2016. The training took place in clusters of three schools, each with 7 representatives. Representatives were selected by the schools and they were instructed to include the headteacher or deputy, a teacher, SMC member, PTA member, Mother Group member, learner, and community leader / chief.

Background to the Project

The aim of the INSPIRE project (2015 – 2018) is to improve the performance of Malawian schools and the impact of the Malawian Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) and District Education Offices on school performance, by improving integrated planning, multi-stakeholder accountability and the provision of effective support.

The project aims to support the Malawi Ministry of Education Science and Technology to develop and demonstrate a consolidated district school monitoring and support system clarifying the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

This project, informed by learning from Link Malawi's district projects in Dedza and Mulanje, will be the first to target all schools within Mchinji District, providing data to enable integrated planning at school, district and national levels. Integrated planning will lead to better targeting of scarce resources and more effective interventions to support schools, resulting in an improvement to the quality of education which schools deliver and improved learner outcomes.



Evaluation Aim & Objectives

To gather detailed data to measure and evaluate School Management Simulation Training (SMST) intervention.

The evaluation of the SMST was carried out as part of a broader mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the INSPIRE project to inform future project delivery, provide evidence of project benefits and learn lessons for the delivery of related projects.

SMST EVALUATION QUESTIONS	
Relevance	Is the SMST relevant to the context and needs of beneficiaries?
Impact on School Improvement	Has the SMST supported schools to improve?
Implementing Learning	Are stakeholders able to implement what they have learned from SMST? What are the barriers to implementing learning?
Management	Is project management appropriate and effective to date? Can improvements be made in the management of the project?
Learning and Best Practice	What has been learnt? What best practice has been exemplified?

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Methodology

Evaluation Design

The Link team in Malawi and Edinburgh led the development and delivery of the MTE with technical support from Alastair MacPherson, an evaluation expert from Additional Research.

The evaluation was structured as a participatory process, with beneficiaries fully involved in the investigative process, and engaging with key stakeholders at international, national, district, zone and school levels.

The main ways in which stakeholders were engaged include the following:

1. Opportunities to shape the evaluation approach: Link Malawi requested feedback from DIAS and the DEO in Mchinji;
2. Opportunity to provide evidence as part of the evaluation process through individual interviews and surveys;
3. Opportunity to provide feedback on draft evaluation findings: Link Malawi shared draft findings with DIAS and the DEO in Mchinji; and
4. Access to evaluation findings through for example, dissemination of reports or presentations: Link Malawi will share the key findings with all stakeholders and make the final report available on request.



Evaluation Methods

INCEPTION MEETING & DISCUSSION

The evaluation commenced with an inception meeting between Link International and Link Malawi MTE team members to:

1. Agree and finalise the detailed aims, objectives and approach of the evaluation;
2. Access background documents relating to the project;
3. Confirm stakeholders for consultation and access contact details for stakeholders; and
4. Finalise logistical arrangements for fieldwork support.

DESK REVIEW OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A detailed review was made of background documentation relating to the project including project plans and approval papers; monitoring data (permitting, as far as possible, the profiling of activities, outputs and beneficiaries); relevant strategy/policy documentation; and available socio-economic baseline statistics providing the context of the project. These documents included:

1. INSPIRE project original full proposal and amendments agreed with Scottish Government;
2. INSPIRE project bi-annual reports to the Scottish Government Fund Manager;
3. District, zone and school improvement reports and plans; and
4. Background documentation including MoEST policy documents.

Fieldwork

INTRODUCTION

The approach used a combination of methods, reflecting the MTE aims and objectives, the range of stakeholder groups, and the resources available. The main methods included:

- Face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with selected key stakeholders;
- Interviewer-led questionnaire surveys with individuals including selected officials and stakeholders not included within face-to-face consultations or case studies;
- Case study research, looking in-depth at a small number of cases.

The main groups addressed by each method are outlined in **Error! Reference source not found.**

STAKEHOLDER AND CASE STUDY CONSULTATIONS

Consultations were held with stakeholder representatives in order to assess the evaluation questions and to provide the most up-to-date picture of issues affecting project performance. Consultations were also held with representatives of the case study schools.

The consultations were conducted by face-to-face, semi-structured interview. Topic guides to support the consultations were developed in advance of fieldwork (see Appendix 2).

BENEFICIARY SURVEYS

This section sets out our approach to gathering evidence of benefits via a sample survey of project beneficiaries.

Survey Sample

A statistically representative sample survey was undertaken of all project beneficiaries. Our approach considered the following issues:



- **Survey Population:** this consisted of all headteachers and one nominated parent representative from all schools assisted under the project to date (94 schools; 2 interviews per school).
- **Sampling Frame:** this comprised a list of all beneficiary schools with the necessary information to draw a sample and to contact the target respondents (i.e. contact details of key school stakeholders including headteachers and parents). This data was held by the Link project office. A set of random numbers was used to select schools from the sampling frame. The headteacher of each selected school was contacted and a nominated parent representative was also selected for interview.
- **Sampling Accuracy:** we adhered to the commonly accepted accuracy level where results are significant 'at the 95% confidence level'.
- **Sample Precision:** For the evaluation, we proposed a level of +/- 5% sampling error. The final achieved level was determined by response rate to the survey and response rates to individual questions.

For the sampled schools, a 100% response rate was achieved, and a sample size slightly larger than required was achieved (76 responses for each sub-group; 152 responses in total). This provides an overall margin of error of +/- 4.46% at the 95% confidence level.

The survey took around 30 minutes to complete for the typical respondent.

In addition, a small purposive sample of a comparison group was conducted (non-beneficiary schools), consisting of some six schools. It is noted that the control group schools are located in the project target districts Dedza and Mchinji. The selected schools have not yet participated in the project activities, but will do so in Year 3 of the project. They are supported by advisors who have undergone training as part of the INSPIRE project.

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A more rigorous experimental/ quantitative approach to control groups was considered a disproportionate use of the limited internal resource available for the MTE, and of limited value given the wide range of variables impacting on the outcomes in schools within the target districts.

Questionnaire development, Administration & Piloting

The questionnaire development process included input from a range of Link team members and external advice and included consideration of the following issues (a copy of the questionnaire is appended – Appendix 3):

- Question content;
- Question wording;
- Question type;
- Questionnaire layout; and
- Delivery method.

It is noted that the survey included a range of questions to supplement baseline data captured previously.

The method used to deliver the survey was a key issue and the choice was a balance between response quality, ability to establish an accurate sample and cost. Consequently, we undertook a face-to-face interviewer-led survey, making use of tablet computers and an offline survey application.



The survey was administered by a small in-house team, following training in the survey content and method of administration. The training established agreed quality standards, aimed at ensuring administration to high professional standards in terms of completion of all relevant question areas.

Following the development phase, a short pilot was undertaken of the survey questionnaire and method of administration before finalisation.

Limitations

Random sampling of participants for the surveys was carried out at school level and the parent representatives were selected by the headteachers of the sampled schools. The selected parents were the chair of the School Management Committee or Parent-Teacher association and would be expected to have higher levels of knowledge and involvement in school management activities and processes than the average parent.

In a small number of cases, questions about the impact of specific project interventions elicited responses about wider issues at the school which were unrelated to the project activities. This was particularly evident when parents were asked about negative outcomes of the interventions.

CASE STUDY RESEARCH

A further phase of the research was undertaken with three case studies of school interventions. Case studies were used to gain an in-depth understanding of selected cases, providing an understanding of why, for whom and under what circumstances the project achieved its objectives. The case studies aimed to assist Link to:

- Illustrate the project benefits in a narrative form, drawing on carefully selected projects;
- Explore the various points of view of the different stakeholders;
- Examine differences in implementation in different circumstances; and
- Better understand the nature of the processes producing benefits.

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The selection of cases was an important step for generalising and answering the evaluation questions. Cases were selected on the basis of discussion with the MTE team and reflected consideration of the factors below:

- Contrasting cases: what happens at the extremes? What explains these differences?
- The best cases: what explains the effectiveness of a project?
- The worst cases: why does a project not function?
- Sub-sets: how can the different types of schools be compared?
- Representative cases: among the examples chosen to represent significant variations, what happens and why?
- Typical cases: on a typical project, what happens and why?
- Particular cases: in these specific circumstances, what happens and why?

The cases are not statistically representative and should be taken as illustrative of a range of issues encountered by participating schools.

One case study within the MTE included reflection on the SMST.

ETHICAL ISSUES

The research was undertaken in accord with the principle that participation is voluntary, there is informed consent for participation, and that no harm is caused to participants.



Research participants were made aware of why the research was happening, what would happen with the data and who it would be shared with. The following information was provided to participants:

- The purpose of the research and what it entails;
- Who is undertaking and financing the research including the identity of the researcher;
- An outline of any reasonably foreseeable risks, embarrassment or discomfort;
- A description of the likely impact of the study;
- A description of how the respondent was selected for the study;
- A statement that participation was voluntary and that the respondent was free to withdraw at any time or to decline any particular question;
- Details as to how the findings will be disseminated:
- A description of what confidentiality or anonymity applies; and
- An offer to answer any questions.

ANALYSIS & TRIANGULATION

The analysis step included review of the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the fieldwork phase in order to answer the evaluation questions. Information from a range of stakeholders and other sources is brought together (triangulated) to provide a range of perspectives on the evaluation questions. Quantitative data was analysed using the Qualtrics survey tool.

Findings

Relevance

EQ1: Is the SMST relevant to the context and needs of beneficiaries?

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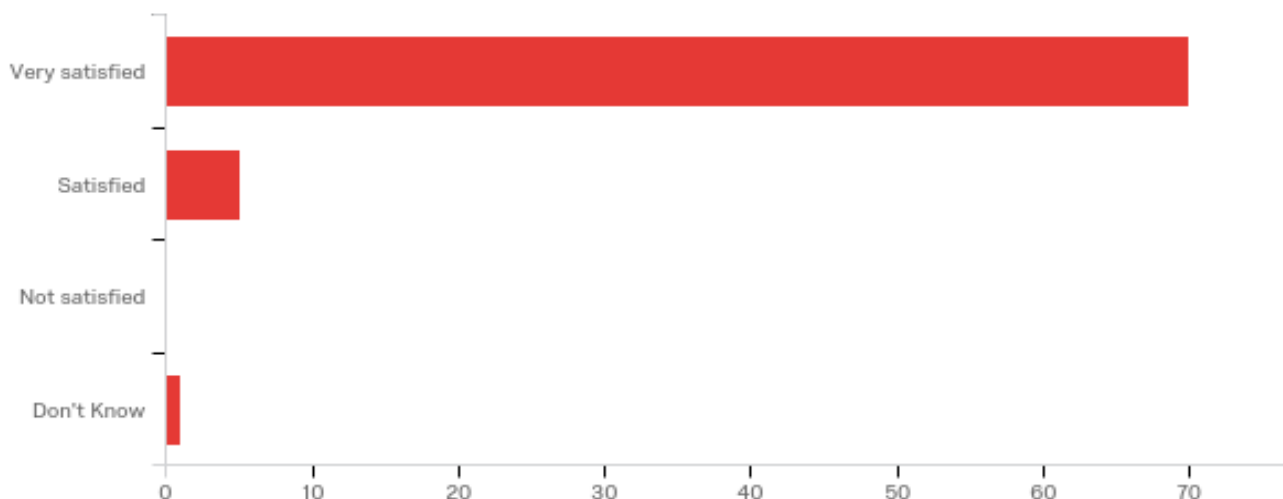
99% of community members were satisfied or very satisfied with the SMST. One commented that ***“the training was extraordinarily good”***.

Key observations from community members were that the SMST:

- reflected the real issues which schools are facing: ***“The training addresses issues that happen in schools”***; ***“the training was more like we were playing but it was a reality of what is happening in schools”***;
- provided them with relevant skills to fulfil their roles on committees and support school improvement;
- provided a clearer understanding of their roles as it directly addressed ***“what is happening on a daily basis in our work”*** and helped them ***“to find their place”*** in managing the school.
- made them aware of key areas to focus on for school improvement;
- established transparent channels of communication between the community and the school; and
- took place at a useful time: ***“The training came just in time when we were about to write the School Improvement Plan”***.



Community members - How satisfied are you with the School Management Simulation Training...?

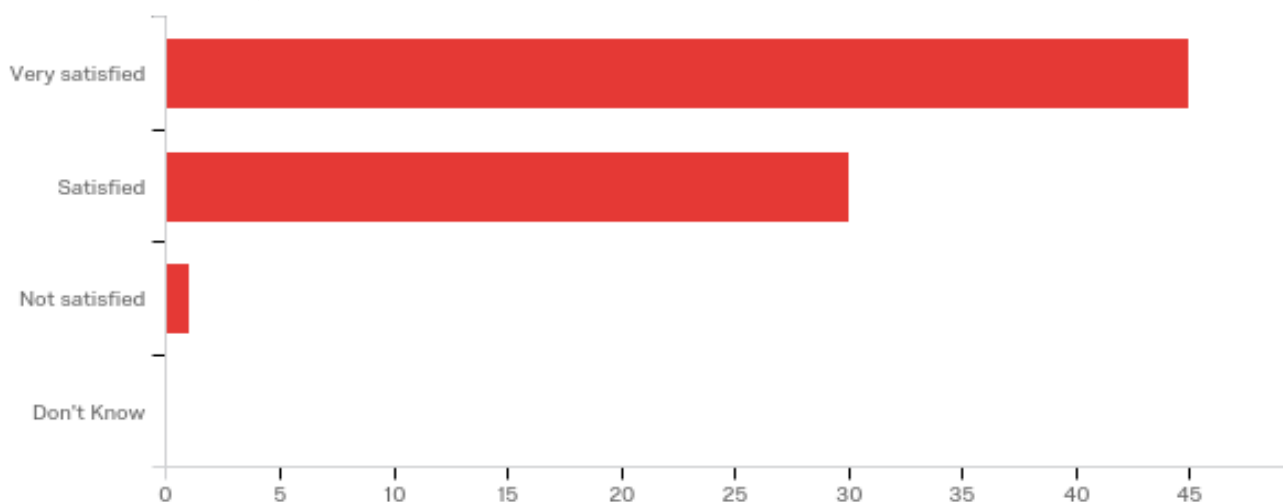


99% of teachers were satisfied or very satisfied with the SMST. Benefits which headteachers and teachers noted were:

- the broad participation of a range of stakeholders and the positive relationships which were created;
- an opportunity for their own professional development and that of committee members: ***“we were encouraged to see that we have critical roles in the management and improvement of our school”***; ***“I have benefited and changed my managerial skills after the training”***;
- acquiring skills and knowledge which would enable them to address the real challenges in their schools: ***“What we were taught is exactly what happens in schools in the communities”***; ***“It demonstrated how to overcome problems that affect management”***.

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Headteachers - How satisfied are you with the School Management Simulation Training...?





Impact on school improvement

EQ 2: Has the SMST supported schools to improve?

BUILDING CAPACITY IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

All headteachers and teachers felt that the SMST was either important (13%) or very important (87%) in enabling them to support school improvement. The reasons for this included:

- better understanding of how to allocate resources;
- the importance of cooperation and shared responsibilities between community, school and district stakeholders;
- the importance of planning and budgeting, and the skills to do these effectively;
- the confidence to contribute to school management decision-making; and
- receiving practical advice on how to achieve and exceed minimum standards in the National Education Standards.

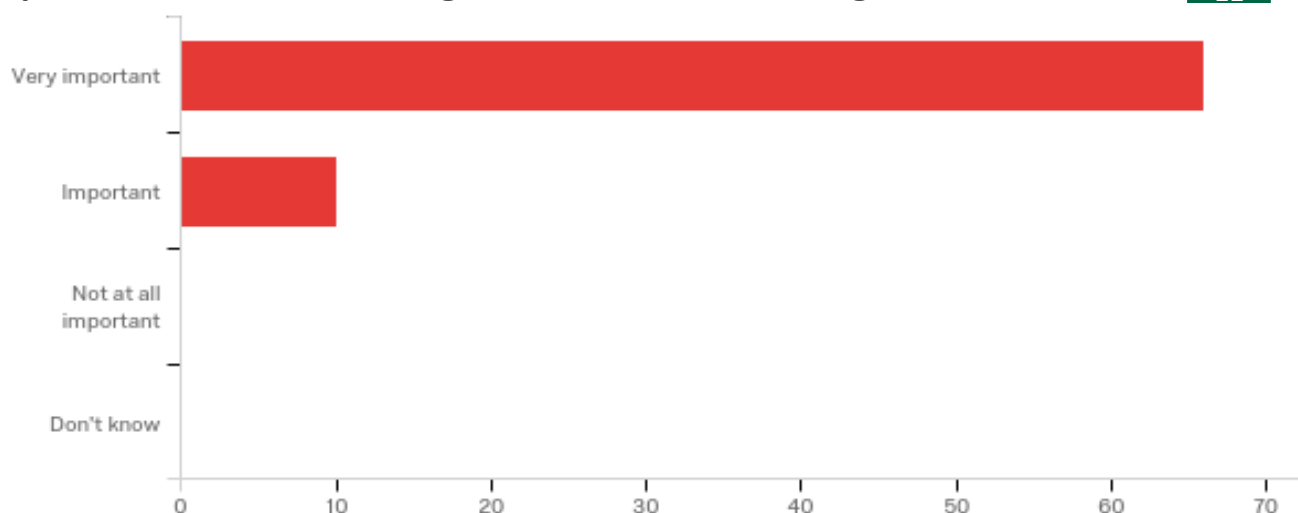
“The training should continue because it has been helpful”

“The training should continue because it guided us professionally”

“The training has a good role on education and you should keep it up. Thank you.”

Teachers - Thinking about how you support school improvement, how important is the School Management Simulation Training...?

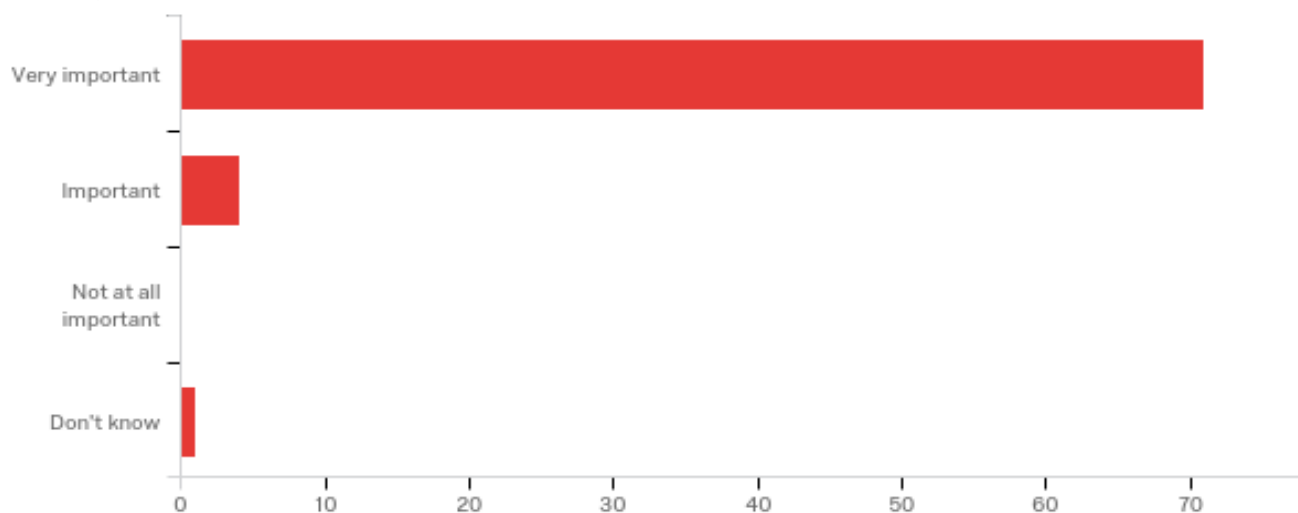
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Almost all community members felt that the SMST was either important (5%) or very important (93%) in enabling them to support school improvement. The reasons for this included gaining knowledge about the impact of financial and resource management on learning outcomes; understanding different stakeholders' roles and responsibilities, and the importance of collaboration; acquiring the confidence to fulfil their responsibilities and take a more active role in decision-making and monitoring school performance, ***“A lot of management skills were acquired in a very short period”*** – headteacher.



Community members - Thinking about how you support school improvement, how important is the School Management Simulation Training...?



Just three months after the SMST, both teacher and community representatives identified positive results directly arising from the training, particularly around community engagement, school management and School Improvement Planning. Improved attendance of learners as a result of these improvements was also noted.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- ***“We have already started seeing changes on how the committees are helping in school management activities”*** Teacher
- ***“We have a teacher who is being paid by the community [Auxiliary Teacher] - this is as a result of the School Management Simulation training”*** Headteacher
- ***“The community is now fully participating in development activities at school and we have managed to construct girls’ toilets”*** Headteacher
- ***“There was no good relationship between school stakeholders but now stakeholders are working hand in hand in the development of our school”*** Headteacher
- ***“The relationship between teachers and the community was strengthened and there’s ownership of the school by the community”*** Community member

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

- ***“We were able to identify our schools’ areas for improvement”*** Community member
- ***“We are benefiting a lot with these activities and there is improvised school management and accountability in terms of SIP [School Improvement Plan] and school ownership has been a shared responsibility to teachers, parents, SMC [School Management Committee], learners, and village heads.”*** Community member
- ***“It helped us to choose important things when we are planning our SIP [School Improvement Plan]”*** Headteacher
- ***“It has helped to reduce unnecessary movements of teachers during school time”*** Headteacher



ATTENDANCE

- ***“School attendance has improved. There is low absenteeism as chiefs take part in making sure children go to school”*** Teacher
- ***“Some of the fruits are now showing up e.g. parents are taking part in making sure that children are coming to school on time”*** Community member

Implementing learning from SMST

EQ3: Are stakeholders able to implement what they have learned from SMST?

EQ4: What are the barriers to implementing learning?

The majority of community members (82%) and (head)teachers (55%) reported that they had encountered no challenges in implementing what they had learned during SMST. This suggests that the skills learned through the training are likely to lead to sustained impact on school improvement.

The main challenges which were anticipated by stakeholders concerned the lack of funds to implement improvements and limited community engagement.

LACK OF FUNDING FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Community members identified the greatest obstacle to implementing learning from SMST was access to financial resources. This was also raised by (head)teachers as a challenge, but less frequently. Link recognises that some activities such as purchasing teaching and learning resources, or employing auxiliary teachers, require funds which may not be readily available to all schools. However, the SMST is intended to support schools to use the resources they have more effectively, and to understand that building relationships with the local community can improve the availability of resources, whether through financial contributions or via voluntary support.

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LIMITED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

(Head)teachers most commonly identified the lack of participation by community members in school improvement activities and meetings as the major challenge to implementing learning from the SMST:

- ***“Community participation is still a challenge. There's need for massive community sensitisation through village heads”***
- ***“Some community members are still not taking part in the development of school improvement plan as they don't come for meetings when called”***
- ***“Resistance for change from different groups e.g. teachers and chiefs”***

Both community members and headteachers suggested that involving more members of the community in the SMST would help to address this. This was seen as a way of enabling everyone to work together towards common goals of school improvement.

- ***“Involve more people like other committee members so together we can impart these skills to parents and community”*** Community member
- ***“The training was conducted once with few stakeholders”*** Headteacher
- ***“Chiefs and parents need to understand these trainings and be able to help in school activities”*** Teacher



- ***“Chiefs should be trained on school management as we did so that we can have common understanding on school management”*** Teacher

Including more people in the training is likely to be beneficial in building capacity in school improvement and shared commitments to improving the school. However, it may be difficult to achieve as delivery of the training is time-intensive.

Management of the SMST

EQ5: Is project management appropriate and effective to date?

EQ6: Can improvements be made in the management of the project?

PROJECT DELIVERY

The challenges identified under 3.3 may be due in part to the short timeframe in which the SMST was delivered. During this delivery cycle, only one round of the game was played with each group of stakeholders. SMST designer Business Today asserts that in their extensive experience, if two rounds are played, a much higher level of learning is possible, and the training is designed to include two rounds.

Several community members and (head)teachers commented that there was insufficient time to fully grasp the learning, and requested that the training be repeated one or more times.

- ***“The time was not enough to cover and understand the training well”*** Community member
- ***“Training time was not enough ...The game needs to be played again”*** Community member
- ***“The training was more challenging that there was need for enough time to be well equipped with the skills”*** Teacher
- ***“The training should be conducted again for us to understand it fully”*** Community member
- ***“Simulation Management Training was only done once and there is need to replay the game training with more stakeholders”*** Primary Education Advisor

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It is possible that playing two rounds of the SMST would enable the headteachers and senior school staff to develop more effective skills in involving the community in school improvement activities leading to longer-term gains.

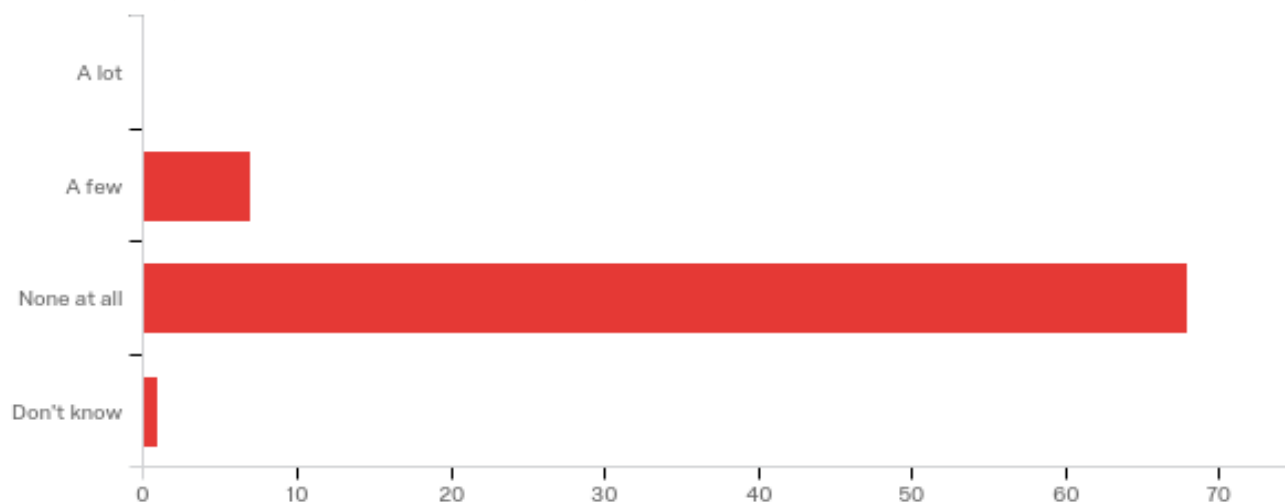
Delivering two rounds of the game requires further time commitment from both the stakeholders and Link. In addition, there would be financial considerations for providing refreshments, transport, and compensating people for their time. A number of community and (head)teacher participants complained that these provisions were insufficient during the training.

UNINTENDED NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

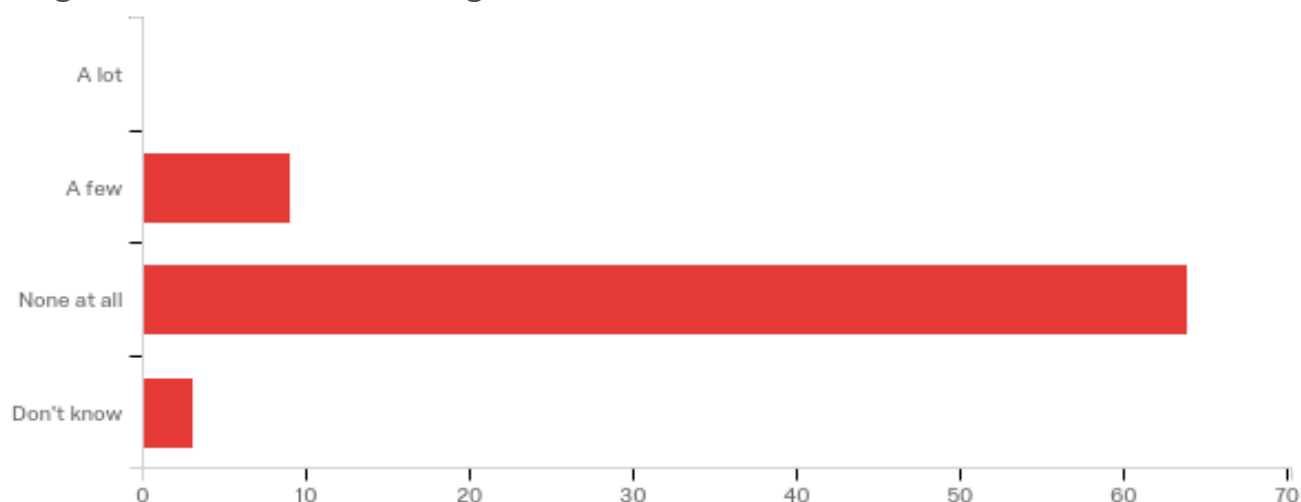
The majority of stakeholders did not identify any negative consequences of the SMST. However, 9% of community members and 11% of (head)teachers felt that there had been a few negative outcomes.



Community members - Have there been any negative outcomes from the School Management Simulation Training...?



Headteachers - Have there been any negative outcomes from the School Management Simulation Training...?



Most of the examples given related to the delivery of the training itself, including the need to increase the time for training, the number of stakeholders trained or the compensation provided to participants. One community member commented that there was **“fighting or arguing with the headteacher because of allowances”**, indicating that the provision of compensation during the training may have worsened relations between the school and the community.

One headteacher also suggested that the training may have contributed negatively to school-community relations: **“The way sometimes the stakeholders approaches teachers makes them [teachers] not to be open - need to improve relationship between teachers and school stakeholders”** - headteacher. Trainers should be aware of this risk and ensure that it is managed appropriately during the delivery of the SMST.

Other examples related to general challenges with school improvement, rather than direct negative results of the training. A community member commented that **“some teachers absent themselves from duties without proper reasons”**, while a (head)teacher reflected that **“members of the community need to be sensitised a lot”**.



Case Study Summary

Background

The school is located 10km from Mchinji boma along the Mkanda road, is rather unique as it has a slightly different background from the average primary school in Mchinji. The school was initially founded as a home for homeless or orphaned children in 2002 at the height of the HIV & AIDS pandemic which caused widespread orphanhood in Malawi. Primary and secondary education services were then added on to complete the package of child care. A number of individual and corporate donors have at one point or another contributed to the establishment. They include World Vision, the European Union, the Rotarians, Save the Children and the Salvation Army.

In 2014 government formally adopted the institution and began to deploy qualified teachers. This was done to make sure the children in the home are getting a decent quality education and also to support the institution to open its doors to children from the surrounding community. The process of regularisation also saw the constitution of a School Management Committee (SMC) and a Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) in 2015. Unlike other regular schools, the SMC operates alongside another management body, i.e. the trusteeship of the founding church leaders chaired by the resident cleric.

School Review, SMST and advisory support

The school participated in School Review (otherwise known as School Performance Review or SPR) in June 2016, and was the only school in the district to meet the minimum standards in all six National Education Standards (NES) which were used. It was also the only one which satisfied the minimum standards for NES 12 'Accurate and Constructive Use of Assessment' in the zone and was one of only four who did so in the whole district.

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Prior to School Review the school was visited only once by the Primary Education Adviser. This was in 2014, soon after the school was granted government support.

The school had embarked on a number of initiatives to improve performance starting in 2014. In the previous two years the school formulated school rules and regulations, but also founded two critical learner clubs to engender better learner behaviour and enhance participation in school life. The clubs were a Mental Health Club and a Guidance and Counselling Club. The practices certainly contributed to the school's performance in NES 5 'Students' Behaviour and Involvement in School Life'. Only nine schools achieved the minimum standard for this NES.

The school took part in SMST with seven representatives attending a cluster training session with two other schools in August 2017.

Change and Attribution

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

School Management Committee members indicate that discussion with the PEAs during the School Review opened up their eyes to issues that they had never thought they were responsible for. Six months after School Review, the SMC was implementing a programme for ongoing school supervision, having learnt through the School Review that this too was their responsibility. In the first term alone the school had been supervised three times by SMC members. The visits include checking on the library to ensure that resources are being cared for. They also monitor classes and chat with the staff to hear how they can further help. The fact that the trustees of the institution



were initially sceptical and resistant about letting the community in on managing the school makes this change quite poignant.

According to parent leaders the School Management Simulation Training provided through INSPIRE has been a key game changer in helping them understand their roles. They indicate that they started to appreciate that they and not the clerical establishment have greater responsibility for ensuring that the quality of education meets or exceeds minimum requirements in the National Education Standards. The simulation training also addressed the issue of adequate consultation when undertaking decisions. This is an area in which parents had already noted they had a weakness because their headteacher tended **“to make too many unilateral decisions.”**

The committee members indicated that although they received orientation on their roles soon after being constituted in 2015, and some members participated in training sessions run by the government and NGOs, the simulation training under INSPIRE was the only training that directly addressed **“what is happening on a daily basis in our work”** and helped them **“to find their place”** in the managing of the school.

Conclusions, lessons and recommendations

Headteachers and community members viewed the SMST as highly relevant to their ambitions to improve their schools and the skills they need to achieve these ambitions. The training had a significant positive impact on the capacity of headteachers, teachers and community members to bring about school improvement, and beneficiaries identified a number of specific improvements in the management and performance of their schools as a direct result of the training. It is likely that both the content of the training and its unique delivery method contributed to these results.

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Interviews with stakeholders also indicated that the potential of the SMST to influence school improvement had not been fully realised, largely as a result of the limited time for delivering the training, and revealed a small number of unintended negative consequences. The following are recommendations to address these points:

1. Extend the time for the training so that two rounds of the game are played and that training takes place at school level, rather than cluster level. Ensure time and financial resources are available to do this.
2. Ensure all relevant stakeholder groups are represented so there is broad understanding of the different roles each group needs to play to mobilise the whole community to support the school.
3. Consider repeating training and holding more training sessions so more people can be trained in each school.
4. Consider adapting the game to provide stronger skills in community mobilisation / stakeholder involvement in school improvement, or supplement the SMST with targeted training for headteachers on building positive community relations.
5. Ensure that trainers are prepared to empower stakeholders and build capacity in a positive way, rather than in ways which might damage relationships between school and community stakeholders.



Acronym List

DEM: District Education Manager
DEO: District Education Office
DIAS: Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services
INSPIRE: Integrated School Performance Improvement, Review and Engagement
MoEST: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MTE: Mid-Term Evaluation
NES: National Education Standards
PEA: Primary Education Advisor
PTA: Parents-Teachers Association
SIP: School Improvement Plan
SMC: School Management Committee
SMST: School Management Simulation Training



Appendices

Appendix 1: MTE Method and Associated Research Group

Method	Target Research Group/s
1. Face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior MoEST/DIAS representatives at national and regional level; • PEAS/District Education Manager trained in School Review Toolkit (Various levels) (total 3 PEAs + DEM in Mchinji).
2. Interviewer-led Surveys with small groups and individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simulation Tool Training Participants (c20 groups of 4), consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Headteachers; ○ Teachers; ○ School Management Committee members; ○ Parent Teacher Association members; • Other Participating School Stakeholders (c20-40 Dedza & c90 Mchinji schools at MTE point), consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teachers; ○ School Management Committee members; and ○ Parent Teacher Association members.
3. Case Studies	Selected participating schools – 3 in total
4. Control Group	Selected non-participating schools – 3 in Mchinji



Appendix 2: Interview Topic Guide

Key Informant Topic Guide

Introduction: About the Project, Purpose of the Interview, Assurance of Anonymity

Adapt Questions as Required

Name/s:	
Main contact Email:	
Telephone:	
Organisation:	
Position:	
Date and Time:	
Location:	
Name of interviewer:	

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1. Key Informant Role and Involvement

- 1.1 Can you tell me briefly about your role and responsibilities?
- 1.2 What do you see as the main aims of the Inspire project?
- 1.3 Please outline the main ways you have been involved in the Inspire project?

2. Project Roll-out

- 2.1 What have been the major challenges faced in delivery the project? How were these challenges overcome?
- 2.2 What do you think the main challenges will be in rolling out the programme across the country and what will the likely timescales be?
- 2.3 Is there anything to suggest the experience in the two pilot districts will be different from other districts across the country (nature of challenges)?
- 2.4 (IF RELEVANT) How will you ensure that the project is rolled out nationally and that the standards of the project are maintained, developed, and results monitored?

3. Partners



3.1 Who have been the most important partners in ensuring progress in delivering the project (national, district, school and community level)?

3.2 To what extent have you been consulted/involved in the development and delivery of the project? Examples?

3.3 Thinking about where you have had most success with partners, what are the reasons for this? (e.g. established relationship, trust).

3.4 Where you face challenges with partners, what are the problems? Are there other partners who could contribute more?

3.5 Does the project tie-in with other initiatives? In what way? Benefits of this?

4. Benefits

4.1 What do you think have been the main benefits so far of the project for each of the main stakeholder groups i.e. Schools; Learners; Communities? Examples?

4.2 What benefits do you expect to see in the future? Are there foreseeable issues that might affect achievement of these longer term or wider benefits?

5. Management Challenges

5.1 What aspects of project delivery have proved particularly effective- what has worked well?

5.2 What were the main management and delivery challenges? What was done to overcome them? (e.g. School capacity, stakeholder participation?)

5.3 Can improvements be made in the management of the project? What lessons can be learned? What could you, or other partners, do differently?

5.4 (IF RELEVANT) What advice or support have you had to meet the requirements of the project? Can you provide examples?

5.5 Have there been any significant barriers to effective development and uptake of / participation in School Review, School Report Cards, Community Meetings, and the School Management Simulation Training Tool (national, DIAS, District, School, Community level)?

6. The 'Big Picture', Unintended Effects and Sustainability

6.1 What would be different if the current project approach hadn't existed (Time, Quality, Scale)? How would your job differ?

6.2 Have there been any unintended / unanticipated /negative outcomes that you have observed?

6.3 What do you think are the 3 main benefits that the current project has achieved? Do you think these benefits will persist?

6.4 Do you have any final comments you would like to make?

Thank you and close



Appendix 3: Questionnaire

INSPIRE MTE Questionnaire - Participating Schools

Q1 (INSTRUCTION ONLY) I would be very grateful for your participation in a short survey to provide feedback on your recent experience of working to review and improve your school. The survey focuses on schools that have participated in the INSPIRE project for school improvement and forms part of a wider evaluation aimed at providing Link Malawi and Link International with information to further develop their support for schools like yours. Your views are important to help us understand how effective Link has been. Participation in the survey is voluntary and findings from the survey will not be attributed to individuals. For further information on any aspect of this research, you can contact the Link Office using the following details (PROVIDE CONTACT DETAILS). In the interview we refer to the 'School Review Cycle'. By this we mean the following activities: School Reviews; the development of School Feedback Reports and School Report Cards; School Management Simulation Training; Community Meetings to Discuss the School Report Cards; and School Improvement Planning. Together we refer to all of these activities as the 'School Review Cycle'. We also ask some questions at the end of the survey specifically about the School Management Simulation Training. Do you have any questions / are you happy to begin...? CONFIRM UNDERSTANDING AND ASK FOR ANY FURTHER CLARIFICATION REQUIRED AS NECESSARY

Q2 What is your position at this school...? TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- Headteacher (1)
- Teacher (2)
- Member of School Management Committee (3)
- Member of Parent Teacher Association (4)
- Other (please specify) (5) _____

Q3 Have you, or any other members of your school community, participated in any of the following 'School Review Cycle' activities...? TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- School Review (1)
- Developing School Report Cards (6)
- School Management Simulation Training (2)
- Community Meeting to Discuss to School Report Card (3)
- Viewing / Reading a School Report Card (not at a community meeting) (4)
- School Improvement Planning Meeting (5)



Q4 Thinking about before your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I participated regularly in school management activities". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (34)
- Somewhat agree (35)
- Neither agree nor disagree (36)
- Somewhat disagree (37)
- Strongly disagree (38)

Q5 Thinking about after your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I participate regularly in school management activities". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (10)
- Somewhat agree (11)
- Neither agree nor disagree (12)
- Somewhat disagree (13)
- Strongly disagree (14)

Q6 Thinking about before your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I could effectively influence school management activities". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (10)
- Somewhat agree (11)
- Neither agree nor disagree (12)
- Somewhat disagree (13)
- Strongly disagree (14)

Q7 Thinking about after your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I can effectively influence school management activities". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (10)
- Somewhat agree (11)
- Neither agree nor disagree (12)
- Somewhat disagree (13)
- Strongly disagree (14)

Q8 Thinking about before your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The quality of school management was good". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (10)
- Somewhat agree (11)
- Neither agree nor disagree (12)
- Somewhat disagree (13)
- Strongly disagree (14)



Q9 Thinking about after your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The quality of school management is good". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (10)
- Somewhat agree (11)
- Neither agree nor disagree (12)
- Somewhat disagree (13)
- Strongly disagree (14)

Q10 Thinking about before your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The local community was effectively involved in school management". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (10)
- Somewhat agree (11)
- Neither agree nor disagree (12)
- Somewhat disagree (13)
- Strongly disagree (14)

Q11 Thinking about after your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The local community is effectively involved in school management". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (10)
- Somewhat agree (11)
- Neither agree nor disagree (12)
- Somewhat disagree (13)
- Strongly disagree (14)

Q12 Thinking about before your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I had a good knowledge of school management activities". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (10)
- Somewhat agree (11)
- Neither agree nor disagree (12)
- Somewhat disagree (13)
- Strongly disagree (14)

Q13 Thinking about after your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I have a good knowledge of school management activities". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (10)
- Somewhat agree (11)
- Neither agree nor disagree (12)
- Somewhat disagree (13)
- Strongly disagree (14)



Q14 Thinking about before your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "This school had an effective improvement plan". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (10)
- Somewhat agree (11)
- Neither agree nor disagree (12)
- Somewhat disagree (13)
- Strongly disagree (14)

Q15 Thinking about after your school participated in the 'School Review Cycle', to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "This school has an effective improvement plan". Would you say that you... READ OUT OPTIONS

- Strongly agree (10)
- Somewhat agree (11)
- Neither agree nor disagree (12)
- Somewhat disagree (13)
- Strongly disagree (14)

Q16 How much have the following groups benefited from the School Review Cycle in the last year...? READ OUT ANSWER OPTIONS FOR EACH GROUP

	A lot (4)	A little (5)	None at all (6)	Don't know (7)
School Management Committees (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learners (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Community Groups or Individuals (please specify) (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q17 What are the top 3 benefits for Teachers in the last year, as a result of the School Review Cycle...? WRITE ANSWERS

- Benefit 1 (1)
- Benefit 2 (2)
- Benefit 3 (3)



Q18 What are the top 3 benefits for Learners in the last year, as a result of the School Review Cycle...? WRITE ANSWERS

- Benefit 1 (1)
- Benefit 2 (2)
- Benefit 3 (3)

Q19 What are the top 3 benefits for Parents in the last year, as a result of the School Review Cycle...? WRITE ANSWERS

- Benefit 1 (1)
- Benefit 2 (2)
- Benefit 3 (3)

Q20 How much will the following groups benefit as a result of the School Review Cycle, in the next 1-3 years...? READ OUT ANSWER OPTIONS FOR EACH GROUP

	A lot (4)	A little (5)	None at all (6)	Don't know (7)
Headteachers (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School Management Committees (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Teachers (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learners (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Community Groups or Individuals (please specify) (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q21 What are the top 3 benefits you expect to see in the next 1-3 years within the school...? WRITE ANSWERS

- Benefit 1 (1)
- Benefit 2 (2)
- Benefit 3 (3)



Q22 Have there been any negative outcomes from the School Review Cycle...? READ ANSWER OPTIONS

- A lot (4)
- A little (5)
- None at all (6)
- Don't know (7)

Display This Question:

If Have there been any negative outcomes from the School Review Cycle...? READ ANSWER OPTIONS<o:p></o:p> A lot Is Selected

Or Have there been any negative outcomes from the School Review Cycle...? READ ANSWER OPTIONS<o:p></o:p> A little Is Selected

Q23 What are the negative outcomes that you have observed, from the School Review Cycle...? WRITE ANSWER

Q24 Do you have any suggestions for improvements in the the School Review Cycle...? WRITE ANSWER

Q25 (INSTRUCTION ONLY) READ: "The next few questions are about the School Management Simulation Training..."

Q26 Thinking about how you support school improvement, how important is the School Management Simulation Training...? READ ANSWER OPTIONS

- Very important (20)
- Important (21)
- Not at all important (22)
- Don't know (23)

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Q27 What were the main ways that School Management Simulation Training has assisted how you support school improvement in the last year...? PROBE FOR ANSWERS AS REQUIRED

Q28 How satisfied are you with the School Management Simulation Training...? READ ANSWER OPTIONS

- Very satisfied (4)
- Satisfied (5)
- Not satisfied (6)
- Don't Know (7)

Q29 What are the main reasons for selecting your answer to the previous question...? PROBE FOR ANSWERS AS REQUIRED



Q30 Have you experienced any challenges in using what you learned during the School Management Simulation Training in the last year...?READ ANSWER OPTIONS

- A lot (4)
- A few (5)
- None at all (6)
- Don't know (7)

Display This Question:

If Have you experienced any challenges in using what you learned during the School Management Simula... A lot Is Selected

Or Have you experienced any challenges in using what you learned during the School Management Simula... A few Is Selected

Q31 What kind of challenges did you experience...?PROBE FOR ANSWERS AS REQUIRED

Q32 Have there been any negative outcomes from the School Management Simulation Training...?READ ANSWER OPTIONS

- A lot (11)
- A few (12)
- None at all (13)
- Don't know (14)

Display This Question:

If Have there been any negative outcomes from the School Management Simulation Training...? READ ANS... A lot Is Selected

Or Have there been any negative outcomes from the School Management Simulation Training...? READ ANS... A few Is Selected

Q33 What are the negative outcomes that you have observed School Management Simulation Training...?PROBE FOR ANSWERS AS REQUIRED

Q34 Do you have any suggestions for improvements in the School Management Simulation Training...?PROBE FOR ANSWERS AS REQUIRED

Q35 Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the role of School Management Simulation Training and the School Review Cycle in school improvement...? PROBE FOR ANSWERS AS REQUIRED

Q36 (INSTRUCTION ONLY) END OF SURVEY THANK PARTICIPANT THE NEXT QUESTIONS ARE TO BE COMPLETED BY THE FIELD WORKER BEFORE SUBMITTING THE SURVEY

Q37 When did the School Review take place? (dd/mm/yyyy)

Q38 When did the School School Management Simulation Training take place? (dd/mm/yyyy)



Q39 When did the Community Meeting to Discuss the School Report Card take place?
(dd/mm/yyyy)

Q40 When did the School Improvement Planning Meeting take place? (dd/mm/yyyy)

Q41 (INSTRUCTION ONLY) END OF SURVEY WELL DONE! PLEASE ENTER ANY
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM NOTES BEFORE SUBMITTING
COMPLETED RESPONSES