

Snapshot of School Management Effectiveness Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the Snapshot of School Management Effectiveness?

- The Snapshot for School Management Effectiveness, or SSME, is an instrument that yields a quick but rigorous and multifaceted picture of school management practice in a country or region. The resulting data are designed to let school, district, provincial, or national administrators or donors learn what is currently going on in their schools and classrooms and to assess how to make their schools more effective.

What data does SSME collect?

- Management data collected by the SSME include pedagogical approaches used; time on task; interactions among students, teachers, administrators, district officials, and parents; record keeping; discipline; availability and condition of school infrastructure; availability of pedagogical materials; and safety.
- Additionally, the SSME includes portions of two other instruments: the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA). These brief but thorough oral assessments are administered individually to randomly selected students, and add to the information about school management effectiveness by accurately evaluating students' knowledge of foundational reading and math skills. Thus, SSME gives a holistic snapshot of schools—from the administration and infrastructure to the teachers and students.

How is the SSME administered?

- Data are collected via direct classroom and school observation; student assessments; and interviews with teachers, principals, and students. By collecting information on only the most crucial school effectiveness factors and by applying innovative and simple data-collection methodologies, the SSME is able to produce a rich data set at low cost. In fact, the SSME was designed to be administered to a school in just one day using a set of trained assessors.

What are the SSME instruments?

1. Head Teacher/Principal Questionnaire – administered to the Head Teacher/Principal in each school visited;
2. Teacher Questionnaire – administered to the two teachers whose students are selected for assessment;
3. Student Questionnaire – administered to each student randomly selected for assessment;
4. Mini-EGRA and Mini-EGMA – administered to a random sampling of students in two grades;
5. School Observation – administered at each school visited;
6. Classroom Inventory – administered in each of the two sampled classes;
7. Classroom Observation (reading) – administered during the reading lesson in the lower grade classroom; and
8. Classroom Observation (mathematics) – administered during the mathematics lesson in the lower grade classroom.

In what countries has the SSME been administered?

- The SSME was successfully piloted in Jamaica and Peru in 2007. The pilots demonstrated that the tool can provide statistically reliable data, successfully discriminate (with statistical precision) between effective behaviors that are already common and those that still need to be developed (and detect the presence of ineffective behaviors), and distinguish between more versus less effective groups of schools. Since 2007, components of SSME have been applied in more than 10 countries throughout Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East in conjunction with Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) and/or Early Grade Mathematics Assessments (EGMA). Please consult <http://eddataglobal.org> for the latest information about country applications.

Can the SSME results be used to compare results across languages and countries?

- Preparation of the SSME instrument for use in a particular country involves some adaptation, including translation into the language of instruction. A number of questions are also adapted to country-specific policies, such as inquiries about the scope of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs). Therefore, the current use of the SSME for comparison purposes is to show discrepancies in outcomes within countries, in rural versus urban areas, for example. However, it is possible, with the simpler and more common behaviors (such as the presence of textbooks in the classroom, or richness of teacher marking) to compare across countries. We do not recommend comparing EGRA and/or EGMA findings across countries as the development of these instruments is very specific to each country's curriculum, standards, and language of instruction.

Once the SSME identifies areas for improvement, what can be done to improve learning outcomes?

- The main purpose of the SSME is to begin or continue policy dialogue with officials in the country where the SSME is administered. The SSME can help in two ways: First, it can show officials whether effective education policies are in place, such as whether teachers are using the textbooks assigned. Second, it can show officials whether new policies need to be implemented to make the school management more effective, such as policies to encourage principals to observe teacher lessons more frequently.

In short: SSME is a field-tested instrument that can be used to determine whether schools in a country, region, or pilot project area are following “best practice” in terms of overall management and pedagogical management, as well as governance. The data can be used to feed deliberations as to improvement strategies or can be used to track improvements due to project and policy interventions. The pilot experiences confirm that relatively small samples that are based on intense visits and gathering can yield very telling data. Visits of one day each to between 40 and 70 schools, for example, are sufficient to characterize schools with sufficient specificity as to lead to actionable knowledge. Thus, it is possible to lower the cost and time-to-completion of data-gathering processes while maintaining sufficient (and specifiable) rigor.

For more information about SSME applications, please contact the Director of the EdData Project, Amy Mulcahy-Dunn, at amulcahydunn@rti.org or (919) 541-8892.