



Sitakhela Likusasa Impact Evaluation

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Incentives to improve HIV Prevention Outcomes for Young Females in Eswatini

Standard Operating Procedure - # 5

Learner admission and attendance data quality assurance (Education Incentives)

Document 5 in a series of 20 Standard Operating Procedures

Version date.	10 May 2019
Status	Final



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Standard Operating Procedure - # 5

Learner admission and attendance data quality assurance (Education Incentives)

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WORLD BANK GROUP



Main study implementation partner



SGBV counselling and follow up



For baseline survey



For baseline survey



[Type text]

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1 Introduction to this Standard Operation Procedure (SOP)

The introduction and critical background information relating to the Sitakela Likusasa Study is provided in SOP#0 (Introduction to the Sitakela Likusasa Study). This SOP aims to provide information with regards to:

This SOP applies to the “in-school” categories of study participants, as school admission (enrolment) and attendance need to be monitored throughout the study in all arms. This SOP describes how the learner admission and attendance data can be assessed, on a limited scale, and verified and will point to areas to consider in order to improve the quality of the learner admission and attendance data and data collection systems. This SOP should be read in conjunction with:

- SOP # 3: Education Incentives – Incentives for School Enrolment and Attendance
- SOP # 6: Standard operating procedures for collecting school enrolment and school attendance information
- Annex B to SOP # 5: The importance of ensuring data quality

2 Understanding the importance of quality learner data

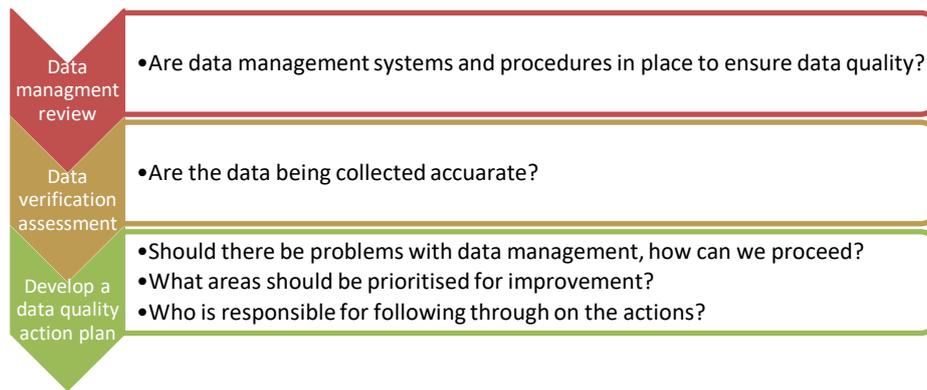
Data quality is a cornerstone of accountability in programs. Ensuring that the correct Study participants receive the incentives they qualify for, is dependent, to some extent, on reliable data on learner admission into school and learner attendance data.

This SOP provides guidelines to conduct spot checks, using a data quality assessment approach, on (learner admission and attendance) data quality and provides feedback on possible areas for strengthening the systems to improve the quality of this data. The review of individual learner and class data at school level must be checked, for errors to be minimised. Regular reviews of the data are needed to validate the data and build trust in the resulting information to be generated for the system. It is recommended that a **10% random sample of schools** be visited **each school term**, resulting in 30% of schools per annum, and school records be checked and confirmed against the study information captured. Errors, challenges and blockages should be identified and suggestions made to avoid these in future and areas identified to be addressed to strengthen the EMIS and in turn improve the data quality.

3 Routine data quality assessment (RDQA)?

RQDA allows one to determine data quality at any given time and provides the opportunity to develop and implement strategies to address and prioritise gaps. The process consists of asking pointed questions on data quality and data management processes.

Figure 1: The three main components of a RQDA



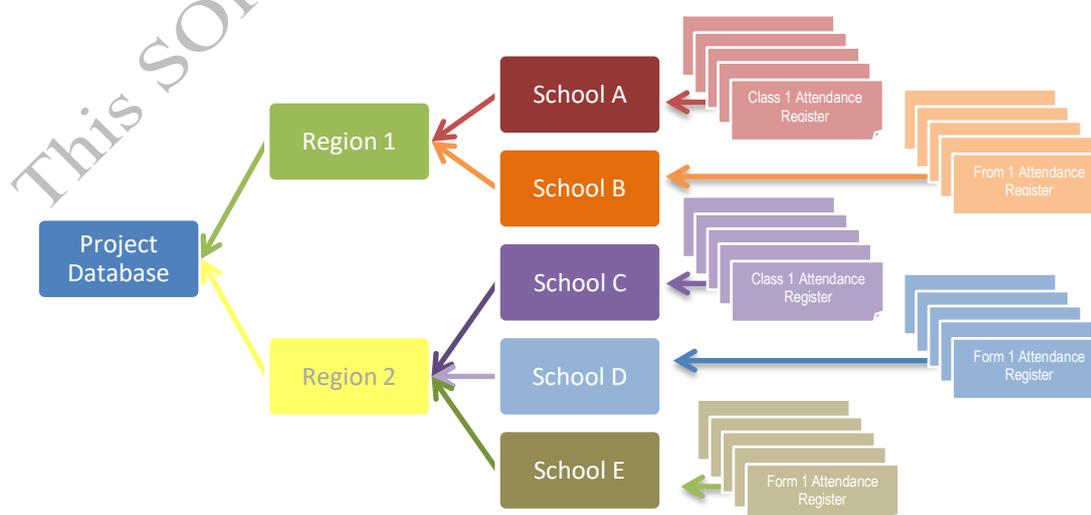
For the purpose of this SOP, the general RDQA will be adapted to focus on learner admission and learner attendance data, as this is the learner information that is required for the purposes of the Study.

The purpose of the revised RDQA is to assess, on a limited scale, if schools and the Project data management team, are collecting, capturing and reporting data accurately and on time, and to double-check the reported results. To do this, a sample of schools will be drawn and these will be visited. During the site-visit to the sampled schools the data on learner admission and learner attendance will be checked, and if required a head count of learners carried out. Back at the project office, the data provided will then be traced to see if it has been correctly linked, recorded, captured and manipulated.

Three types of data verification are proposed and they will be integrated into the audit processes; **trace and verify**, where the critical numbers will be checked against the original copy of the source document (school registration lists and copies of attendance registers submitted) and these are then compared with the reported numbers; **Cross-checks**, where the reported numbers are checked against other data sources (such as project, school and EMIS records); and **Spot-checks**, where visits will be carried out to targeted schools and recorded data (project records) checked with the actual learner numbers (head counts) and where appropriate other school records (Admission and attendance register).

Since for the Study, no aggregated data is used, there is no need to provide for data quality checks at the aggregation levels. However, aspects of the data management cycle will be assessed and possible weaknesses identified.

Figure 2: Tracking the flow of the learner attendance data, from data source to database



Details of individual learner attendance records are required to flow up to the Project Database,

The RQDA will be guided by certain implementation phases, with specific steps within each phase.

Implementation phases for the learner admission and attendance data quality assessment

The implementation of the adjusted Routine Data Quality Assessment (RDQA) can be identified by the following phases:



Phase 1:

Preparation & Initiation



The audit team will be required to lead on all the steps within this phase. Step 1 & 2 will require the assistance of the database manager.

This phase occurs prior to the audit team going out to schools, and will be required to be completed every school term. It is suggested the audit is conducted within the 3rd month of the start of the new school term, as data from the previous term will be checked and the data management team need to have processed this data.

This SOP was not used in the impact evaluation

PHASE 1

Preparation and Initiation

1. Obtain electronic listing of schools

2. Confirm and document the scope of the RQDA

3. Draw a random sample to select 30% of the schools

4. Obtain National and Regional authorisation & inform Regional Guidance Officers

5. Identify and orientate team of field workers

6. Review documentation & prepare required summaries

7. Prepare detailed plan for site visits & deal with logistics

The steps within *Phase 1* are:

1. Obtain an *electronic* listing of all the schools the Study participants are drawn from. Ensure the listing contains the minimum of the following details:

- EMIS Number
- Official School Name
- Region
- School contact details
- Enrolment by grade and gender (year of data)

2. Confirm and document the scope of the RQDA identifying what it is that is to be checked:

- which reporting period to be included,
- what data and level of aggregation – attendance and admission, and
- size of the sample.

3. With the school listing provided in step 1, using the statistical technique of random sampling and computer applications such as MS Excel,

The purpose of the random selection sample is to produce quantitative estimates of data quality that can be viewed as indicative of the quality of data in all schools not simply the selected schools.

STATA, SPSS (or others), draw a sample of 30% of the schools, allowing for replacement. **Random Sampling** offers the most powerful method for drawing inferences about data quality for a country or program. The selected schools will be representative, i.e. the schools selected will be similar to the entire population of schools in terms of the attributes that affect data quality – size and location.

4. Obtain National and Regional authorisation for the impending site visits and data quality assessment to be undertaken. Ensure that the relevant Regional Guidance Officers are also informed, as they will play a critical role in the field work. The Regional Guidance Officers to also inform the selected schools of the planned visits, but should not share too much details, just provide an indication of when the team will be visiting and that the Head Teacher/Principal is to be present.

5. Constitute the field team, ensuring that each member understands the role she or he needs to play and that all have received the necessary training and orientation. Each team member must be fully conversant with the procedures and instruments to be used for the RDQA.

6. Review the documentation previously provided by the schools included in the sample, along with any related data analysis or information products produced. For each school to be visited ensure the Field Team members have the following:

- A summary of the learner attendance data that needs to be verified. This would include for each of the learners participating in the Study, an indication of the class and stream the Study participant is in and the

total number of days they were absent for during the term under review.

It is critical that the names of the learners involved in the Study are **NOT** to be provided the Head Teacher, Regional Guidance Officer or anyone else outside the Study Team

- Copies of the lists of the learners enrolled at the selected school. Calculate a total for each grade/class and stream (if provided) by gender.
7. Deal with all logistics required to prepare for the site visits and draw up a detailed plan for the site visits: including the dates and timing of the visits, assigning team members to the various schools. Each term 1/3 of the selected sample (10% of the school population) are to be visited, so that over the course of the year, the 30% identified as the sample will be covered. The 10% to be visited each term are to be randomly assigned to each of school trimesters.

Phase 2:

School visits
are
conducted



The field team leader will be required to drive all the steps within this phase. Members of the field work team will be critical in this phase. The school principal/head teacher for each of the selected schools will be involved. To be undertaken each term according to the plan devised in Phase 1 (Step 7).

PHASE 2

School visits
are conducted

1. Trace and
record
reported data

2. Conduct a
head-count of
learners

3. Calculate
data quality
statistics

4. Conclude
the school
visit

The steps within *Phase 2* are:

1. **Trace and record reported data** Once at the school, after dealing with protocol issues, request the school to provide the attendance registers for all grades and streams for the period under review, the admission register and copies of the current class lists (or lists of learners enrolled at the school by grade and stream). Ask to be allowed time (approximately 45 minutes) to work with these documents on your own (as a Field Work team). In this time:
 - Complete the relevant sections of the questionnaire (annex A), to determine whether the key elements of reporting and recording learner admission and attendance are being implemented at the selected schools. This would include availability and use of the required registers, completeness, whether changes to enrolment are recorded in the attendance register and admission register, how errors are dealt with, level of detail, etc. Aspects of data quality (table 2 within the Annex) will be considered.
 - Look at lists of learners enrolled in the school, against class lists, against names recorded in attendance registers and against the admission list provided at the back of the attendance register; compare this with the data previously provided for the school – ensuring that the same period of time are under review. Cross check the count of learners across the various data sources, and calculate the differences.
 - Record any differences found and try and substantiate or explain the discrepancies. For example,
 - If a difference is found in the **number of learners**

enrolled in a grade – new learner/s may have enrolled or learner/s may have left (dropped out) the school. For this check to see if the attendance register (for the current term) reflects any learners leaving or being admitted. The admission register can also be checked for this information.

- Should a difference be found in the data recorded for the learner attendance of Study participants – changes may have been made to the data or there may have been a transcription error. For this check the attendance register, to see if alterations have been made, redo the calculated totals and compare with the data captured in the data base.
- Another possible reason for a discrepancy could be simple data entry or arithmetic errors in calculations.

2. Conduct a head count of learners, by following this process :

- Request that access to the school for learners be controlled for the period of the count – no learners to enter or leave the premises.
- Learners are requested to stay in the same classroom for the time the count is conducted – preferably with teacher supervision (for secondary schools they will be required to move into their register class groups). In the classroom ask the boys and girls to sit separately, and to stay seated in the place assigned to them. No “breaks” to be taken. Learners may continue with work while the field team moves through the group.
- Two members of the Field Work team then move through each class and count and separately record the number of boys and girls counted for each class and stream. If their counts agree they move to the next classroom. If their counts do not agree they are to repeat the count until their numbers recorded by sex tally.
- For each class visited the Field Work team members need to also count and record the number of learners absent, teachers and learners can be asked who is absent or “missing” on that day.
- This process is repeated till all learners are counted. The numbers can then be compared with the information provided in the attendance register.
- Differences are to be calculated and recorded for each stream and grade.

3. Enter the required key data into a spreadsheet or calculate the required ratios and percentages:

a. Result verification ratio for learner enrolment (school) =

$$\frac{\text{verified count of learner enrolment of school}}{\text{reported count of enrolment of school}}$$

b. Result verification ratio for learner enrolment (grade) =

$$\frac{\text{verified count of learner enrolment of grade}}{\text{reported count of enrolment of grade}}$$

c. Result verification ratio for learner attendance (Study participants) =

$$\frac{\text{verified count of learner attendance of Study participants}}{\text{reported count of learner attendance of Study participants}}$$

d. Percent difference for cross checks in learner attendance (Study participants) =

$$\frac{\text{verified count of learner attendance of Study participants}}{\text{reported count of learner attendance of Study participants}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

4. Provide some brief feedback to the Head Teacher and thank all involved at the school for their assistance and willingness to cooperate with the activities that had to be undertaken and the sharing of the schools documents and records. Indicate to the Principal/Head Teacher that a brief report on issues of data quality and system compliance will be prepared and that this will be shared with the school. Ensure that the Field Team has all the required documentation before leaving the school, and that all aspects of the questionnaire are completed.

Phase 3:

Review output & findings



The Field Work team will be required to drive all the steps within this phase.



This phase occurs when the Field Work team return from the school visits, every school term. It is suggested that the review is conducted as soon as the team is back in from fieldwork, or when a batch of visits are completed, should the visits be spread over time.

PHASE 3
Review output and findings
1. Draft findings and recommendations
2. Close out meeting

The steps within *Phase 3* are:

1. Ensure that all aspects of the questionnaire are complete. Use the notes made and the analysis of findings to draft a report. Review the graphs generated by the questionnaire tool, these should also be included in the report.

The report should list the findings and then link these to recommendations to address the issues of concern. The findings should stress the positive aspects of the school reporting system and the data management, as well as the weaknesses identified by the Field Work team. Remember the main purpose of the RQDA is to improve data quality, so focus on this with the recommendations. All findings should therefore point to this and provide innovative controls and effective steps to ensure that data are collected consistently and reliably in order to comply with the components of quality data (table 2 within Annex B). The recommendations need to strengthen the design and implementation of school record keeping and data management of these critical records. All findings must be backed by documentary evidence.

In the recommendation notes, cite the evidence that points to a threat to data quality. One or more recommended action should be provided to address this or avoid it in future. Some of the recommended actions could be time referenced.

For example: **Supervision checks:** The lack of regular supervisory checks of the attendance register data could lead to potential errors in calculations and the aggregation of data. *Recommendation/s:* The school to appoint a senior teacher, per grade (or for smaller school per phase), to check the attendance registers across all streams for that particular grade on a weekly basis, before submitting them to Head Teacher.

2. Once all the school site visits are completed, for a particular cycle, the Field Work Team Leader should conduct a close out meeting with the data manager, those involved in M&E and other

stakeholders to share the results and present the preliminary findings and recommendations. Together the team could also discuss further steps to improve data quality. The agreements reached at the close out meeting, and further recommendations made or suggested changes to the preliminary findings and recommendations, must be documented.

Phase 4:

Completion



The Field Work team leader will be required to drive all the steps within this phase.

This phase occurs when the Field Work team have completed a cycle of school visits, and conducted the close-out meeting for Phase 3.

The steps within *Phase 4* are:



1. To draft the final report of the RDQA processes, including the findings and recommendations for addressing the gaps and weakness highlighted through the audit. It is at this stage that the recommended changes accepted at the close-out meeting be made to the report.

A suggested framework for the audit report is provided below.

2. Disseminate and share the report with relevant groups and communicate the findings. When the findings are shared it is recommended that together an action plan to address the identified gaps should be developed. The action plan should be clear and include what action needs to be take, time frames – start and end date, who will take the lead and what measures will be put in place to verify or measure that the action has been completed.

It is suggested that when the results of the RQDA are shared and disseminated, stakeholders are given the opportunity to provide comments. These can be integrated into the report.

3. As appropriate, initiate follow up procedures to ensure the agreed changes are effected. It is suggested that the identified recommended actions be categorised as either minor data quality issues or major data quality issues. Different timeframes are to be determined to address the two categories –perhaps 6 months for the minor issues and a year for the major issues.

If subsequent visits are made to the schools, during this period, it is suggested that follow up in made on actions the schools were required to complete. For major issues it is recommended that the person/team tasked with implementing the required recommendations or changes should report on a quarterly basis, so that progress or hindrances could be monitored.

Figure 3: Suggested framework for the final data quality audit report

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Introduction & Background
 - a. Project Background
 - b. Purpose of the RQDA
 - c. Scope of the RQDA
 - d. Selection of schools
 - e. Description of the data collection and reporting system
- III. Assessment of school records and data management system
 - a. Describe steps taken in RDQA
 - b. Summary statistics
 - c. Key findings, identified strengths and weaknesses
- IV. Verification of data on learner admission and learner attendance
 - a. Description of the data verification steps
 - b. Assessment of data quality
 - c. Key findings, identified strengths and weaknesses
- V. Table of recommendations and areas for suggested improvement
- VI. Responses to the RQDA

Source: Adapted from the Measure (2008) *Data quality audit tool – guidelines for implementation*

4 References

1. Education Foundation (2001) *School Records Management*
2. Education Foundation (2002) *EMIS Improvement Project – Learner Information Module*
3. MEASURE (2008) *Data Quality Audit Tool – Guidelines for implementation*
4. NESIS (1995) *School data collection training Manual*
5. PACT (2005) *Building Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Systems for HIV/AIDS Programs*
6. PACT (2014) *Field Guide for Data Quality Management -Monitoring, Evaluation, Results and Learning Series Publications (Module 2)*
7. SADC (2013) *SADC EMIS Norms and Standards Peer Review Assessment Report - Eswatini*
8. Eswatini Ministry of Education (u.d.) *Admissions Register*
9. Eswatini Ministry of Education (u.d.) *Attendance and Mark Register (E.A.5)*
10. Eswatini Ministry of Education (1988) *A guide to school regulations and procedures – including the Education Rules of 1977*
11. The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, PEPFAR, USAID. WHO, UNAIDS, MEASURE Evaluation (2008) *Routine Data Quality Assessment Tool (RDQA) – Guidelines for implementation for HIV, TB & Malaria Program*
12. UNESCO (2013) *Monitoring and evaluation of the education sector response to HIV and AIDS – guidelines for the construction and use of core indicators*

Annex A: Questionnaire to be used for the RQDA



Sitakhela Likusasa Impact Evaluation

Spot Check Questionnaire Learner Admission and Attendance Data Quality Assessment

School Name			
Region			EMIS No
Reporting period being verified	Start date		End Date

From EMIS Data: Year of Data _____

Learner Numbers

	Class/Std 1	Class/Std 2	Class/Std 3	Class/Std 4	Class/Std 5	Class 6	Class 7	Sub total	Total
Boys									
Girls									
Total									

From School Submission to the Project: Date of Data _____

Learner Numbers

	Class/Std 1	Class/Std 2	Class/Std 3	Class/Std 4	Class/Std 5	Class 6	Class 7	Sub total	Total
Boys									
Girls									
Total									

In the table above (School reported learner numbers), with an * indicate the class/Std which has study participants.

Indicate number of study participants that attend this school: _____

School Visit

Date		Team Leader		RGO	
------	--	-------------	--	-----	--

Remember to:

Confirm the number of class groups/streams per grade/std, the enrolment by grade and gender, whether any learners have left the school during the course of the year (give details, name, stream and date left) and if there are any new entrants (during the year) after admissions were closed (give details, name, stream and date learner joined the school)

Request the school to provide access to:

The Admission Register

Attendance register for all classes/streams

Copy of current school class lists for all classes/streams

A space where the field team can work with the school records (Privately)

Indicate that a head count of learners may be require

Learner numbers & number of class groups/streams indicated by school:

	Class/Std 1	Class/Std 2	Class/Std 3	Class/Std 4	Class/Std 5	Class 6	Class 7	Sub total	Total
Boys									
Girls									
Total									
Streams									
Number of learners who left the school (during the course of the year)									
Boys									
Girls									
Total									
Number of new entrants - learners who joined the school after formal admission at the start of the year									
Boys									
Girls									
Total									

SCHOOL ADMISSION REGISTER: (✓ Tick appropriate option)

Are all learners admitted to school (new entrants) entered into the admission register?	Yes	No
Are all the required details provided for the new entrants (no missing information)	Yes	No
Are admission numbers assigned to all the entries in the register?	Yes	No
Is the register up to date? (check against the class lists provided, especially for the first class/std offered)	Yes	No
Does the register indicate when learners leave the school during the year?	Yes	No

Should errors or omissions be found – provide possible explanation or reason for the differences found

<i>Describe error or omission</i>	<i>Account for possible difference</i>

SCHOOL CLASS LISTS

No of class lists checked during the visit:

Class/Std 1	Class/Std 2	Class/Std 3	Class/Std 4	Class/Std 5	Class 6	Class 7	Total
-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	---------	---------	-------

No of class lists where number of learners listed match the enrolment figures *Account for possible differences*

provided by EMIS (only complete if the year of data is the same)	
provided by school (on arrival)	
provided by school (for earlier project request)	
indicated in the class register	
indicated in the summary at the rear of the class register	

✓ Tick appropriate option

For the entry class/std, are all learners admitted entered on the class list? (against admission register)	Yes	No
Are all the required details provided for the entries (no missing information)	Yes	No
Was the class list created specifically for the project or is it a routine list used by the school	Created	Routine
If routine, is the class list up to date? (new entrants and school leavers included)	Yes	No

Should errors or omissions be found – provide possible explanation or reason for the differences found

<i>Describe error or omission</i>	<i>Account for possible difference</i>

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REGISTER:

No of attendance registers checked during the visit:

Class/Std 1	Class/Std 2	Class/Std 3	Class/Std 4	Class/Std 5	Class 6	Class 7	Total
-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	---------	---------	-------

For each of the following indicate the number of the attendance registers checked that match the criteria :

Names fully match class list	
Admission numbers (attendance register are cross referenced to attendance register)	
Absence of learners is indicated correctly (codes are used for absenteeism)	
Evidence that the register has been checked by a colleague	
Register is up to date (allow for 1 day not yet completed)	
Register indicates when learners leave (including date)	
Number of school days are reported correctly	
Totals/summary calculations are provided for the end of the week	
Totals/summary calculations provided are calculated accurately	
Totals/summary calculations are provided for the end of the term	
Totals/summary calculations provided for the end of term are calculated accurately	
If end of the year, Totals/summary calculations are provided for the end of the year	
If end of the year, Totals/summary calculations provided for the end of the year are calculated correctly	
At the back, the admission list is provided accurately, including the admission number	
If end of the year, Totals/summary calculations (at the back) are provided for the end of the year	
If end of the year, Totals/summary calculations (at the back) provided are transferred correctly	

Should errors or omissions be found – provide possible explanation or reason for the differences found

<i>Describe error or omission</i>	<i>Account for possible difference</i>

DETAILS FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Number of study participants enrolled at this school	
Number of classes/standards that the study participants are enrolled in	
Number of study participants that appear on the class lists	
Number of study participants that appear in the class register	
<i>Calculate the number of days the identified study participant/s were absent for – term by term</i>	
Number of study participants that have absent days reflected inaccurately in the register	
Number of study participants that have absent days reflected inaccurately in the project database	

Should errors or omissions be found – provide possible explanation or reason for the differences found

<i>Describe error or omission</i>	<i>Account for possible difference</i>

HEAD COUNT

Where differences in the reported number of learners are found between – Class list, attendance register & project records a head count is to be conducted across all learners. The count of learners by class stream/group and gender is to be undertaken, separately, by two field workers. Count to be repeated until the numbers recorded tally.

The following tally sheet can be used for each class group/stream to be head counted.

		Boys	Girls
Class/Standard	Learner number on class list (a)		
	Learner number in register (b)		
Group/stream identified	Number of learners marked present (c)		
	Number of learners in admission list (back of register) (d)		

Learner count by field workers (FW)

	FW 1 – 1 st Count	FW 2 – 1 st Count	FW 1 – 2 nd Count	FW 2 – 2 nd Count	FW 1 – 3 rd Count	FW 2 – 3 rd Count	Agreed total
Boys							
Girls							

Calculated Difference (Compared against the head count)

Compared against the head count	Head Count (e)	Class list (a)	(e – a)		Register – only those present for the day (c)	(e – c)		Admission list (d)	(e – d)	
			Value	As %		Value	As %		Value	As %
Boys										
Girls										

Should errors be found – provide possible explanation or reason for the differences found

<i>Describe error</i>	<i>Account for possible difference</i>

CALCULATION OF DATA QUALITY RATIOS

Use the data collected to make the following calculations:

a. Result verification ratio for learner enrolment (school) =

$$\frac{\text{verified count of learner enrolment of school}}{\text{reported count of enrolment of school}}$$

--

b. Result verification ratio for learner enrolment (class/std) =

$$\frac{\text{verified count of learner enrolment of class/std}}{\text{reported count of enrolment of class/std}}$$

Gr 1	Gr 2	Gr 3	Gr 4	Gr 5	Gr 6	Gr 7

c. Result verification ratio for learner attendance (Study participants) =

$$\frac{\text{verified count of learner attendance of Study participants}}{\text{reported count of learner attendance of Study participants}}$$

--

d. Percent difference for cross checks in learner attendance (Study participants) =

$$\frac{\text{verified count of learner attendance of Study participants}}{\text{reported count of learner attendance of Study participants}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

--

FEEDBACK TO HEAD TEACHER

As a field work team, reflect on the findings (especially the tables that capture the errors and omissions and possible reasons for the differences) and agree on the items to report back to Head Teacher on, and suggestions to be made to improve learner attendance and admission data.

SCHOOLS RESPONSE

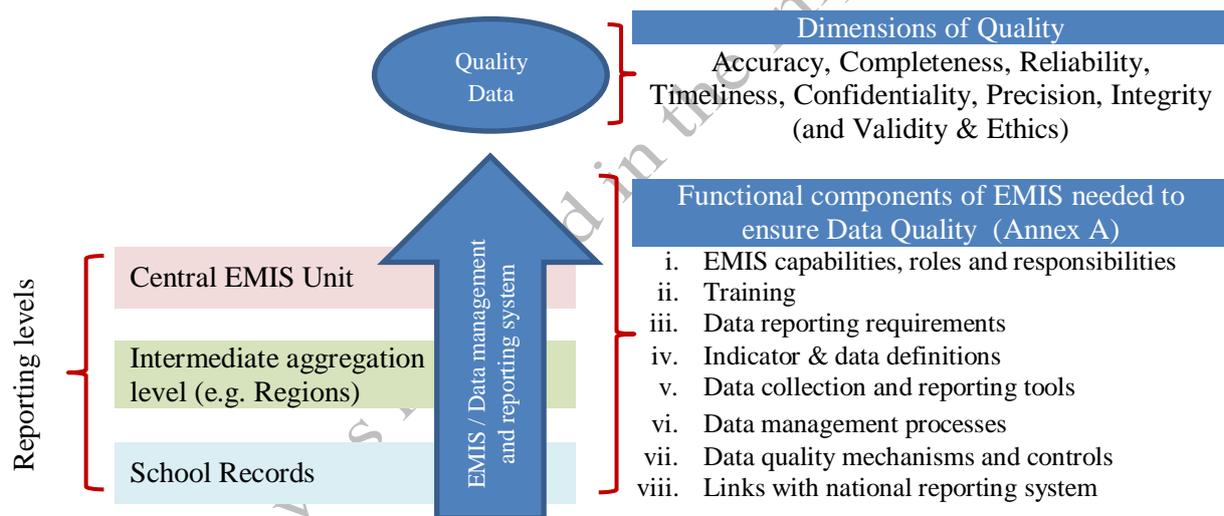
Fieldworker to capture the response of the school when feedback is provided

Annex B: Understanding the importance of quality learner data & processes in Eswatini

Data quality is a cornerstone of accountability in programs. Ensuring that the correct Study participants receive the incentives they qualify for, is dependent, to some extent, on reliable data on learner admission into school and learner attendance data. Having poor or unreliable data creates long-term costs and unforeseen effects compared with the costs and benefits of having good data. Practical and affordable strategies exist for generating timely and reliable data on learners, but appropriate investment is needed to develop the capacity to collect, manage, analyse, disseminate and use information.

In general the quality of reported data is dependent on the underlying data management and reporting systems, or for the Education sector EMIS (Education Management Information System); stronger systems should produce better quality or more reliable data. In order to produce learner data of good quality, school recording and reporting systems and data flows need to be functional, dependable and consistent. The various points at which this data is then aggregated also need to be reliable and operational: the regional and central (head office) level. When assuring the quality of learner data it is important to (1) verify the quality of the data, (2) assess the system that produces that data, and (3) develop plans to improve both if required.¹

Figure 4: Conceptual framework for data quality assurance; data management and reporting systems within the Education Sector, functional areas and data quality



Source: Adapted from the GFTAM (2008) Routine data quality assessment tool

In order to ensure data quality, reviews are to be conducted at all levels. As all points of data collection and EMIS processes are disposed to errors resulting from data collection, processing and transmission, it is of utmost important to have data quality reviews. Concepts of data quality, data management and data assessment

What do we understand as data quality?

Data quality makes reference to the worth of accuracy of the data collected. Data quality emphasizes the high standard required of data capture, verification and analysis. Ensuring high quality data is important and requires a structured and purposeful approach at each step along the way. Issues relating to data quality need to be thought through to ensure that suitable quality standards are maintained. The process of checking data quality is referred to as routine data quality assessment

¹ These steps are identified in the GFATM: Routine Data Quality Assessment Tool Guidelines (2008)

(RDQA) or a data quality audit. RDQAs help identify where data quality is poor and should point to possible solutions.

Criteria often used to assess data quality

Data quality is commonly assessed according to five key criteria: 1) accuracy or validity, 2) reliability, 3) integrity, 4) precision and 5) timeliness. Others that are added include: 6) completeness, 7) confidentiality and 8) ethics.

Table 1: Dimensions of data quality

Criterion	Explanation or operational definition	Pointers for data quality issues
Accuracy or Validity	Also known as validity. Accurate data are considered correct: the data measure what they are intended to measure. Accurate data minimize errors (e.g., recording or interviewer bias, transcription error, sampling error) to a point of being negligible.	Data validity issues could result from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitional issues for data being collected • Respondents having trouble understanding the questions asked of them • Data is incomplete or illegible • Data altered in transcriptions • Sampling or representation errors • Respondents under pressure to answer 'correctly' or provide the information
Reliability	For a data set to be reliable, data collection processes must be stable and consistent over time, with reliable internal quality controls in place and data procedures handled in a transparent manner.	Data reliability issues could result from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different tools used to collect the same data • Recording inconsistency between staff members providing data • Instances of wrong or missing data not reported or considered
Integrity	Data have integrity when the system used to generate them is protected from deliberate bias or manipulation for political, personal or other reasons. For a data set to have integrity, the data must be accurate and free of error introduced by either human or technological means, either wilfully or unconsciously.	Data integrity issues could result from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone has tried to bias or influence the outcomes of the data • Unreasonable time pressures are placed on data collection and collation
Precision	This means that the data have sufficient detail. For example, learner attendance requires the number of individuals who attended school, by grade/form and sex of the individual. An information system lacks precision if it is not designed to record the sex of the individual.	Data precision issues could result from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is data aggregated without peer review • Is only aggregated data collected – despite efforts to collect disaggregated data
Timeliness	Data are timely when collected frequently enough and they are up-to-date (current). Timeliness is affected by: (1) the rate at which the program's information system is updated; (2) the rate of change of actual program activities; and (3) when the information is actually used or required.	Timeliness issues could result from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions made without data – due to delays or unavailability • Data being out of date to be relevant or of value

Source: Adapted from definitions provided in PACT (2014) and GFATM (2008)

While the five criterion discussed in the table above are considered as the foundation for understanding data quality , the following additional factors are at times also considered:

Completeness: means that an information system from which the results are derived is appropriately inclusive: it represents the *complete* list of eligible persons or units and not just a fraction or part of the list. No data is missing, no responses incomplete or due to other data quality issues, found to be unusable. (Euphoria!)

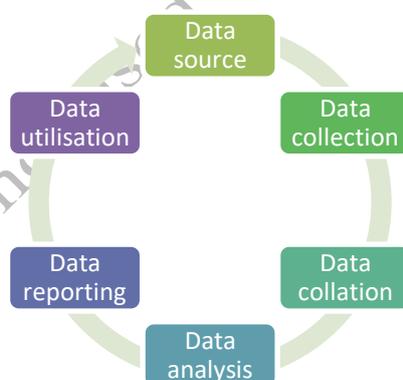
Confidentiality: means that clients are assured that their data will be maintained according to national and/or international standards for data. This means that personal data are not disclosed inappropriately, and that data in hard copy and electronic form are treated with appropriate levels of security (e.g. kept in locked cabinets and in password protected files).

Ethics: are the rules or standards governing the conduct of a person collecting, collating, reporting on, or utilizing data, and represent our standard of what's "right". Ethical issues include concerns of informed consent, the protection of privacy and confidentiality and misrepresentation or falsification of data.

What is data management?

Data management considers how data moves along the track; from controlling the data collection process; to how data are brought together and analysed; determining the most appropriate levels of aggregation, presentation and dissemination format; and ensuring data utilization.

Figure 5: The six key stages of the data management cycle



To gauge the quality of a given data set, you need to understand exactly where the data originated and the strengths and weakness of the **data at that source**. Primary data sources present the least risk to potential errors as the data is raw, un-manipulated and first-hand.

To ensure data quality and permit multisite data comparisons, the **data collection** effort usually needs to be structured so that all data are collected the same way from one data collection site to the next. Credibility of the process is also very important in the data collection stage. Selecting appropriate tools and methods, training data recorders, having clear instructions on how to collect data and how to capture information, and checking the accuracy of the data generated are all part of a quality data collection process. Ensuring that data collection tools have data entry "checks" where possible will help to keep data that are collected clean. Checks can include random spot checks undertaken by a supervisor.

Data collation is the process of assembling data into a format for the purpose of analysis using either electronic or manual tools. Collation may involve data coding to make it easier to manipulate the data. Collation also refers to the process of consolidating information from various sites or offices and building completed data sets. All these processes introduce an opportunity for mistakes to be made and errors to be introduced into the data. Thus, careful management of the collation process is critical to maintaining data quality.

Data analysis is the process of examining, reviewing, and evaluating data sets to assess a hypothesis. Analysis enables data users to test underlying hypotheses or assumptions and to predict relationships in order to understand and evaluate their programs. The data analysis period is also an important time for a data quality review. Although the primary purpose of data analysis is to advance understanding and gain insights into the program, the analysis process also provides—from a data quality viewpoint—valuable feedback on the adequacy and completeness of our data and its relevance, validity, and precision.

Reporting involves compilation of descriptive information, presenting data analysis as useful knowledge. Key to the reporting process is to ensure that data presented are relevant to the different target audiences and that the report has integrity—in other words, that it accurately presents the data set and results. From a data quality perspective, accurate presentation of the findings—without an overzealous spin overstating the results or purposive exclusion of information to mislead an audience.

Data usage refers to the process of making timely, data-driven decisions. For this to happen efficiently, relevant high-quality data must be made accessible in a timely manner to key decision makers. This means that decision makers (including project teams) must know of the existence of the data set, can locate it, and can easily import it into their working environment. Usually, the data are most useful to decision makers after analysis and synthesis into an understandable, relevant report.

Source: Adapted from PACT (2014) Filed Guide for data quality management – monitoring, evaluation, results and learning series publication (module 2)

Identified constraints of learner admission and attendance data and systems within Eswatini Ministry of Education

Schools are required to have information about their learners if they are to make appropriate decisions about resources and educational support programme. School Management Teams require this information for school based planning, administration, governance and self-evaluation. From the time a child enters schools, records begin to follow the new learner. Besides the information provided by the parent or guardian, the school itself creates additional information that describes the learner's involvement in education, extracurricular activities and other relevant experiences. This information is all contained within the school records system. In addition to schools requiring information, learner information for management and planning functions are also required at Regional and Head Office level, to ensure that national policies have been successfully implemented. Learner numbers remain the biggest cost driver for the Education Sector, so the quality of learner information is critical.

The Eswatini Ministry of Education has well-structured processes in place to guide schools on collecting, tracking and reporting on **learner admission** and **attendance** at public schools. There are two critical documents, both are standardised for all public schools, both provided to schools by the

government at no cost and both have clear guidelines and instructions: the admissions register and the class attendance register.

The Admissions Register

This is a permanent record in which details of every learner **admitted** to a school is recorded. The Register is designed as a comprehensive listing of the schools former and current learners and is necessary to keep track of school enrolment. The source of information entered into the admissions register is obtained through the application process – either through the completion of application forms (which are school specific), letters for admission, transfer cards or learners (along with a parent, guardian or sibling) presenting themselves at an interview.

Schools tend to differ on understanding when a learner is "admitted".

The intended purpose of the learner Admissions Register is to:

- Record all learners admitted to a school by entering summary details of learners who have been accepted for enrolment.
- Provide an overview of the school enrolment by individual learner.
- Show learner movement from the first enrolment to the time they leave the school.
- Assist in developing the school enrolment or class lists.
- Assign a unique admission number to each learner. This number should never change, while the learner is at that school.

In the Eswatini context, the admissions register is a bulky, hard covered, bound book, issued by the Ministry of Education. The cover contains clear instructions on how the Admissions Register is to be created and maintained.

Figure 6: Instructions from Admissions Register

The Admission Register should be kept exclusively by the Principal. Successive numbers should be allotted to the children on their admission, so that each child may have its own number, which it should retain throughout its school career.

The register should show distinctly for each child in the school-

- (a) Its number on the register.
- (b) The date of its admission or re-admission: day, month and year.
- (c) Name in full, christian and surname.
- (d) The exact date of the child's birth: day, month and year.
- (e) the name and address of its parents or guardian.
- (f) School attended prior to admission to this school, and Class or Standard on which placed on Admission.
- (g) Year of passing Class or Standard.
- (h) The date of leaving.
- (i) What happened to the child after leaving this school.
- (j) Every child's name in the alphabetical index.

Where several children of the same name attend, they must be distinguished thus:

'John Jones (a), John Jones (b)' etc. Pet names must not be entered.

DIRECTIONS

1. Let all entries be made as neatly and legibly as possible.
2. Enter scholar's name in index at once.
3. Put the full Admission No. at the top of each page, and at every complete 10. In other cases put only the unit figure. They will be more easily referred to.
4. In dates enter the year in full; and the number of the month as 3 for March, and so on. e.g. 14/3/1936.
5. Full name of Child's parent, enter only christian name except in the few cases where the surname is different, when it also must be entered.
6. This register must be produced to an Officer of the Ministry of Education whenever required.
7. "Where has pupil gone," In this column show whether pupil has transferred to another school, gone to University, taken up a job etc.

Thus:-

526
7
8
9
530
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
540
1
2
etc

The instructions provided in the Admissions Register, as well as the “Guide to school regulations and procedures” indicate that school leavers should be reflected in the Admissions Register as soon as the learner leaves the school.

Once Admissions are concluded and the Admissions Register finalised, the intended next step is that from the attendance register the class lists are created (or updated for subsequent grades), and once these are finalised the details are transcribed into the Attendance Register, both to track learner attendance, and at the back of the Attendance Register to record admissions into the specific class for that year.

The Attendance Register

The Attendance Register provides a daily record of the attendance of each learner in each class in the school. The Attendance Register is based on the class list, prepared from the entries in the Admissions register and the learner records of the previous years (failures and promotions). The names of all the learners should be entered alphabetically, according to Surname, and by gender. The admission number is an important cross reference between the Admissions Register and the Attendance Register, and must be entered into the Attendance Register for each learner.

The intended purpose of the attendance register is to:

- Provide the class teacher or school management with information about an individual learner’s attendance or absence at a glance
- Determine the average class attendance
- Identify those learners who need attention due to irregular school attendance
- Show the size and composition of a class group

Non-attendance, or absenteeism, is recorded on a daily basis and should be differentiated between those learners who are absent due to illness (marked with an S), those absent with leave (school informed or reason for absenteeism) (marked with an L), and those absent (marked with an X). The class teacher and school management then follow up on irregular school attendance. If the learner leaves the school, the learner is to be struck off the Attendance Register indicating “left, the date and reason”. At the end of each week, summaries of learner attendance are calculated for the week and the Attendance Register is submitted to School Management for checking. The checks are basically for compliance to ensure that the registers are being completed diligently. It is also at this point that Management may be alerted to irregular attendance.

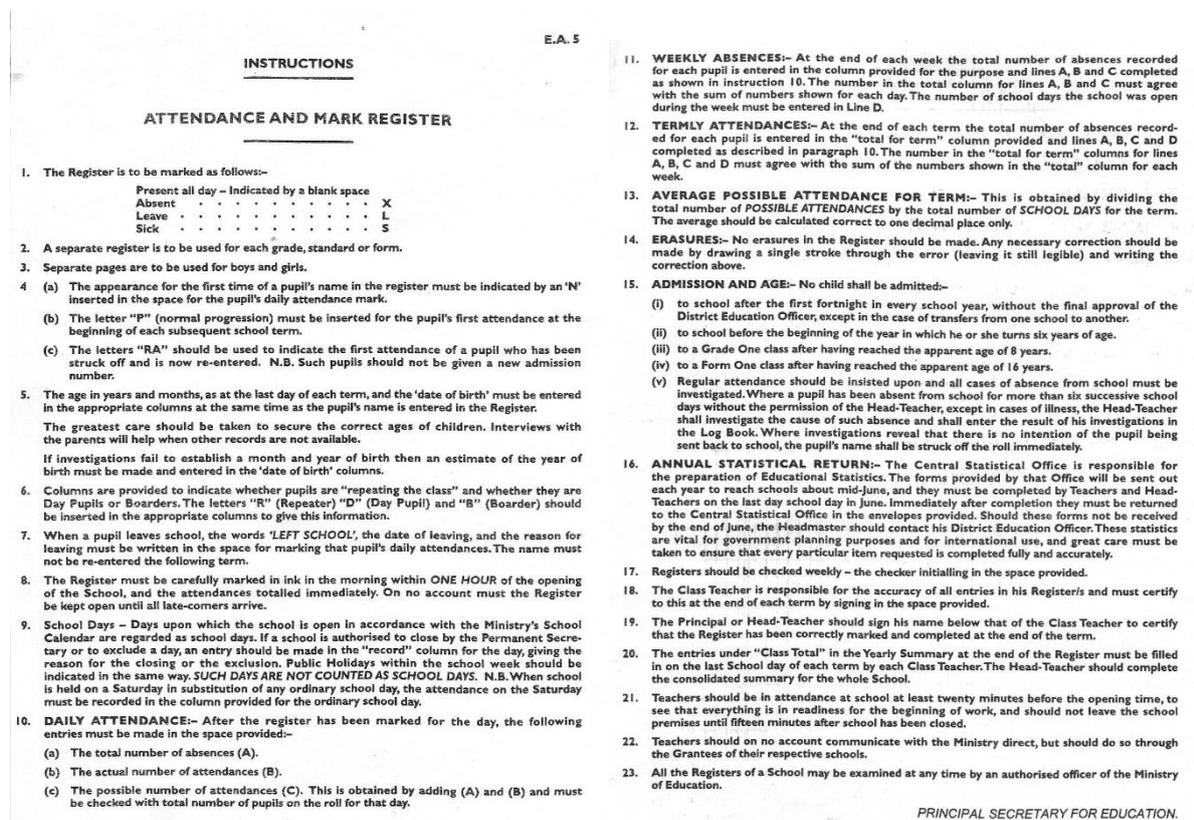
Schools tend to not always indicate the reason for absenteeism. A learner is also marked present if s/he only presents her/himself for the registration period or time when the attendance register is completed. .

At the end of each term, the class teacher is required to complete a summary of attendance and this is completed at the back of the Attendance Register. In some schools school management teams collate these summary tables for all grades, to get a complete and comparative picture of learner attendance across all classes and grades.

At the end of the year, the final assessment marks attained by the learner is completed in the final exam results schedule, provided in the Attendance Register, and there is an indication if the child is promoted or has failed the grade. The Admission list, within the Register, also has to be updated to include the total number of days attended in the year, for each learner.

In the Eswatini context, the Attendance Register is combined with the mark register in a large (A3+) book issued by the Ministry of Education. The cover contains clear instructions on how the Attendance Register is to be completed.

Figure 7: Instructions provided in the School Attendance Register



Source: Eswatini Ministry of Education Attendance and Mark Register

Different processes observed in capturing learner attendance at Primary and Secondary Schools, during the June 2016 field visit.

Given that in general, in primary schools, a class teacher is assigned to a group of learners who then teaches most of the subjects to this class, i.e. the class stays with the same teacher for the majority of the day, the daily attendance register is completed by the nominated class teacher. Attendance is generally recorded directly into the Attendance Register during the first few sessions of the school day.

However in Secondary schools, given that the learners move between teachers and according to a structured timetable that often does not follow a week, different systems are introduced to ensure that the attendance register is completed. One system allows for a class to be assigned to a registration teacher, who may or may not teach the learners. The time timetable then allows for a registration period at the start of each day, or after assembly, and the registration teacher is then required to complete the attendance register and deal with administrative issues in the time assigned for 'registration'. Another system observed includes the use of class monitors, who are provided with a class list of learners. With this system, the class monitors mark off learners who are present or absent, and generally this is completed for every lesson during the day, so one can track learner attendance throughout a day. Some schools who use this system, request the teacher to sign off against the list at the end of the teaching period. The class list is then either returned to a nominated class teacher or straight to the office. Even with this class monitor system, the assigned class registration teacher is required to track down the class within the first few periods in order to be able to complete the attendance register. It is only at the end of the week, in some schools that the daily registers completed by the class monitors are compared with the formal attendance register completed by the registration teacher. This is not done consistently across schools.

Some schools indicated, should they use the system where class monitors complete the register, unannounced spot checks will be conducted by senior teachers, who at odd times of the day, during the term will call for the class list tracking learner attendance. They will then conduct their own check of learners who are in attendance and compare this with the class monitors list.

It appears that schools tend to use the class monitor system to try and track, or discourage bunking off or truancy rather than strengthening the attendance register data.

EMIS and national statistics on admissions and attendance

Like many countries in the Region, EMIS within Eswatini, relies on an annual school census to collect the required data from schools to collate national statistics and provide information to support planning, management, reporting and policy implementation and tracking. Currently the EMIS Annual School Census form makes allowance for tracking school admissions (new entrants), school leavers (drop outs) and school enrolment, by gender, grade and age. The current EMIS Annual School Census makes no provision for reporting on learner attendance.

When the Head of EMIS was interviewed, he indicated that an earlier version of the EMIS Annual School Census form included tracking absenteeism due to reason, but this was dropped as the data was found to be unreliable. It was indicated that no effort had been made to improve or adjust school records to provide this data and no training had been provided.

Currently the Central Statistics Bureau, through their household surveys collects information on school attendance to be able to report on the Net Attendance Rate. This information is obtained through a question included in the survey that asked the head of the household whether the children in the home attend school. There are no follow up questions on the frequency of school attendance, or any way in which this information is confirmed or validated.

There are new developments that may put additional pressure on the EMIS and school record systems, to provide more detailed and accurate information on learner absenteeism and learner enrolment, and improve learner based record keeping:

The adoption of UNESCO Indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the education sector response to HIV and AIDS

Within this M&E framework, countries are going to be required to report on school attendance amongst orphaned learners. While the framework indicates that this data will be collected through population based surveys, it may with time be transferred to the Ministry of Education to provide this data.

As part of their admission processes and school records, schools will be required to be able to report separately on orphans, according to age category.

Eswatini has committed to implement this framework, and preparatory work has already begun.

The adoption of the SADC EMIS Norms and Standards

The SADC EMIS Norms and Standards code contains 17 minimum norms and standards covering policy and legal frameworks, resource availability and utilization, statistical processes and education information reports. SADC Ministers of Education adopted this code at their annual meeting in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, in March 2010 and by doing so, committed themselves to adhere to these norms and standards, thereby improving their EMIS.

These norms and standards are directed at improving data quality and strengthening EMIS.

Eswatini has already undertaken the peer review assessment and has started working towards implementing the recommendations of the peer review.

National introduction of SAMS - School Administration

The Eswatini Ministry of Education has negotiated with the South African Government to implement the SA-SAMS system in

Management System

Eswatini. The MOU is about to be signed (June 2016).

SAMS allows for the computerisation of all aspects of school administration, management and governance. The programme has a strong EMIS focus to assist schools in the completion of the Annual School Census. The system is based on the creation of individual learner records, which follows the learner throughout her/his career within the education sector, which could be from early childhood development through to tertiary studies.

The introduction of SAMS in Eswatini will require that detailed, individual learner records are created and maintained by schools. **Learner attendance is also considered to be a critical component of SAMS and schools are likely to be required to maintain learner attendance records on SAMS.**

Schools moving towards computerized administrative systems

Some schools we visited in Eswatini (Field trip June 2016) had made the move to a computerised administrative system. In doing this, they felt that the paper based records – School Admission Register and School Attendance and Mark Register – were outdated and duplicated the work they did on the computer system. At one school the Admission Register has been totally disregarded, since all learner registration is done within the computer software, however the paper based school Attendance Registers were maintained, but on a weekly basis this information was captured into the computer system, against each individual learner record.

A distinct advantage of the computerised system for the Study is that when registering for the Study, learners could be asked to produce their most recent automated school report. **The school report, generated by the computer system, could be used to validate the learner's enrolment at a school, but is sure to also include a data field that captures the number of school days missed due to absenteeism.**

Issues that may impact on data quality

As previously indicated, the Eswatini Ministry of Education has well-structured processes in place to guide schools on collecting, tracking and reporting on learner admission and attendance at public schools. The admissions register and the class attendance register are both standardised for all public schools, are provided to schools by the government at no cost and have clear guidelines and instructions. In addition the “Guide to School regulations and Procedures” read together with the Education Rules of 1977, provide a clear legal framework regarding learner admissions and maintaining attendance registers. **If the school followed these regulations and instructions provided, to the letter, there would be no qualms about the quality of learner admission and attendance data at public schools.** However, over the years the monitoring of these regulations and instructions provided have slipped and with that cracks have been created that do impact on the quality of learner admission and attendance data.

The table below points to some of the issues that are considered to possibly impact on learner admission and attendance data quality.

Table 2: Observations from June 2016 field visit



Observations
from the Field

With the Admissions Register, schools tend to differ on understanding when a learner is “admitted”. Some wait to complete the admissions register well into the first term, when attendance has stabilized and learners attend regularly, while others will complete the attendance register as a learner apply to the school. Some of these learners may then not attend the specific school as they have applied to several schools, to ensure a place is secured.

While the school regulations indicate that when a learner leaves a school, for any reason, this must be recorded immediately in the Admissions Register, this is rarely done. None of the Admission Registers that we observed during our school visits (June 2016) were up to date in recording school leavers, and in some instances even late learner admissions (transfers in throughout the year) were not recorded.

While the instructions in the Attendance Register are also clear about when and how to record when a learner leaves the school, this varied across the schools visited. Some wait 6 days, others wait 14 days, others 2 weeks, while others wait till the parent/guardian reports to the Office. While this affects learner enrolment data it also affects the calculation of the weekly and termly summary attendance data and indicators the schools need to calculate.

Schools tend to not always indicate the reason for absenteeism. It was indicated it is difficult to tell this as they are not always informed, or the parent reports to the office but the class teacher is required to complete the learner attendance register.

A learner is marked present if s/he only presents her/himself for the registration period, or time when the attendance register is completed. The inverse applies, if a learner arrives just after registration has been completed (e.g. they are late on the day) they are marked as absent. Learner attendance appears to be determined by being present when the learner attendance register is completed.

Some schools make reference to temporary admission registers, class lists and attendance registers. Often these are used for the first few weeks of the new year, until learner enrolment has settled down. The duplication and double reporting system may result in errors creeping in.



Observations
from the Field

It is apparent that schools find little value in the Admission Register. Data is not complete and after the class lists are compiled the Admission Register is not updated until the new entrants are issued the next year. Schools report they only use the Admission Register in order to allocate a registration number to learners. Often learners who join the school mid-year are not even entered into the Admission register.

Schools indicated that the Admission Register is never check by officials visiting the school. At times the Attendance register is checked, or when a specific case regarding a learner is investigated. The school may be asked to produce the Attendance Register to check the attendance record of the learner being investigated.

One school shared a good practice, to help improve the quality of the data. Senior teaches were requested to check the registers of teachers within the grade, during the course of the week, before these were submitted to the principal for control. Senior teachers would do spot check to ensure that those who were absent were marked as absent, and also were required to check the calculations and summaries prepared by the teachers in the grade. The principals indicated this did help control the quality of the data and also ensured that registers were completed on a daily basis, as teachers did not know when senior teachers would check the register.

The summary calculations that are required at the end of the week and term, in order to close the Attendance Register are confusing and misleading. It was also indicated that teachers do not know why it is required as it is not used by anyone.

None of the schools visited indicated that they provided training or orientation for teachers on how to complete the registers. It is assumed they are taught while at college. Teachers

confirmed they are taught while at College, however they felt the instructions are clear. Teachers who attend university are not taught how to complete registers, they merely ask colleagues to help and interpret the instructions.

One newly appointed Head Teacher (1 month in) interviewed had no knowledge of what was required of her in terms of checking on registers or completing the Admissions Register. The older, more experienced principals indicated, when they check the registers on a weekly basis they provide feedback to young teachers, if errors are picked up.

It appears that class lists are prepared in a very ad hoc manner. This is disturbing given the importance given to the class list – as this appears to become the official record of learners admitted or registered at a school. One school reported that learners (new entrants at a primary school) were counted off into three groups and then the teacher asked the learner for their details and created the class list this way – this was then entered into the Attendance Register and the Admissions Register, along with the Admission list in the Attendance Register. No checks were made against admission registers, application forms or support documents.

After interviewing some Head Teachers it became apparent that one was left with a bit of a question about which came first – the Class List or the Admission Register.

One of the recommendations with the SADC EMIS review is that it should be compulsory when learners register to present their birth certificate – this could be used to confirm the name and age of learners and will assist in improving data quality.

From the Study fieldwork team side, the loose use of terminology should be avoided. When wanting the details of learners admitted into the school, or registered within the school, there should be a request for details of learners admitted into the school - not enrolment. Enrolment is termed to be the count of learners enrolled at a school, or in a class/grade.

Also it is suggested that the duplication of effort be avoided. For the Study purposes, the school should be asked to submit their admission lists from the class Attendance Register, for all grades. To ensure that the Grade and Stream is indicated. Schools should not be requested to create a new list of learner details for the purpose of the Study. Use existing records and information products.

All regulations and guidelines, and observations, mentioned earlier, only apply to public schools. If Study participants should attend private schools, these operate independently and different records, procedures and practices may apply.
