Exploring the Emergence of Community Support for School and Encouragement of Innovation for Improving Rural School Performance: Lessons Learned at Kitamburo in Tanzania

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Abstract

This article describes a qualitative exploration of a primary school in a remote rural community of Tanzania, whose students showed promising performance in mathematics, as measured by the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE). Case study methods were used to conduct research about the school and the community and included interviews, focus groups, and observations. This paper describes the role of community leadership in generating a learning community (Warren, 2005), that initiated community support of the school, which in turn prompted teachers' innovations in professional development, that improved teaching and learning in mathematics and contributed to the observed promising performance on the PSLE. The article concludes that although school principals and teachers are regarded as keys in generating professional learning communities (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008), under good community leadership communities may be essential catalysts in establishing and sustaining professional learning communities which may contribute to school improvement.

Keywords

School-community connectedness, Tanzania, mathematics, learning communities, sequential sampling

Introduction

Similar to many nations, Tanzania is focused on improving the education of its children and youth through improving schools. Literature suggests that school-community connectedness is vital for improving school performance and

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enhancing better community life (Hewitt, 2006; Lortie, 1975; Stefl-Mabry & Lynch, 2006; UNESCO, 2012).

This research was conducted in Kitamburo, a rural community in Tanzania. The community was studied to better understand the relationships that bind the community and the school. Tanzania is basically a rural and agrarian community (Hyden, 1980; Stahl, 1961). After 70 years of European colonialism (Stahl, 1961) followed by more than 50 years of independence gained in 1961, 70% of the approximately 45 million people of the United Republic of Tanzania reside in rural areas (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014, p. ix), with agriculture as the main economic activity (p. xi). The agricultural sector employs about 80% of the total population and contributes to approximately 45% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), and 30% of export earnings (United Republic of Tanzania, 2009). With an understanding of the importance of agriculture in improving the national economy, education in Tanzania was one of the long accepted driving forces with the potential to improve agricultural productivity, the lives of the rural population, and ultimately national development.

Despite the efforts of the government to increase school enrollment, and to recognize the place of education in national development, actual practices were not promising. The expansion of both primary and secondary schools in Tanzania did not bring quality education as expected due, in part, to poor preparation and remuneration of teachers, and to poor budgetary allocation for school infrastructure and teaching and learning materials (Masenge, 2012). Consequently, school performance has always been poor. In Tanzania the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) conducted across the country, consists of one examination paper for each of the five subjects: Swahili (Kiswahili), English, General knowledge (Maarifa), Mathematics and Science. Almost 50% of all primary school leavers fail the PSLE by scoring an overall D or E grade (Masenge, 2012). Primary school failure rates for the five consecutive years of 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 were respectively 46%, 47%, 51%, 46% and 45% (NECTA, 2012). Further, the failure rate of mathematics for the same five years were respectively 83%, 82%, 79%, 75%, and 61% (NECTA, 2012); failure rates in mathematics have consistently exceeded other subjects (Masenge, 2012).

Whereas the failure rate can be explained from different points of view, one area worth considering is the relationship between teachers, students, and parents. The situation in Tanzania reflects poor relationships between the said parties, who are key stakeholders of schools, particularly primary schools. In one primary school in Tanzania, a Grade 2 student went to school with a dilapidated school uniform which showed his private organs. A teacher ordered the child to go back home to fix the uniform. The father of the child went to school and caned the teacher because he did not find that a good reason for sending his child back home (Raphael, 2014, July 29). Another parent in a different school visited her child's school to request clarification about school contributions that parents were required to pay to support the education of their children. She was jeered and chased by students after receiving an order from the school's head teacher (Kumba, 2014, August 14). This scenario, in contrast to the context of a school with community support, prompted the question: How do schools and communities in Tanzania work together to generate learning communities?

Conceptual framework

The researcher approached the study using a community capabilities framework (CCF). Community capabilities framework originates from an understanding that every human being has the capacity, real or potential, for self realization and uses that realization to act accordingly to support his/her survival and positive progress (Ellis, 2000). This study adopted the perception that community capacity is "the collective ability of a group (the community) to combine various forms of capital within institutional and relational contexts to produce desired results or outcomes" (Beckley et al., 2008, pp. 60–61).

While the conditions that prompted the proposed study was students' relatively better performance in mathematics at Kitamburo primary school; observed school-community connectedness, and parents' participation in meetings, the underlying conditions which led to those known aspects about Kitamburo were not known. The study investigated the community conditions which prompted the emergence of community support, which contributed to improving the teaching and learning of mathematics at Kitamburo primary school and the subsequent promising school performances.

Methodology

The background of this paper is an international research project involving researchers from University of Alberta and Brock University of Canada; and Mzumbe University of Tanzania and the Institute for Educational Development, Eastern Africa, Aga Khan University in Tanzania. The purpose of the partnership was to research possibilities for primary mathematics teacher development in rural and remote communities in Tanzania. To familiarize themselves with the Tanzanian context, the research team of eight researchers visited various institutions responsible for education in Tanzania. After the familiarization visits, the team divided the broader research project into five small case studies: District leadership case, Governance case, Programming case, School case and Teacher college case. The cases were meant to identify promising practices so as to inform the broader study and ultimately develop prototypes for improving the teaching and learning of mathematics. This paper is informed by findings of the School Case Study.

Data collection for the school case was conducted at Kitamburo community between 2011 and 2014. Kitamburo was chosen after having shown persistent promising performance in mathematics measured by PSLE. The school case involved two consecutive studies: The pre-study and the detailed follow-up case study.

The purpose of the pre-study was to find out why students in the selected school performed better in mathematics by investigating a) the role of teachers in students' performance b) the role of parents in students' performance and c) the role of the general community in students' performance. Data of the pre-study school case was collected by interviewing 15 teachers of Kitamburo primary school, one Education Officer of the district where Kitamburo belongs and, Ward Education Coordinator of a ward where Kitamburo belongs. In addition, one focus group discussion was conducted with 12 villagers of Kitamburo community.

Data collected in the pre-study was analysed and results showed that the promising performances of Kitamburo primary school were primarily a function of a strong collaboration between the school and the community. While the pre-study helped researchers understand what was taking place at the school, the underlying conditions which led to the emergence of that community support was not known. The detailed follow-up case study

investigated the community conditions which prompted the emergence of community support operating at Kitamburo primary school.   The detailed follow-up case study aimed to learn, from participants, how the community support at Kitamburo emerged and worked to make Kitamburo primary school show promising performance in mathematics compared to other schools in similar rural settings.

Selection of Focus Group Participants
The pre-study used purposive selection of respondents. All 16 teachers of Kitamburo primary school were chosen for interview, though in practice only 15 were interviewed because one teacher was attending in-service studies and could not be reached. Teachers were selected because they were the people who taught the students who showed promising performance in mathematics upon writing their examinations. The 12 community members who participated in the focus group discussion were also selected purposely well in advance of the discussion with help from the village management team, after the objective of the study was explained to them by the research team.

The detailed follow-up case study used purposive sequential selection of participants (Neuman, 2003). Sequential selection of research participants refers to a situation whereby a researcher continues to select more participants until there is no significant new information from new respondents. Sequential selection was found more suitable for this study because it is an ongoing selection process (Merriam, 1988) without a predetermined total number of respondents as the total number depends on a "situation of diminishing returns" (Wellington, 2000, p. 139). Thus, the detailed follow-up case study started by recruiting the Village Chairperson and the Village Executive Officer of Kitamburo village. Through them, five additional members of the village government

were selected to make a team of seven respondents who provided information through participation in a focus group discussion. The selection of the five members based on age and gender. Thus two were female and three were male; of the five two were more than 60 years old, one was between 20 years and 30 years old and two were between 30 years and 40 years old.

Data collection started by a holding focus group discussion with the seven people and was followed by individual interviews with selected respondentsAt the end of the focus group, the researcher requested that participants identify six villagers who, to the best of their knowledge, would be able to provide information about the question that dominated the focus group discussion. Participants were given a chance to suggest a name and participants then voted. Names were selected after being voted "yes" by at least five participants of the focus group. After getting the six additional names, the researcher conducted individual interviews with each of them. At the end of each interview, the researcher invited the interviewee to provide three additional names of villagers who, to the best of his/her knowledge, would be capable of telling more about the subject of the conversation. After finishing interviews with the six people, the researcher went through the list of names that interviewees provided and arranged the names in order beginning with the most frequent name. The researcher used the list to continue with interviews beginning with the name that was mentioned by the most people to the name that was mentioned the least. Thus, in total 15 people were involved in individual interviews and seven in focus group discussion, making a total of 22 participants. Although the researcher had a long list of potential participants during the process, he decided to stop the interviews because there was no significant new information gathered from new interviewee. Table 1 presents summary of participants.

Table 1

Summary of Research Participants

S/No	Type of participants	Number	Data collected
1	District Education Officer	1	Interview
2	Ward Education Coordinator	1	Interview
3	School head teacher	1	Interview and focus group discussion upon follow-up data collection
4	School teachers	14	Interview and focus group discussion upon follow-up data collection
5	Community members	12	Focus group discussion
6	Community members	15	Interview
7	Community members	7	Focus group discussion

Table 1

Methods of Data Collection

Data in both the pre-study and the detailed follow-up study was mainly collected through interviews. A basic interview guide was prepared and contextualized during field interviews on the basis of the status of the interviewee. Focus group discussions were also guided by questions that were prepared well in advance. Each interview session took 40 to 55 minutes and was carried out at relevant time and space according to respondents' and researcher preferences. At the end of each interview, the respondent was requested to mention a pseudonym of his or her choice which is used in the research report and this paper.

Other data collection techniques were observation, document review and focus groups. The researcher recorded instances of specific events and behavior as suggested by Merriam (1988) on a coded sheet of paper prepared well in advance for that purpose. Documents reviewed in this study included certificates of award to the village, a football trophy, active and archival school and village documents, relevant individual letters of selected participants, and school and village buildings. All these were interpreted with reference to their potential contribution to the community commitment to support the school. In all cases when focus groups were used, the question for discussion was posed to the participants who were then allowed to respond voluntarily. The researcher moderated the discussion to insure it was within the topic. Both directive and nondirective techniques were used to let participants contribute to the agenda. Interviews and focus group discussions were audio recorded, then transcribed in Kiswahili which was the language of communication and then translated for use. Before using the information, respondents had the chance to read the transcription and confirm that what was transcribed represent what he/she had said.

Analysis of Data

Data analysis was part and parcel of the data collection as recommended by Wellington (2000, p. 134). The researcher started with data reduction. Data reduction is the "selection and condensation" of the collected data into "themes, clusters and categories" (Wellington, 2000, p. 134). After reduction, data was displayed (Wellington, 2000) in order to have a visible conception of data and charting out potential

relationships that helped to lead to the conclusion. Data display was done with a conception of framework of the study as suggested by Yin (2009). This study was framed in the community capacity model and thus at that point the researcher visualized the community strengths, the community mechanisms, and the outputs for purposes of identifying possible catalysts conditions that led to the emergence of community support at Kitamburo. Data was analysed in relation to specific research questions and the conceptual framework. Finally, conclusions which informed this paper were drawn.

The Study Area

Kitamburo community is a rural community in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. It is located at the edges of a plateau within the general wider plateau that characterized the administrative district to which it belongs. It is about 40 km from the municipality which is also the headquarters of the administrative region to which Kitamburo belongs. However, due to the poor roads that characterize most rural areas in Tanzania, it takes about 90 minutes using a powerful vehicle like Land-cruiser to reach the Kitamburo community. Of the 90 minutes, 30 minutes are needed to drive the 7 km from the district headquarters to the community. There was only one public transport vehicle (a bus) which passed through the community towards the regional headquarters and back to a village next to Kitamburo. Until 2009, the community belonged to one administrative village, but due to an increase in population it was divided into two administrative villages, Kitamburo and Ndolu. Both the pre-study and the detailed case study approached the community as one entity and thus involved participants from both administrative villages.

The approximate altitude of Kitamburo is 1700m—2100m. Rainy season is between November and May.   The average annual rainfall in the community was 1000 mm. Soils were predominantly red clay with dark top soil and were generally slippery when it rained. The main vegetation was forest and grassland. Forests were predominantly manmade and most tree varieties were exotic indicating a deliberate effort at forestation by community members. Trees were used for timber and fuel. The main economic activity in the community was crop cultivation. Major crops were maize, vegetables and fruits. Animal and bird keeping is also practiced.   Of the 15 interviews, 9 were conducted in the homes of the respondents. Most household compounds had more than one house—a big house and small houses nearby. In most cases, the big house was relatively good and it was for sleeping and used as a sitting room, although some households had an independent house for a sitting room. Other houses in the compounds were used as kitchens and for storage of food and other belongings of the household. None of the compounds had a kitchen inside the house. The overall scenario at Kitamburo suggested that, economically, most community members had already moved out of abject poverty and were working their own pieces of land. However, the community had no dispensary, no supply of tap water and no big shops to purchase consumables. Kitamburo primary school is located a few meters from the centre of the community.

The School Curriculum

The school followed the national curriculum. Subjects taught were mathematics, English, Kiswahili, science, history, geography, civics, information and communication technology, domestic science and personality. These subjects were taught by 16 teachers who constituted the school teaching staff, including

Table 2

The Teachers' Years of Service and Teaching at Kitamburo Primary School

Interviewee	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Years of Teaching	26	16	09	11	01	17	03	11 months	37	02	07	05	26	21	30
Years at Kitamburo	26	16	09	11	01	17	03	11 months	01	02	07	05	26	11	06

Source: Field data collection, 2011.

Table 2

the head teacher. Including the incumbent head teacher, the school had employed eight different head teachers since 1975 when it was established. At the time of data collection, most teachers had been at the school for many years. Table 2 shows a summary of teachers with the respective number of years they served at Kitamburo primary school. In addition 12 of 15 teachers interviewed (80%) had the same number of years of service and years of staying in Kitamburo, indicating that , they were not transferred to another school. Moreover, whereas some teachers stayed for as many as 26 years in the school; six teachers had stayed in the school for 5 years or less, which provided the opportunity for mentorship by long-term exp*er*ienced teachers.

Findings

Origin of the Village

The researcher approached Kitamburo community as a single entity. Data indicated that Kitamburo started as a traditional settlement. While respondents knew little of the genealogical history of the community, they had insights about its emergence with one villager saying,

> "This village originates from up there. It was established in a land that belonged to my father." (Interview notes with Kijogoo, 21/01/2014). Another villager recalled, "When we started to join together and establish this village we had no strangers." (Interview notes

with Severina Mkaluka, 18/01/2014). This indicated that founder community members were tied by blood relationships. None of the respondents could remember the exact number of residents who made up the community when it started, but village documents indicated that Kitamburo started in the year 1968 with 38 founder households.

A founding member of the community, Galamula Magobe, recalled the difficulties that villagers had in starting the community, saying,

> The village started with a lot of difficulties. This village was as if not well recognized and even if it was recognized it was as if there will be a certain loss in it. (Interview notes with Galamula Magobe, 22/01/2014)

From the beginning people were not sure whether joining in the village would help them to make positive progress or if they would be just wasting their time and resources because the village emerged from:

> A women faith based association. They were neighbors. The association included both clan members and non-clan members. (Interview notes with Galamula Magobe, 22/01/2014)

Kitamburo community started as a village and the village emerged from member association. This suggested the existence of commonalities amongst association members who later turned to village members. The

association was called the "Kitamburo Lutheran Church Women Association Group" (Interview notes with Kijogoo, 21/01/2014).

Villagers did not remember the exact number of founding members and had mixed memories about the total number. While some said seven (interview with Severina Mkaluka, 18/01/2014), others said eight (interview notes with Kingie Mnyumba, 22/01/2014), however reports consistently indicated there were fewer than 10. The association's religious affiliation suggests the role of foreign ideas as a catalyst in the life of Kitamburo community members since the roots of the Lutheran Church involved are not African. It seems clear though that common religious beliefs inside the church influenced founders to join together as an association, this extension from church might have been motivated by different things, but one probable motivation was a search for a tangible better life in the present rather than waiting for better life after death. An immediate result of the community's efforts to create a tangible good life was more crop production. This prompted the association to request a piece of land so that they could establish joint crop cultivation activities. When asked how the association of few members grew to a big community, respondents responded that:

> In the course of farming [the association joint farm] the women cultivated wheat in the first year. In the next year the wheat did so well this made other people including men to join the group. (Interview notes with Kijogoo, 21/01/2014)

This meant when men found women making progress on their farm, they decided to join them. Joining the women's association was not the only option for men. The men could easily have decided to use the patriarchal system widely practiced at that time in African culture to prohibit women from working in the association. The fact that the men did not revert to the patriarchal system with regard to the farm indicated that people at Kitamburo had the urge to have a working strategy as a way out of the poverty in which they were living. The people's urge for positive change was evidenced by one respondent who said:

> People in this highlands are pro changes, they like changes. (Interview notes with Kingie Mnyumba 22/01/2014)

The women's decision to accept men into an association initiated by women implied recognition of the potency of diversity in having things done. It also reflected mutual trust between men and women. Men trusted that women could do something and women trusted that the men would bring added value to the association. The association had females as founding members and was led by a female.

> When the women association group absorbed many members, Mahugila the founder and leader found it difficult to lead and decided to delegate the leadership of the group to her brother. (Interview notes with Kijogoo, 21/01/2014)

The decision by men to join an association initiated and led by women raised management challenges that made Mahugila, the founder and leader of the women's association, step down and hand over leadership to a brother, Chipwasa. After leading the association for about two years, her brother handed over the leadership to yet another brother, Milonge. Village documents indicate that Kitamburo community, which emerged from a women's association with a woman as founding leader, had only that one woman leader throughout its existence.

These two Milonge and Mahugila were true brother and sister [were son and daughter of the same couple], and Chipwasa though did not belong to same family belonged to the same clan so they were relatives. (Interview notes with Galamula Magobe, 22/01/2014)

Although individual leaders changed, it is noteworthy that leaders were from the same clan and the same family background and thus provides reason to believe that the village was, for a long time, under the leadership of people who had a similar worldview. Milonge spent more than 20 years as a village chairperson. Villagers recounted that he had personal characteristics that made people love and trust him and thus they were willing to implement almost whatever he proposed.

Beginning of the School

Respondents recalled that literacy levels were extremely low when the community began. They noted that during those days:

> There were very few who could read and write. It was even difficult to get people who could take attendance of villagers in joint village activities. (Interview notes with Kingie Mnyumba, 22/01/2014)

This had changed dramatically by the time the data were collected for this study when all respondents, males and females; young and old, were able to read and write as evidenced by their capacity to read the research consent forms and read drafts of their respective interview notes after the audio recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher. As crop production and housing conditions improved, the population at Kitamburo grew and the number of children grew also, but the village had no primary school. One respondent recalled that

The idea of establishing a school came after having learnt that the village had many children and that letting them all go to another village in search of education was found to be very unfair. . . . so we tried to request for a school at the district . . . the district response was positive and they said that is one of the goals of establishing a village. (Hussein Juma, 17/01/2014)

Prior to having their own school, most children from Kitamburo were schooled in primary schools in nearby villages, both of which were at least 5 km from Kitamburo and required children to walk at least 10 km every school day. When asked who initiated the idea of constructing a school at Kitamburo, one respondent recalled:

> In fact it was the people [community members at Kitamburo] who requested for a school to the council. (I Zakary Niemba, 18/01/2014)

Kitamburo community was established *pair pass* with the country-wide villagization program in Tanzania. As noted by respondent Kingie Mnyumba:

> One of the goals of socialism was to gather people [in collective villages] in order to provide them with important services including education. (Kingie Mnyumba, 22/01/2014)

Although villagers initially hoped that the government would initiate construction of the school, it was the community members at Kitamburo who ultimately asked that the government allow them to construct a primary school in their village. It is convincing that community members wanted to balance progress made in agricultural production with progress in other important sectors like

education. The excitement of having a school was evidenced by another respondent who said:

> We went to make bricks. We villagers made bricks for the construction of two classrooms. That was one stream. . . . So that is how the school as you saw it now was constructed. It was constructed by our own efforts. Parents' effort. Yes Mr.! (Elizabeth Kigula, 22/01/2014)

Elizabeth Kigula had memories that the school started in a building designated as a village warehouse before shifting to the current proper Kitamburo primary school buildings. According to her memories, which were later confirmed with school records, the school started in 1975. The researcher wanted to know how the spirit of supporting the school initiated in the last 40 years was sustained to the time of data collection.

> Foundations were laid by the first teachers who told us that this school is around you so it is yours. We kindly request you [villagers] not be afraid of us [teachers]. We are teachers but we need to share with you, we ask your help so do not stay away from us. (Yajenga Paulo, 21/01/214)

The first teacher, who was also the first head teacher of the school, was a female teacher. Explaining how she was received by community members at Kitamburo, Kingie Mnyumba said:

> In fact they [Kitamburo community members] received her with suspicion because was a female teacher they did not believe that she could deliver what was expected of her. As you know the general trust over women during those days was doubtful. (Kingie Mnyumba, 22/01/2014)

This indicated that right from the beginning community members wanted a performing school. Kingie Mnyumba further commented that, contrary to the mistrust of community members, the female teacher was brave enough to accept living in the huts just like villagers did. This made villagers wholly accept the teacher and come to trust in her. Even though the teacher accepted this environment, she did not lose her professionalism.

> She was brave. She already had experience of working in mountainous areas so she had no problems with the environment. She stayed and worked with us until she gave out fruits under her leadership. (Kingie Mnyumba, 22/01/2014)

The "fruits" were the students who were selected to join secondary school education.

Successes and Challenges

School success stories contributed to a sense of school community connectedness. There were more and more community investments to the school which demonstrated awareness that the school belonged to the community.

> We gave them [teachers] village tractors, we said teachers should not have difficulties of getting food, we tell them to pay by installment later on, the students went to weed teachers' farms, helped them to spray insecticides, helped them to harvest, and helped to take the harvest from teachers' farms to their respective homes without any complaint from community members. This made teachers realize the community recognition of their job and motivated them [teachers] to work hard in order to reciprocate the good things villagers

did to them. (Mtamalile Matege, 17/01/2014)

Respondents claimed that at Kitamburo:

> A student to help a teacher in his/her private work is part of training to children. Such activities were regarded to contribute to child upbringing and that a student belongs to both teachers and parents. (Kingie Mnyumba, 22/01/2014)

The researcher witnessed students fetching water for teachers after finishing the school sessions. Access to drinking water was still a problem at the community and villagers were not willing to see their teachers spending their time fetching water and thus allowed them to use students to do the job after classes.

At the same time, teachers were government employees who were assigned to schools by the government through the District Education Officer. As a result, teachers were coming and going. The Kitamburo community had a practice for recognizing when a teacher was performing well, according to the community-based indicators, amongst which the transition rate of their children to secondary education was most important. One time Kitamburo received a head teacher who did not perform according to community [Kitamburo] based indicators of a performing teacher.

> We found like a loss to us because we constructed school buildings, we paid school contributions but children were not going for secondary school education, the first year no child, the second year no child, and the third year! (Mahanjam Malinguni, 17/01/2014)

This situation had a negative impact on the students and community members and made

Kitamburo community learn that not all teachers fit their set criteria.

> It seemed he had a language that whether they pass or not is none of my business provided I receive my salary. (Kingie Mnyumba 22/01/2014)

With respect to involving the community in school matters:

> He did not want to cooperate [with community members] in solving trouble issues like absenteeism nor did he like to monitor school absentees and he was able of taking unilateral decisions and beating students so this made him be in different with the school committee. (Kingie Mnyumba 22/01/2014)

While other teachers were friendly and well received by the community, and parents were ready to see their children helping teachers as already noted, this non-performing teacher was assessed as:

> Unmarried and there were rumors that he was running with grown up school girls so parents found that he is likely to cause problems. (Kingie Mnyumba 22/01/2014)

Kitamburo community members were concerned with the teacher's behavior and:

> That old man [Milonge] said we shall go to the district to see education officers and tell them this issue. (Mahanjam Malinguni, 17/01/2014)

This indicated that the Kitamburo community had visionary leadership focused on the future of the community and that students were seen as important members for the future. The leaders had insight into what issues to deal with—who, where, and when. Respondents said:

We really went there we talked to them [district education officers] in fact they understood us they said we shall do something and when they did it since that year we found students going for secondary school education. Three students passed, four students, five students and sometimes eight students we came to say that we did a good thing. (Mahanjam Malinguni, 17/01/2014)

The district transferred the poor performing head teacher and sent a new head teacher to the school. Good leadership at the district level of education administration enhanced school community connectedness. The officers were ready to listen to community grievances and acted accordingly. Thus the school experienced a certain period of challenges which made it perform badly.

A New Head Teacher

When the poor performing head teacher was transferred, a new head teacher came to revitalize school performance.

I came here as a head teacher well informed that we transfer you to a school where community members complain about poor school performance. (Mzee wa Busara, 21/01/2014)

Mzee wa Busara noted that when he reported at the school he found the school not performing well as measured by the PSLE results. He started to put into place strategies to improve school performance.

In the first place we established school council which met once monthly. This was made by all students and all teachers. Then we had staff meetings in which amongst others we discussed

issues raised in the school council . . . Then we had meetings of the school committee, then parents' meeting which were convened to school and at the end of year we had parents open day. (Mzee wa Busara, 21/01/2014)

It was through these meetings that school food was proposed as one of the strategies to address truancy and improve performance. This suggests that good leadership on the part of the school and the village helped the two institutions to work together. Almost all interviewed community members made comments like the following:

He [the new head teacher] improved the school because the one who was here before him dropped the school academically and economically to the extent that the school was about to die. (Kingie Mnyumba 22/01/2014)

The teacher was described as having several key characteristics that helped the school:

Had a good language, he loved education, had a good way of guiding students. (Galamula Magobe, 22/01/2014)

Having "good language" raises the issue of communication. To communicate for the purpose of enhancing cooperation, one must use language which can convince the person you wish to cooperate with. Community members further added that:

He [the new head teacher] was a kind of person who loved education and loved mixing with community members. The head teacher before him did not bother with school matters after office hours. (Galamula Magobe, 22/01/2014)

This implied the head teacher was able to take school issues to the village through mixing and discussing school issues in informal settings with community members without losing his status as a teacher. He had a kind of personality that made community members associate the school with him. He lived as an insider without losing the outsider qualities that brought him to Kitamburo as an expert in education. This demonstrated his creativity and flexibility, qualities that community members wished to support.

Role Models

The well-cherished Milonge, who served the position of village chairperson for more than 20 years, had visited a number of foreign countries during the heyday of socialism in Tanzania. As reported by one villager, he visited:

> West Germany before the reunion of East Germany and West Germany. He visited both countries. He visited Australia, he also visited Cuba. He visited about 5 foreign countries. (Mahanjam Malinguni, 17/01/2014)

Upon returning from those visits, Milonge used the experiences to sensitize community members to the importance of supporting the school and teachers' innovations. It is without doubt that community members learned the importance of education and informally recognized education as a criterion of good leadership. Thus one member of the focus group said:

> I should not feel so proud of myself but personally I finished schooling in this school in 1984 and there after I was privileged to go abroad for a one year study tour. I stayed in Germany and Denmark. While in Denmark I visited Russia, Spain, East and West

German, Sweden and Norway. (Focus group discussion notes, 15/01/2014)

This was the incumbent chairperson of Kitamburo village who was also chairperson of the school committee. It is convincing that education and diverse experiences (such as traveling to other countries) of top village leadership helped Kitamburo community develop workable management procedures and principles.

In addition to that, educated people from Kitamburo community were returning home, not as visitors but as development catalysts. For example:

> Zelina constructed a house for her mother, Terudi has built a house for her family, Nolina has built a house for her mother, Treace has built a house for her mother. (Mzee wa Busara, 21/01/2014)

This made community members understand the benefits of investing in education which in turn motivated more effort in investing in education, an effort which was partly translated in investing social capital by having close cooperation with teachers.

Good Governance

The village management structure at Kitamburo was in line with recommended structures as per the laws and regulations of Tanzania (United Republic of Tanzania, 2001). At the top of the village management structure was a meeting that included all of the villagers, the second level was a meeting of the village council, and the third level, a meeting of the hamlet (sub-villages). According to the law, hamlets and the village council met monthly, while all villagers met quarterly. Kitamburo, like other villages, had a village executive officer responsible for the daily execution of village management activities and a village chair person who was the head of

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the village and chairperson of all village level meetings, such as the meeting of the village council and villagers' meetings (village assembly). According to the law, the VEO was a government employee whereas the chairperson was democratically elected by villagers. The village chairperson represented the village at the ward and district levels. This suggested that the village chairperson was crucial for effective village representation and thus Kitamburo community had to ensure that the post was held by a visionary person:

> Steps are taken against leaders who are not stable. I will give an example of a period of time you can not specify the person concerned, but he assumed chairmanship of the village and we said this is just normal to rotate but his affairs were quite incorrect he was selfish, tribalism we started to question his leadership and people began to complain. Eventually a team of about 10 elders decided to call a meeting and write down the complaints and submit to the District Director. . . . the District sent here investigators who proved beyond doubt that the man squandered the village wealth . . . he was taken to custody and the District Director finally came and said the person is no longer the village chairman he is terminated from office due to one two three reasons. We chose another chairperson. (Mahanjam Malinguni, 17/01/2014)

Through strong village management, Kitamburo made bylaws to guide the various activities of the community members, including activities of education.

> Yes we had village bylaws. If somebody did not attend to a village

development activity was penalized. (Interview notes with Mpenda Elimu, 17/01/2014)

Despite effective village government, some community issues required indigenous skills, relations, knowledge, and experience:

> When the village government finds an issue can best be solved at a clan level it advises the clan leader of the concerned clan to hold a [clan] meeting and try solve the matter. (Severina Mkaluka, 18/01/2014)

This practice made the village involve indigenous leadership in various matters that were beyond the scope of village government. These included matters regarding welfare of individuals linked to clan relationships.

> Probably if we see a clan fellow whose behavior is not in line of what is expected of him or her then the respective clan must call a meeting to counsel him or her. (Severina Mkaluka, 18/01/2014)

In turn, community members recognized the importance of clan leadership. Thus, the clan relationships, which contributed to the emergence of Kitamburo community, continued to be active and respected.

This section shows how community members were critically reflecting on their statuses and taking action towards improvement. Mentorship and monitoring helped to forge collaboration despite potential different points of view amongst themselves. Collective beliefs and mutual trust strengthened the collaboration between and among community members and teachers and students.

Summary of Themes
This study was framed in a community capabilities framework (CCF) which assumes

that communities in different places have forms of capital which, in the presence of catalysts, can be used to achieve community vision and mission (Emery & Flora, 2006). The pre-study, revealed a close collaboration between the school and the community as the main contributing factor to the promising school performance. Collaboration is an aspect of social capital. Literature about social capital argues two major orientations. There are those who look at the community as an entity and thus emphasize community social capital (Putnam, 1993; Whitley & McKenzie, 2005), and those who emphasize individual's social capital (Portes, 1998). Analysis of the collected data in the detailed case study revealed existence of ties between community members and the school that were an important source of support to the school. These ties described above included a) commitment, b) accountability and responsibility, c) communication, d) participation, e)mentorship and monitoring, f) ideologies, g) values, norms and rules, h) reciprocity and i) systemic operationalization.

Since the establishment of Kitamburo, the community showed *commitment* and signs of feeling responsible for their own development. This commitment made them construct a school. Community support to the school grew organically from within the community due to the logic that the school belonged to the community. Commitment went hand in hand with a sense of *accountability and responsibility*. They requested a school because they felt accountable for the long distance their children were walking in search of primary school education and they held non-performing teachers accountable In addition, there was smooth *communication* between parents, students, and teachers. Communication enhanced and informed *participation*, which encouraged creativity and innovativeness among teachers, parents, and students. This, in turn,

encouraged regular improvement of strategies and activities. Further, there was always a system of *mentorship and monitoring* at Kitamburo. Teachers who stayed at the school for a long time mentored new teachers. Therefore the school culture was sustained over time. Moreover there was a *systemic and ongoing monitoring* of the practices of community members, teachers, and students ensuring each party effectively played its role. These roles among others were: reading on the part of students, taking care of students' school expenses on the part of parents, and teaching on the part of teachers. Also, Kitamburo community has been guided by *values, norms, and rules*. "Values are collective ideas about what is right or wrong, good or bad, and desirable or undesirable in a particular culture" (Williams, as cited in Kendall, Murray, & Linden, 2007, p. 77). Whereas values provide ideas about how people are supposed to behave, norms "have specific behavioral expectations;" they are thus "established rules of behavior or standards of conduct" (Kendall, et al., 2007, p. 78). Rules, on the other hand, are documented stands of behavior with respective enforcement sanctions. In other words, values serve as vision; norms serve as mission; and rules serve as constitution towards achieving development goals. Kitamburo community had improved well-being as its value. Everybody was struggling to improve his or her life as evidenced right from the beginning of the community when the women association looked for a farm in order to improve their income and general life and well-being. The general value of the need for improved well-being made them choose hard work over laziness, unity over isolation, and supporting innovations rather than dormancy. Also, there was strategic school community *reciprocity* that made the two institutions connect. The school benefited because the community was taking care of it on the grounds

that it viewed the school as a community property. Community members were always thinking about how to improve the school.

The Community Strengths

The interplay of various forms of capital contributed to the emergence of community support to the school that can be traced right from the beginning of Kitamburo community. Religious teachings, arguably responsible for the establishment of the association, was a form of cultural capital (Emery & Flora, 2006). The cultural capital provided by women prompted them establish an association which influenced their progress in wheat cultivation. This progress prompted men to join the association, providing yet another source of human capital. Men would not come to know how much the association had harvested without having at least some e ties with the association members. This indicated the existence of bonding ties between men and women. Thus, the small-scale individual female-male ties were translated into large scale association as well agued by Granovetter (1973) in the concept of the strength of loose ties in social capital. Acceptance of men in an association initially established and led by women, created a complex environment (Mezrow, 2000) which called for stronger political capital (Emery & Flora, 2006). Increased need of political capital required the association to have a leader with the ability to bring the voices together. Taking advantage of cultural capital (Bennett & Silva, 2011), a brother to an outgoing leader was assigned to lead the association. The good leadership enabled association to look for bridge social capital (Narayan, 1999) in order to address their dreams beyond the boundaries of their association. The bridge social capital enabled the association members to meet people, learn, and change their frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000) with the effect of and transforming both the association and the village.

The social capital enabled Kitamburo community to work together and show promising results in agricultural production. However the   money they gained from selling surplus farm products was not automatically translated into corresponding well-being of the individual community members. Through critical discourse (Mezirow, 2000), community members were able to reach a decision to construct a school, built capital, to improve teaching and learning of their children, which in turn created more human capital. The established school brought in teachers who had spent more years in school and colleges and arguably had more human capital than most community members. Knowledge is power, thus arguably, teachers were viewed as sources of knowledge in the community and thus made community members support them which, in turn, encouraged teachers to deliver and contribute to students' transition to secondary schools, an aspect of human capital. The trust and cooperation(aspects of social capital) community members had invested in constructing the school and supporting teachers was systematically being transformed to human capital through students' attendance to the primary school and transition to secondary school. In turn, the students who continued with post-primary school education were able to accumulate enough human capital which was transformed into finance capital (Hayami, 2009) through employment or improved production and productivity within the community.

Catalysts for the Emergence and Sustained Community Support to the School

The study revealed that commitment to the school and encouragement to support

innovations which contributed to promising school performances were: a) incentive system, b) transparency c) personalities, d) sustained institutions and e) historical achievements.

Community members at Kitamburo continued to have commitment in supporting the school and innovations because there was the *incentive* of positive outputs from what they were committed to do. The government encouraged the community by listening to their genuine requests. Teachers had incentives because they received privileges like access to village land for cultivation, and living rent-free in teachers' houses. Although there were not institutionalized guidelines, when one party felt that another party was not doing what was expected, the incentives changed from positive to negative, as happened to the non-performing head teacher.

Further, Kitamburo was a *transparent* community. Community members were able to let their voices be heard at any administrative level provided they had well-grounded evidence to support their grievances.

 In addition, people who assumed top community leadership had *personalities* which enabled them to mobilize resources towards community progress, amongst which happened to include community support to the school.

Also, *sustained institutions* had a strong influence. Kitamburo community emerged from a church-based association, the Lutheran church. One characteristic feature of the Lutheran church inherent from the founder of the Lutheran church, Martin Luther, right from its inception in the 16th Century, was a critical reflection of the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. It is noteworthy that most community members at Kitamburo, influenced by the teachings of the Lutheran church during their formative years, adapted the church-based strategies of community-based development activities. This influenced the frame of reference

of community members so that they engaged in critical reflections which enabled them to realize the importance of education and collaboration in enhancing community support to school improvement.

In addition to the faith-based institutions, the glue that binds community members at Kitamburo is indigenous knowledge in leadership and management dating back from pre-colonial days. At the time of data collection, Kitamburo had at least 12 clan organizations, though the majority of the villagers belonged to only three clans. Though Hyden (1980), argues that social formations that existed before colonialism and socialism in Tanzania survive because of the survival of the economic structures which give them life (p.4); I would say economic structures are not the only reasons that support the structures. Indigenous knowledge is "The information base for society, which facilitates communication and decision-making. Indigenous information systems are dynamic, and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems" (Flavier, et al. 1995, p. 479). Since the traditional clans in Kitamburo survived from pre-colonial days, it is convincing to argue that the indigenous knowledge applied in managing the clans is still needed in facilitating communication and decision making that make Kitamburo show promising community support to the school. Traditional clan leadership employs indigenous management knowledge (Beidelman, 1997). Clans in Africa were responsible for maintaining norms and customs, including making sure that the reputation of a clan was maintained and sustained through good deeds of clan members (Beidelman, 1997). Another catalyst is the good record of achieving what the community had decided to do. Achievement acted as a motivation and unifying argent. The long-term trend of strategy-action-success taught them

that there was always a possibility to win if they decided to work together toward the set objective. It was this historical achievement which contributed to the community support to the school.

Summary of Results

This study suggests that Kitamburo was bestowed with a natural environment with good weather, and was conducive to support the cultivation of a myriad of crops and keeping a variety of animals. The environment attracted people to settle in the area. In the course of living and working together in the environment, villagers established a common way of looking and acting at the world around them. Repeated testing of strategies and actions of working with the world around them showed promising results and such strategies were then institutionalized. This institutionalization led to the establishment of community values, norms, and rules which spoke with a moral voice to all villagers and therefore enhanced collaboration among the individuals and micro communities that constituted the broader Kitamburo community. One such small institution was the primary school, hence the emergence of community support to the school.

Policy Implications

Community support to school as a potential solution to poor school progress is an area extensively recommended by academics, policy makers and curriculum implementers. However, most studies are professional-centered, focusing on teachers as key agents of establishing community support to schools. This study has shown that community support at Kitamburo was organically generated and emerged from community members who then influenced teachers to innovate structures and programmes which improved school performances.

These results, suggest the importance of making sure community members have their voices heard and their efforts recognized. Villagers should not be viewed as merely recipients of curriculum and policy directives, but rather as generators of curriculum and public policies including policies in education. The well-documented decentralization program in Tanzania should have practical implementations by giving community members more powers over the school in their area. If management powers of the school shall be vested in the community it will be easy for them to do counterchecking which will ensure teachers deliver what is expected of them.

Conclusion

The situation of community support to school in Tanzania is "long in prescription and short on description" (Lortie, 1975, p.vii). Tanzania is rich in writings and policy documents emphasizing the importance of communities to support their respective schools, with little equally important contextual step-by-step description on how to establish such commitment among communities. Kitamburo community has shown signs of positive deviance by practical support to its school. Teachers, community members and students have collectively innovated activities and structures which enhanced effective implementation of the curriculum. The innovations had implications on the teaching load of teachers, education costs on the part of community members and efforts on the part of students; but none of the three sub-communities found the implications as a burden. Every sub-community was committed to fulfill what was expected in order to meet the collective community objectives.

This deep commitment made teachers teach as teachers, students study as students and community members participate in school issues as community members. Teachers made

effective teaching a part of their identity; students identified themselves as hard working; and community members identified themselves with effective participation in supporting the education of their children. All these were a result of learning processes which to a large extent originated in the roots of the community. Learning processes enabled community members, teachers and students to see what was working, and what needed to be changed.

As a teacher teaching development studies at a university level, one of the challenges I face is whose stories I bring to class to share with students about education and development practices in general. In more cases than not, I used to feed my students with development policies, programs and strategies that skewed towards developmentalism (Ibhawoh & Dibua, 2003), an approach which took little cognizance of voices of the rural population or of those meant to benefit from development in general. The results of this case study will serve as immediate supporting evidence for home-grown rural development strategy. Kitamburo has shown that the most important thing is not the documented policy or strategy or activity which is brought to rural community as prescription (Pritchett, 2012). The most important service is not school buildings and other services brought to serve community members as unfortunate victims. The most important thing is not the rules, norms and values that community members are directed to adopt and adapt. Rather, it is how the community gets to the activities, programs, and policies to establish services and values, norms and rules. Kitamburo has shown that what matters is the struggle the community members have to engage in to establish values, norms, rules, and structures that shall serve to tackle problems and challenges.

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About the Author(s)

Athanas Ngalawa, PhD, is a Lecturer of Development Studies. His areas of research interests are education, culture, environment, and community participation with focus to development processes of rural communities in Tanzania. His previous researches were focused on factors influencing access and performance of students in primary schools. Also, Dr. Ngalawa has a special interest in curriculum studies particularly curriculum implementation. He is conversant with, social capital theory, education policies of Tanzania, and participatory theatre approaches in development interventions.

Elaine Simmt, PhD, is a Professor of Secondary (Mathematics) Education. Her research is focused in mathematics education. In particular, she explores teaching and learning as understood through the frame of complexity theory. A second and complementary area of study is centred in teacher education, specifically mathematics-for-teaching. School-based research has led to Simmt's interest in investigating research methods and designs suitable for studying the complex and contextual phenomena of teaching and learning. In her most recent work, Dr Simmt has joined colleagues in a series of international research and development projects in Tanzania.

Florence Glanfield, PhD, is a professor of mathematics education. Her research interests focus on the experiences that individuals (teachers and learners) and communities have with mathematics and learning mathematics. Glanfield collaborates with colleagues in all research projects and is currently engaged in projects with Canadian Indigenous communities, urban Aboriginal youth, elementary & secondary mathematics teachers, and primary teachers and teacher educators in Tanzania.

Appendix A

Sample interview protocol - Kitamburo

Post Ujamaa School-community connectedness: Exploring Learning Communities in Rural Areas

Post *ujamaa* school-community connectedness: Exploring learning communities in rural areas seek to understand how some communities in Tanzania has managed to establish and maintain closer school-community partnership which promote the teaching and learning in primary schools. *Kitamburo* village is one of the villages with such kind of relationships which helps the students at *Kitamburo* to show good performance in Mathematics. You are kindly requested to tell us stories which explain the conditions in *Kitamburo* village which led to the emergence of a learning community that support the teaching and learning of mathematics in this village. You are chosen to participate in this study because of your better knowledge on the stories that led to the emergence of the said learning community. I have a tape recorder so I would like to get your consent to allow me tape record the stories you will tell me so that I will not miss any of them. The stories you tell will be treated confidentially and will be used for purposes of this study only. To ensure that you are requested to choose a pseudonym which will be used in reporting the stories you tell. If you agree to participate in this study, I kindly request you to fill in and sign the consent form.

Date:
Interviewee Actual Name:
Interviewee Pseudonym:
Position of Interviewee:

Questions

1. Please describe the school- community relationships in this village

2. What is the impact of the relationship between the school and community members?

3. What organs, people, norms, values and people do you think plays the central role in maintaining the relationships you have said?

4. When did the school and community members start having the kind of relationship you have said?

5. What conditions led to the beginning of the relationships you have said.

6. What things can you claim that villagers gains due to the said relationships.

7. What things can you claim that the school (teachers and students) gain due to the said relationships.

8. What mechanisms are in place to ensure community members unified actions to support the school?

9. Are there free riders? How do you deal with them?

10. How do you reach to a consensus?

11. What role is played by the leaders, organs, values and norms in maintaining the relationships?

12. How do you manage the villagers – Are villagers managed as whole group or in small groups?

13. Is there rivalry and hostility from outside the village? How do you manage it?

14. How do you manage new comers?

15. What are the challenges facing school-community connectedness?

16. What are the achievements of the closer school-community relationships?

17. If I were to join the village as a new member of the village- what are the do and don't do you were to tell me? Why?

Appendix B
Sample observation protocol- Kitamburo

Observational field notes- Post *ujamaa* school-community connectedness: Exploring learning communities in rural areas.

Observer:………………………………….
Role of observer: Complete observer/observer as participant/ participant observer
Time:……………………………….
Length of observation:…………………………………

1. The setting:
Physical environment:…………………………………….
Context:……………………………………………………..

2. Participants:

	Children	Youth	Middle age	Old	Very old	Total
Female						
Male						
Total						

3. Activities and interactions
What is going on:…………………………………….

4. Frequency and duration
When did it begin:……………………………
How long does it last:……………………………
How frequently it occurs:………………………………….

5. Subtle factors:
Informal and unplanned activities:………………………………
Symbolic and connotative meaning of words:………………………
Nonverbal communication:………………………………………

Appendix C
Sample focus group protocol- Kitamburo primary school

Good afternoon/morning and welcome to our session. My name is Athanas Ngalawa I teach at Mzumbe University and I am currently interested in understanding the conditions that led to the emergence of a learning community at Kitamburo which operates to the effect of making your school- Kitamburo Primary School, have relatively better performance in Mathematics in the district as measured by various examinations like Primary School Leaving Examinations.

You are invited to this session because you belong to the school, you are students here in the school and you know better what is happening around the village.

I will be asking you questions and you will be giving me answers. There are no wrong and right answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. I am interested in both negative comments and positive comments.

I have a tape recorder because I don't want to miss any of your explanations. You have very helpful things to tell me and I cannot write fast enough to get them all down. The explanation you will tell me shall contribute to writing a research report on the subject matter I just told you, how the learning community at Kitamburo came into being. To effect that, I kindly request for your consent. If you are ready to participate in this discussion please fill in the consent form that I will give you just now. If you are not ready please be free to tell me so that I request somebody else to take over your position.

Well, let's begin. To begin with, you already know my name and the place I work I would like to know the name of each of you and a brief story of himself/herself. I have this ball here with me. I will start by throwing it to one of you. Your job is to catch it and once you have it then is your turn to tell us your name, your Grade level, where do you live in this village, and a brief story about yourself. When you are done you will tell us and I will tell you to through the ball to another person of your choice so that he/she can do the same.

Now we know each other. Let us go to the questions.

1. I have this circle here with a picture of a person at the center. This picture represents you. I also have a piece of paper written 'Mathematics". Your jobs is come forward and position this piece of paper at a distance you will choose from you (the picture at the center) and tell us why have you decide to put it at that particular distance from you. As a general rule putting it very close means you love mathematics and putting it far from you means you do not love mathematics. Putting it outside the circle means you would wish not to see mathematics in your school timetable at all.

2. Now this time the center picture is a house. This house represents your school- Kitamburo. Instead of having just one piece of paper I have so many papers with names of institutions around our village. I will choose one of you to put the relative position of the institutions I have listed from the school. As usual, putting it very close to the school means the institution is very helpful to your life and learning here in

school while putting it very far it means the institution has insignificant contribution. Ok now you see the institutions- can we read loudly? (they read while the one who put them is pointing using a pointer). Do you think the list is exhaustive or I have forgotten some of the institutions? Fine you see how our fellow "x" have positioned the institutions. Now "x" can you tell us why do you put institution 'a' at that position? Who has a different point of view and a different position he/she would have positioned institution 'a'? Ok go and show us? Ok why do you decide to put it there?

3. Now instead of institutions I have a list of organization organs here in the school and in our village.

4. Ok. This time I have a list of teachers and at the center is mathematics.

5. Ok this time I have a list of names of villagers and at the center is the school.

6. I have the same list of villagers and at the center is mathematics.

7. Suppose you are to create a balance sheet between the school and the village how would it look like- how the school gains from the villagers and how the villagers gains from the school?

8. Suppose I want to join this village what would you tell me to do or not to do in order to be accepted as a good member of the village.

9. Ok Do you have a question to ask me?

10. Thank you for taking your time to participate in this discussion. I will go and write down your views and come back to confirm with you in future days before I decide to use it in my research.