"Respect is an Investment": Community Perceptions of Social and Emotional Competencies in Early Childhood from Mtwara, Tanzania

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Abstract

Education programs in Africa increasingly aim to develop and measure social and emotional competencies. However, assessments are typically adapted from those developed in other continents and are not derived from local perspectives. In the current study, we conducted focus groups and individual interviews with teachers, parents and students in 4 randomly selected rural primary schools from Mtwara region in Tanzania, 3 of which had recently begun participation in a pre-primary education program. The aim was to understand the social and emotional competencies in early childhood that participants viewed as important for school and for life in general. Compared to existing frameworks of social and emotional competencies, participants placed more emphasis on aspects of social responsibility, for example respect, obedience and being an attentive listener. Individual competencies such as curiosity, self-direction and self-belief were valued more by teachers than parents and seen as most important for success at school. In general, most social and emotional competencies – even individual competencies - were discussed in terms of social relationships. Findings have implications for how cultural values are considered in assessment, curriculum design and parent and community engagement around pre-school education.

Keywords

Education, assessment, preschool education, social and emotional competencies, early childhood, cultural values, Africa, Tanzania

Introduction

There has been a recent growth in the implementation of pre-primary programs in low-income countries and evaluations of these programs, which require measurement of aspects of children's development and learning.

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The assessments used in these evaluations are initially conceived and designed elsewhere, however. Few assessment exercises begin with an in-depth investigation into how domains of child development are perceived and valued by the local community. This paper reports such an investigation in the Mtwara region of Tanzania to understand the similarities and differences between community perceptions of child development and those included in international assessments and frameworks. The study focuses particularly on social and emotional competencies.

The context for our study is the USAID Tusome Pamoja Pre-Primary Program, which is being implemented in 2 districts in the Mtwara region of Tanzania. The program is being evaluated in part using the Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes (MELQO) assessment (Anderson & Sayre, 2016). This is an international assessment adapted and piloted for use in Tanzania. However, there are two ways in which it may not be optimally adapted to the context. First, the assessment is intentionally designed to be international and so focuses on commonalities rather than differences among contexts. Second, the assessment has its origin in research, conceptual frameworks and other assessments used in Western countries. Some have argued (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010) that educated populations in Western countries are not only unrepresentative of the species, but that they are outliers on the spectrum of human behavior. How might an assessment developed from such populations be inappropriate for use in different contexts, such as in low and middle-income countries? Assessments may fail to include domains of development that are important for adaptive functioning in the home, community and school in different contexts. Similarly, domains can be conceptualized differently in each context. Even when assessments target appropriate domains, those domains may manifest differently by context; that is, competence in a given domain may be demonstrated by different behaviors from one context to another. The importance of these issues has been demonstrated in the development of culturally grounded assessments of mental health in Africa (Betancourt, Speelman, Onyango, & Bolton, 2009; Betancourt, Yang, Bolton, & Normand, 2014).

Social and Emotional Competencies

The current study is focused on social and emotional competencies because they are increasingly seen as important for children's education and yet studies addressing them in low- and middle-income countries (e.g., Wolf et al., 2017) are few. We also hypothesize that the development of social and emotional competencies has a strong cultural component and so contextually relevant research is particularly important in this domain. We use the term competencies to describe behaving effectively in a given situation. Because competencies are typically comprised of skills, abilities and knowledge, they tend to be more complex (they may involve a combination of several skills or abilities) than skills or abilities alone. For example, the competency of making friends may involve the skills of understanding emotions and communication. Thus, identifying the appropriate set of skills, abilities, and knowledge that comprise a competency in a context is important for understanding and supporting children's development.

Several frameworks exist to conceptualize social and emotional competencies with much overlap between them. A widely used framework has been developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2017) based on a review of the research in this area (Osher et al., 2016). In this

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framework, there are five sets of interrelated social and emotional competencies, each comprised of a range of skills, abilities, and knowledge (Osher et al., 2016, p. 646): self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making.

Our study focuses on the role of social and emotional competencies in the adaption to school and for academic success (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). This is because our research aims to inform assessments used in the evaluation of pre-primary programs. It is also because we hypothesize that the key differences between valued competencies in Tanzania and Western countries will, in part, be reflected in the differences in competencies, skills and abilities required for success at home and at school in rural areas in Tanzania.

Social and Emotional Competencies in sub-Saharan Africa

To understand whether and how children's social and emotional competencies may differ in the study location, we need to understand the contextual factors that shape development (Goodnow, 1988; Harkness & Super, 1992). Children's behavior is shaped directly by their learning environment and by cultural values (Greenfield, 2009; 2016; Keller et al., 2006), both of which are influenced by the socio-demographics of society. In the context of this study most families are subsistence farmers. In this mode of economic activity, families benefit most from large numbers of obedient children who can farm the land (LeVine et al., 1993). This contrasts with knowledge economies in which families benefit more from investing in the education and independence of a smaller number of children. Notwithstanding considerable diversity in culture and context around the world, the contrast between subsistence agricultural societies and educated, industrialised societies (Henrich et al., 2010) is useful for identifying differences and similarities in the factors shaping children's development (Greenfield, 2009; 2016; Lancy, 2014). Greenfield (2016) reviews the aspects of agricultural societies that are most important for shaping children's development. Agricultural societies have a collectivist (rather than individualist) culture; families have many children with several generations living together; they have age-graded authority and contextualised (rather than abstract) thinking; they provide more social guidance and more criticism (rather than praise and support) to children; and family obligations are key. The consequences for social and emotional competencies are that children are to have more respect, obedience, shyness, empathy, a desire to fit in, cooperation, and ascribed gender roles than those in educated and industrialised societies.

In sub-Saharan Africa, much published evidence on children relates to cognitive rather than social and behavioral domains of social and emotional competencies. Lancy (2014) notes that children in farming communities have attention that is 'wide-angled and abiding' rather than focused and fleeting. Results of sustained attention assessments (Clarke et al., 2008; Halliday et al., 2012; Zuilkowski, McCoy, Serpell, Matafwali, & Fink, 2016) suggest that children in Africa, unlike with other abstract cognitive tests, perform at or above Western norms. Similarly, in Zambia, poor rural children performed better than wealthier children on an attention task, in contrast to all other domains in the test battery (Zuilkowski et al., 2016). However, cognitive skills are not the highest valued competencies in rural African communities. In Uganda, cleverness has overtones of cheekiness and cunning (White, 1998). Rural communities in Uganda associated intelligence with being slow, careful and active whereas teachers associated intelligence with speed (Wober, 1972). A substantial body of research points to the value placed on social

responsibility (Serpell, 2011) by communities in Africa, including aspects such as respect, obedience, and cooperativeness (Bissiliat, Laya, Pierre, & Pidoux, 1967; Dasen et al., 1985; Fortes, 1938; Grigorenko et al., 2001; Serpell, 1993; Super, 1983).

Self-control is a social and emotional competency that may differ across cultures. In educated and industrialized societies, control in young children predicts a range of long term outcomes (Moffitt et al., 2011). In Zambia, young children were relatively successful at a delayed gratification task (Zuilkowski et al., 2016) and poorer children were better able to delay gratification than wealthier children. The explanation for this may be partly that children in rural areas are more used to being obedient to adults.

Social and Emotional Competencies at School in sub-Saharan Africa

If children in subsistence-agricultural societies develop different competencies from those in industrialized-educated societies, there may be implications for a child's transition to school because the social and emotional competencies encouraged at school may be at odds with those developed at home. For example, schooling may promote behaviors, such as questioning adults, that could undermine values of respect and obedience (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, 2000; Jukes, Zuilkowski, Okello, & Harris, 2013). One study in the Gambia (Jukes, Zuilkowski, & Grigorenko, in press) found that children who started – but did not complete – primary school were seen as less respectful and obedient that those who do not enroll in school at all. Similarly, in Mexico, (Chavajay & Rogoff, (Chavajay & Rogoff, 2002) mothers who had been to school were less likely to engage in cooperative problem solving with children as compared with mothers who had not been to school. Lancy (2014) notes several aspects of childhood in subsistence-agricultural communities that may contrast with the culture of schools: persistent direct questioning is rare and questions are used only to find out information you do not know, rather than to assess someone's knowledge; learning is often from siblings rather than adults, by observation rather than instruction, and involves little verbalization and few why questions; averting one's eyes is respectful but may be interpreted by teachers as a lack of attention.

However, some findings point to the compatibility of the values of subsistence-agricultural communities and schooling. Intriguing research from Zambia found that social responsibility was a better predictor of long-term success in school than cognitive ability (Serpell & Jere-Folotiya, 2008) for girls, although both domains predicted the educational success of boys.

There is a clear need to investigate further the social and emotional competencies that help children to succeed in school in subsistence-agricultural communities, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The aim of this study was to identify competencies that are important for children's education in Tanzania and to identify contextually relevant behaviors that exemplify these competencies. This study is the first step in a research program to develop assessments of social and emotional competencies that are underrepresented in current test batteries.

> The primary research questions were:
> 1) Which social and emotional competencies are seen as important for children's general development in Mtwara, Tanzania?
> 2) Which social and emotional competencies are seen as important for children to adapt to and succeed in school in Mtwara, Tanzania?

Several secondary research questions were aimed at understanding perceptions of social and emotional competencies in more depth and understanding the potential for pre-primary education to support the development of social and emotional competencies. These questions included:

3) Which behaviors demonstrate a given social and emotional competency?
4) How does the competency develop with age through early childhood?
5) What do parents and teachers do to support development of the competence?
6) Is the competence equally important for boys and girls?

Methods

Research Design

The current study followed a grounded theory approach (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996) in which we used qualitative data from participants to construct conceptual categories representing local perceptions of social and emotional competencies. The research was not driven by hypotheses, but we nevertheless had some expectations about the study's findings. For example, we expected that parents' and teachers' perceptions would differ from published social and emotional competency frameworks, broadly along the lines outlined in the introduction. However, we intended our research to be agnostic about the extent of those differences in order to document them as objectively as possible. Interviews were conducted by four Tanzanian University lecturers. None of the interviewers had lived or worked in the study region. Interview questions were guided by daily conversations among the four researchers and with the first author, a British education researcher with 20 years of experience in Tanzania and some previous experience conducting research projects in the study region.

Population, Participants and Sampling Technique

The study took place in Mtwara Region, in the south of Tanzania, separated from Mozambique by the Ruvuma river. The region is divided into nine districts with a regional population of just over 1.2 million in the 2012 census (Tanzania, 2013). The capital of the region is Mtwara town, which was developed in the 1940s as part of the failed Tanganyika groundnut scheme. The economy of the region is based on subsistence agriculture and cashew nuts as cash crops. The town has a deep-sea port and has seen recent foreign investment in support of offshore oil and gas exploration. Mtwara was ranked the 15th Region out of 25 in primary school leaving examination (PSLE) pass rates in 2013 (PORALG, 2014).

Three of the four participating schools were selected from Mtwara Rural (two schools) and Tandahimba (one school) districts where the Tusome Pamoja Pre-Primary program had just been launched. A fourth school was selected from Nanyamba district where the pre-primary program was not taking place. In all cases, the schools were chosen at random from a list of all schools in the district. The participating communities were typical of the region. They were mainly from the Makonde ethnic group and mainly Muslim, with a minority of Christians. They were subsistence farmers, growing cassava, maize, peas and millet as food crops and cashew nuts and sesame as cash crops, supplemented by small-scale animal husbandry. All villages had mobile phone access, but electricity was widespread in only two of the four villages.

Table 1 summarizes basic information for the four schools. Performance in primary school leaving exams is ranked nationally in two groups – schools with more than 40 pupils taking the exam (School 1) and schools with fewer than 40 pupils sitting the exam (Schools 2, 3 and 4). All four schools performed more poorly in 2016 than in 2015, representing a trend across Mtwara region. For example, School 4 dropped from the 7th percentile to the 85th percentile nationally.

Table 1.
Summary information about participating schools

	Primary School Leaving Exam Percentile		Pre-Primary Program	Grade 7 cohort size, 2016	Total enrolment	Village population	Distance from Mtwara Town (km)
	2015	2016					
School 1	13th	42nd	Yes	64	916	3536	40
School 2	18th	76th	Yes	30	411	1257	35
School 3	48th	74th	Yes	18	188	1335	120
School 4	7th	85th	No	25	245	1746	80

School 1 was established in 1948 when it served as a middle school during British colonial rule, giving it a significant role in the history of secular education in Mtwara region. The village it serves is also the largest of the four villages in the study and the only one with a secondary school. In general, this village had the highest level of public services among those in the study, including widespread well water and electricity. The village is about 15 km from a cement factory, which provides minimal employment to villagers. School 2 was the second largest school we visited and a similar distance from Mtwara town as School 1. School 2 also had electricity and was close to the cement factory. School 3 was founded in 1973 and was the smallest school we visited and the furthest from Mtwara town. There was no electricity in the village and few public services. There was a secondary school available to primary school graduates in the neighboring villages. School 4 was founded in 2007 as part of efforts to increase access to basic education. Before that, children in the village walked around 5 km to a neighboring primary school. The school has only four teachers to cover seven classes. Students graduating from the primary school could attend a secondary school in a neighboring village in the same ward.

It is important to understand the nature of classroom instruction and student-teacher interactions in this region. Most teachers are posted to their schools and are frequently from other districts or regions in the country. In pre-primary school and the lower grades of primary school, all lessons are taught by one teacher. Instruction typically takes place with the teacher at the blackboard and children seated in desks, if available, or on the floor. All communication is initiated and controlled by the teacher. Children talk only when prompted by the teacher or when reporting conflict among them. Teachers use extensive repetition and questions are directed at whole groups more than at individuals, in part because of large class sizes. Group responses by the class are sometimes followed by children raising their hands and being individually selected to repeat the answer. Children are also selected to come to the front of the class to answer a question out loud to the class or to write something on the board. Few pre-primary teachers are trained, which results in them spending more time managing pupils' behavior than in teaching and learning. Professional development for teachers in the Tusome Pamoja project has focused on encouraging teachers to check for understanding among pupils, to be a facilitator of learning and to practice activity-based learning, allowing pupils to incorporate home experiences in their learning. Teachers are encouraged to develop learning areas in their

classrooms to promote child-centered and play-based learning opportunities for children.

Participants and Data Collection Methods

Participants were parents, teachers and pupils from the four selected schools. Focus groups discussions were conducted in single-sex groups based on our previous experience that women were reluctant to talk in the presence of men. We conducted four focus groups with a total of 61 male parents and five focus groups with 34 women. We conducted individual interviews with four male parents and five female parents in the first school and decided to rely solely on focus groups with parents as they were a more effective method of generating useful qualitative data.

We conducted individual interviews with 16 male teachers and 11 female teachers across the four schools. A total of 80 students were interviewed individually after taking part in a group session to draw pictures of their experience of starting school. Ten students – five boys and five girls - were selected from each of two classes in all four schools. Our sampling strategy aimed to provide a degree of representativeness but also helped to ensure that we included some of the relatively few children who made good interviewees. In each class, we randomly selected five of these students and asked teachers to select another five students who were more likely to provide detailed information in response to our questions. In the first school, we interviewed ten children from each of standard I and II (the first two years of primary school). Children in standard I provided very little information and so we switched to interviewing standard II and IV in subsequent schools. Children in pre-primary were considered too young to provide useful information in interviews. Instead we asked older children about their experience of starting both pre-primary and primary school. The adequacy of the sample size was monitored by assessing data saturation in the list of competencies provided by adult interviewees. When no new competencies were generated in interviews with the third and fourth schools, we concluded that data saturation had been achieved (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Procedure

Consent

Ethical review of the research was conducted, and approval was obtained from the RTI Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (Proposal No. 0215203.000.002) and from the Tanzania Commission of Science and Technology (Permit No. 2017-121-NA-2016-313). All adults gave informed consent and students gave verbal assent.

Interviews and focus groups

Teachers and parents were interviewed by two researchers, with one asking most of the questions and the other making detailed notes. All adult interviews were recorded using a portable digital audio recorder. The approach to interviews was developed through pilot work in which we explored different questions to find those that elicited the most useful responses.

> The interviews focused on two central questions:
> 1) What are the qualities that you would like your children/pupils to develop in life?
> 2) What are the qualities that help a child to succeed at school?

The term *competencies*– as discussed in the introduction – is the most accurate term in English to describe the focus of our research. This term was not easy to translate into Kiswahili. Instead we used two words in Kiswahili, which roughly map onto the English word qualities or character. The first word was *sifa*, which means *character* or *reputation,* and can also be used to mean *praise*. This term was sometimes additionally clarified as *sifa za*

kimalezi (character resulting from upbringing) and *sifa za kimwenendo* (the character relating to one's conduct). The second word used was *tabia,* translated as *behavior, character, disposition* or *habits*. Less frequently, we used *mwenendo* (conduct) and *matendo* (actions).

Interview guides contained several probes for each of the two main questions (see Appendix A). In addition, all four interviewers were closely involved in the conception and design of the study and could guide questioning in the desired direction. The aims of the first two questions were to elicit as many qualities or competencies as possible. Additional questions were asked of each competency mentioned by interviewees. The questions sought to understand the competency further by probing for behavioral examples, asking why the competency is important for life and for schooling, asking how the competency developed with age and what parents and teachers do to develop the competency. From the second school onwards, we added a question asking respondents to list their top five most important competencies mentioned. A key aim of additional questions was to generate enough behavioral examples of each competency to aid analysis. To ensure that all competencies were fully described, in the third and fourth schools we asked respondents direct question about competencies for which we had fewer behavioral examples even if they had not mentioned these competencies in their interview. We compiled a list of qualities mentioned and assigned them numerical codes, which were used to label notes in the field. At the end of each day we reviewed new competencies mentioned by respondents and discussed whether they warranted a new code or could be combined with existing terms.

Interviews with students addressed the second research question concerning the competencies required to adapt to and succeed in school. Data collection from students began by giving them paper and colored pencils and asking them to draw two pictures – one of something that made them happy in their first days at school and one of something they found difficult. This strategy was somewhat informative, although some students told us they simply produced something they felt capable of drawing. The drawing session at least helped students to feel more comfortable with the research process. Individual interviews (see Appendix B) followed the group drawing session with one interviewer per student. No recording device was used; responses were recorded in detailed notes. Students were asked to explain their drawing and to expand on the factors that they liked and disliked about their first days of school as well as the things that surprised them. Additional probes were included to ensure that students discussed their experience in the classroom as well as at school in general. Probing children about their classroom experience was particularly important as the very first days of school were often concerned only with enrolment of students and other administrative issues and little classroom instruction took place. Two interview questions elicited the most relevant information for our research. The first asked children what they had learned at home that helped them in school. The second asked them what advice they would give a younger child about to start school. In both cases, responses helped us understand how the school experience could be designed to support the development of children's competencies valued by parents and teachers and to understand the competencies that children saw as important for being successful at school.

Data Processing and Analysis

Data were entered from written notes into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Audio recordings were used to supplement written notes and to resolve any ambiguities. Data were entered such that each line of the spreadsheet contained information about one competency mentioned in response to a given interview question. For each competency, the following information was

entered into the database: behavioral examples; information pertaining to how competencies are nurtured; how competencies are helpful for schooling; verbatim quotes; and other information. All data were entered in Kiswahili with an accompanying English translation.

Analysis of the information was conducted by competency. Only competencies spontaneously mentioned by respondents – rather than prompted by interviewers – were included. Each researcher was given responsibility for analyzing all the information relating to one competency. The first step in this analysis involved assessing the accuracy of coding to ensure that information was attributed to the right competency. Second, researchers assessed the accuracy of translations from Kiswahili into English. These first two steps provided quality assurance in the coding and translation of data. The final step involved writing a narrative analysis for each assigned competency. This analysis used behavioral examples and other information to infer the meaning of each competency in the eyes of respondents. Researchers also provided summarized information from participants addressing each of the six research questions described above. In addition to the narrative analyses, we also calculated the number of interviews (individual or focus group) in which competencies were mentioned. The frequency analysis was conducted separately for each question and overall for all questions (excluding questions where interviewers prompted respondents to discuss certain competencies).

A second quantitative analysis was conducted at the level of example behaviors for the competencies. One aim of this analysis was to identify commonalities among competencies. All behaviors were given unique codes by the four Tanzanian researchers. Each researcher then reviewed the others' codes and merged similar behaviors into a single code. Analyses were then conducted to assess the number of behaviors shared by any given pair of competencies. Pairs or groups of competencies were then identified where a high proportion of the total number of behaviors were shared between the two competencies. This analysis helped to understand the meaning of the competencies and to identify similarities and redundancy among them. The first author used the quantitative and qualitative descriptions to group and categorize competencies and integrated narrative analyses to produce the descriptions below.

Results

Frequency of Competition

We first present the results of the frequency analysis. Table 2 shows the number of interviews and focus groups in which competencies were mentioned by teachers, parents and students and the number of teacher interviews and parent focus group discussions in which the competency was rated as one of the five most important competencies for children. Six competencies were mentioned most frequently by all three groups and also rated as important: Respect, attentive listener, obedient, cooperative, clean, polite and humble. Discipline was mentioned more by teachers and parents than children but was rated as the most important competency by 8 out of 21 teachers and 4 out of 10 parent focus group discussions. Some competencies were emphasized more by teachers than parents. For example, self-motivation was rated as important in 10 individual interviews with teachers but by only 1 parent focus group. Eight teachers rated curiosity as important and four rated self-belief as important; these two competencies were not rated as important by any parent and each was mentioned by only one student. Parents were more concerned about trustworthiness than teachers, with 4 parent focus groups, but no teacher, rating it as important.

Table 2.
Number of interviews or focus groups with parents, teachers and pupils in which each competency was mentioned and rated as important.

		Mentioned in interviews				Rated as important	
English	Kiswahili	Parent FGD (13 FGDs)	Parent Interview (N=10)	Teacher (N=23)	Pupils (N=80)	Parent FGD (10 FGDs)	Teacher (n=21)
Respectful	Mwenye heshima	11	6	16	39	5	6
Attentive listener	Msikivu	11	10	17	12	4	5
Obedient	Mtii	11	8	15	16	8	3
Cooperative	Anayeshirikiana	8	1	14	20	2	4
Clean	Msafi	9	3	11	19	1	4
Polite, calm and humble	Mpole /mtulivu	8	4	12	13	1	3
Self-directed	Anayejituma	5	4	15	5	1	10
Hardworking	Mwenye juhudi / bidii	8	2	10	14	0	3
Disciplined	Mwenye nidhamu	7	4	13	3	5	11
Curiosity	Mdadisi	6	1	17	1	0	8
Clever	Mwerevu	6	2	7	1	0	1
Love of parent/teacher	Anayependa wazazi/waalimu	4	2	5	6	1	2
Trustworthy	Mwaminifu	9	2	1	3	4	0
Understanding	Muelewa	6	2	5	0	2	0
Funny	Mcheshi	5	1	6	0	0	0
Courageous	Aliye hodari	4	1	7	0	0	1
Time management	Anayejali /tunza muda	2	1	6	5	1	3
Self-aware	Anayejitambua	6	1	3	1	1	1
Confident, self-belief	Anayejiamini	2	0	8	1	0	4
Persistent	Asiyekatatamaa	4	0	6	0	1	0
Sociable	Mchangamfu	4	2	3	2	0	3
Has fear of God	Mwenye hofu ya Mungu	2	2	5	0	0	1
Seeks understanding	Mfuataliaji	3	2	3	0	1	4
Truthful	Msema kweli	3	2	2	0	1	1
Careful	Makini	3	0	4	0	0	0
Smart/decent	Nadhifu	1	2	3	2	0	0
Creative	Mbunifu	2	0	4	0	0	3
Daring/Risk-taking	Mthubutu	1	0	4	0	0	1
Civilized, calm	Mstarabu	3	0	0	4	1	0
Wise	Mwenye busara	3	0	1	1	1	0
Has goals	Mwenye malengo	1	0	3	0	0	2
Knowledgeable	Mwenye maarifa	2	0	1	1	0	0
Tolerates hunger	Mvumilivu wa njaa	1	0	2	1	0	2
Hospitable	Mkarimu	0	2	1	0	0	0
Makes friends	Anayejenga marafiki	0	0	2	1	0	0

Defining and Categorizing Competition

Through an analysis of commonalities in the behavioral examples given by respondents, we grouped sets of competencies together. The first clear group of competencies we termed *social responsibility*. This category included four of the most frequently discussed competencies – *attentive listener, obedient, disciplined, polite and humble* – that had many behaviors in common. Each competency had between 16 and 22 behavioral examples and each pair of competencies in the group had between 4 and 7 behaviors in common. In addition, these competencies had some behaviors in common with less frequently mentioned competencies, providing some evidence that many social and emotional competencies share some commonalities. For example, the *trustworthy* competency had a few behaviors in common with the social responsibility competencies. All ten behavioral examples of *self-awareness* also appeared in *attentive listener* and all three behaviors under *time management* appeared in *obedient*.

The second group of competencies we termed *social relationships* and included competencies that involved interacting with others but were not part of the *social responsibility* competencies. Examples included *cooperation* and *being sociable*. A final category we termed *individual competencies,* consisting of competencies that can be demonstrated independently of other people. It included competencies emphasized by teachers more than parents such *as curiosity, self-belief* and *self-motivation*. The following description of participant responses is organized by these categories.

Social Responsibility

As discussed above, social responsibility competencies were mentioned more frequently than others and shared many behaviors.

Attentive listener (msikivu). The Kiswahili word *msikivu* literally means *listener* but implies someone who is attentive and responsive in listening. *Msikivu* is someone who, when told something, understands and pays attention to what they have to do. Behaviors include listening to instructions and paying attention in class. However, an attentive listener must also provide evidence in subsequent action by fulfilling assignments and providing the correct information when sent with a message. Attentiveness helps a child to take in whatever is being taught, process it and put it into practice. Several respondents highlighted how listening to elders can help children avoid problems in the future. Some parents and one teacher illustrated the concept with a popular rhyming proverb "asiyesikia la mkuu, huvunjika guu" translated as "he/she who does not listen to elders will break a leg (i. e., face difficulties)" (School 2, FGD 1; School 3 Teacher 4). Other parents used the saying "asiyefunzwa na mamaye atafunzwa na ulimwengu," meaning "he/she who is not taught by his/her mother will be taught by the world" (School 3, FGD 1).

Obedient (mtii). Obedience can be displayed in a few different ways. First, children can follow orders from elders, and agree to being sent on errands. Teachers and parents said that obedience did not mean to obey or to conform to instructions blindly. Children should comply with "positive" instructions only (School 2, FGD3). Second, children show obedience by following norms and customs – school rules, their roles and responsibilities and Tanzanian culture in general. Third, children show obedience by participating in daily routines, such as doing chores at home.

Discipline (mwenye nidhamu). Discipline was rated as the most important competency by parents and teachers. One parent illustrated this importance using a Kiswahili idiom: "Mtoto ni nidhamu," meaning "a child is discipline" (School 3, FGD 1). Discipline had behaviors in common with many other competencies. When probed, teachers were unable to give examples of behaviors that were specific to discipline that were not also examples of respect and obedience. Qualities associated with discipline included being an attentive listener, being calm and humble, giving respect to elders and others and being obedient with instructions. Parents and teachers told us that being disciplined is vital for success in life and school.

Polite/humble (mpole) and *calm (mtulivu)*. The qualities of being polite and humble and being calm were closely associated in discussions with teachers and parents. They also overlapped with *civilized (mstaraabu*). Several individual characteristics were associated included with these competencies. A child who is easily angered and fights is not calm and polite. A child who is nervous is also not calm. The competency was principally demonstrated through behavior towards others and included reference to other competencies – a polite, calm and humble child is also obedient and respectful.

Respect (heshima). Respect did not have as many overlapping behaviors as the above four competencies but was frequently mentioned when defining those competencies. Behaviors that were specifically associated with respect included greeting elders; "receiving" (kupokea) elders and teachers, meaning to meet them as they arrive and carry their bags and books; dressing decently; and raising one's hand before speaking in class. Respect is also signified by the absence of contempt for others and by not using abusive language. Respectful children also work diligently and are self-directed. Parents had a saying in the Makonde language to emphasize the importance of respect, which translated as "a respectful child will live a long and happy life" (School 3, FGD 1). School 3 had a signboard nailed to a tree saying "heshima ni akiba," meaning "respect is an investment."

Our interpretation of the social responsibility competencies is that each one has unique attributes, but the group has many commonalities. The competencies are all demonstrated by children who fit in and do what is expected of them. They relate to one's responsibilities within a social group and are not concerned with individual expression.

Social Relationships

Cooperative (anayeshirikiana). Cooperation was defined mainly in relation to other children. Cooperative children play well with their peers, they share food and play-things with them and do not fight. These behaviors were also included in the competency *making friends*. Parents said, "a mean child has no friends" (School 2, FGD 1). Cooperative behaviors towards younger children were also mentioned including protecting them from danger and reading stories to them. According to parents, cooperation is a useful competency because it helps in solving problems together and in doing collective farm work.

Sociable (Mchangamfu). For parents and teachers, the goal of being sociable was to achieve harmony and cooperation with others. Specific behavioral examples include being talkative; being an extrovert; smiling and being joyous; being bold, for example in answering questions; taking part in sports and games and avoiding self-isolation. Some other behavioral examples were closely related to respect and obedience, such as fulfilling responsibilities willingly, working wholeheartedly and greeting elders.

Funny (Mcheshi). As with being sociable, being funny was seen as helpful in cooperating with people and building relationships with peers "so that they elect you their leader" (School 1, Parent 2). Children who are funny like making jokes, they like working in groups and are slow to show contempt to others.

Loving teachers and parents (kupenda wazazi na walimu). A frequent comment from all adult participants was that children should love/like (*kupenda*) their teachers and parents. This is demonstrated by "receiving parents with joy" (School 4, FGD1) when they return home, carrying bags for parents and teachers and sharing food and gifts. Respondents described this love as the basis for cooperation.

Trustworthy (mwaminifu). Trustworthy behaviors include following orders and the absence of transgressions such as avoiding stealing things and returning change after being sent to buy something. This is one of few competencies that was mentioned and valued more by parents than teachers.

Truthful (mkweli). Truthfulness was closely related to being trustworthy. According to teachers and parents, trustful children are open and straightforward in talking, have self-awareness and know when to correct their behavior and avoid bad company. Teacher and parents emphasized different relationships between truthfulness and bravery. Teachers mentioned that children who are fearful may say anything to avoid punishment. Brave children tell the truth regardless. Parents discussed how fear of punishment can encourage children to tell the truth.

Individual competencies

Curious (*mdadisi*). Curiosity was the competency mentioned most frequently by teachers. According to them, curious children ask many questions, they like to learn new things, they investigate things they do not know, they observe and make deductions about things before sharing with others. Some curious children will ask to borrow books from teachers. Because of these behaviors, curious children are in a position to give responses in class that are different from those of other children. Examples of curiosity came mainly from teachers. One said that her child asks a lot of questions based on logical reasoning: "My son is very inquisitive, one day he asked me: Mom if all people in the world were of the same sex, would the population stop increasing?" (School 1, Teacher 1). Another teacher said, "A curious child will say to his friends 'let's catch a grasshopper and observe how it breathes" (School 3, Teacher 2). Curiosity was mentioned less by parents. One parent said: "In our villages curious pupils are very few, most of our people are devoted to religious teachings of Islam, there is not much attention given to such education in our families". We asked adult respondents if curiosity was incompatible with discipline or obedience. The response was that there are two forms of discipline - discipline due to fear and discipline associated with questioning. They discouraged the former as it makes children obey everything without reasoning. A child who is both obedient and curious is the ideal.

Seeking understanding (mfuatiliaji). The literal meaning of the Kiswahili term here is one who follows up. The competency was closely related to *curiosity*. Example behaviors include being ready to ask teachers or parents to inspect their notebooks for feedback, working fast so that they can submit their work to teachers for feedback and "seeking clarification from teachers, parents, and even headteachers to ensure that they get an answer to puzzling questions" (School 4 FGD 1).

Self-belief (anayejiamini). Self-belief was valued more by teachers than parents. Example behaviors include asking and answering

questions, participating in groups, leading others, being sent on errands, helping others and being helped themselves and doing voluntary assignments.

Courageous (hodari). Courage was described in a similar way to self-belief. One teacher said, "a courageous pupil will pick up a piece of chalk very easily and lead others in solving a problem … even without my pointing at him/her" (School 4, Teacher 1). Similarly, "a pupil who dares to follow teachers in the office or outside the classroom and asks questions is courageous" (School 4 Teacher 1). Teachers said that courageous children do not give up easily, citing the saying "sikubali hadi niweze," meaning "I will never give it up until I manage" (School 1, Teacher 1). As with self-belief, courageous children are not afraid to ask for help. Courageous children thrive in a competitive environment and always want to be first in the class.

Daring (mthubutu). Daring was closely related to courageous. Example behaviors include being eager to learn new things at school and from one's environment, expressing oneself freely and confidently, being transparent and having nothing to hide, standing out among their peers and giving unique answers to questions.

Self-directed (anayejituma). In Kiswahili, the verb *to send someone (kumtuma)* is understood to mean sending someone on an errand. The reflexive form of the verb *kujituma* literally means to send yourself on an errand and is translated as 'self-motivated' It is exemplified by initiating or volunteering for a task or doing a task, such as washing school clothes, without being told to do so. Parents also gave examples of this competency that involved accepting orders respectfully and without complaining. Self-directed was one of the competencies most frequently mentioned and rated as important by teachers. They said that a child who showed this competency could study by themselves, can study topics beyond the syllabus, and can ask questions voluntarily, even outside the classroom. Teachers also said that children, who were punctual, looked after their school equipment and helped elders in completing tasks were self-directed.

Hardworking (mwenye juhudi). The examples given of children being hardworking all related to being self-directed in learning. The examples included children who study voluntarily, are motivated to learn, who sit down and read by themselves after school, plan time well and asks questions to teachers even out of the classroom.

Clever (Mwerevu). Although we did not direct respondents to consider only social and emotional competencies and to ignore cognitive abilities, clever was outside the list of ten most frequent competencies mentioned by parents and teachers. Only one teacher and no parents rated this as an important competency for children to have. Respondents said clever children can understand easily, follow instructions faithfully and are eager to learn. Relatedly there were only three mentions of the importance of being *knowledgeable (mwenye maarifa*). The only example given of this competency was that a knowledgeable child is one who "does the right things" (School 1, FGD 1). *Understanding (muelewa*) was also mentioned but no examples of this competency were provided.

Careful (Makini). A careful child makes no mistakes when carrying out instructions; they understand what they are directed to do and do it. This competency was sometimes mentioned together with *mtaratibu* meaning *slow and careful*, or *measured*. One teacher quoted two proverbs to illustrate this: "haraka, haraka haina baraka" translated as "'quickly, quickly' has no

blessings" and "chelewa ufike," meaning "'late' will get there" (School 4, Teacher 3). Careful children are also punctual.

Persistent (asiyekata tamaa). The Kiswahili term use for this competency translates literally as not to lose desire easily. Parents and teachers gave several examples of persistence. Persistent children always stay on-task until they finish and "refuse to go to sleep until the task is done" (School 1, FGD 2). They do not give up easily; they overcome challenges and work to find solutions to problems. Persistent children "do not become angry or discouraged when failing to find the answers to questions or when getting low marks." (School 4, Teacher 1). They will ask tireless questions until they understand a certain concept.

To have goals (kuwa na malengo). One parent focus group said that it was important for children to have a goal of who they want to be after schooling. They mentioned that this competency is relatively new in the local culture. One teacher talked of the importance of learning from successful people and developing a habit of learning from them.

Clean (msafi). The competencies of clean and *smart/decent (nadhifu)* had considerable overlap. A clean child is one knows how to wash themselves, has clean clothes and keeps the environment clean by sweeping the compound and avoiding littering. A smart/decent child wears smartly ironed clothes that cover their bodies appropriately. Parents said they didn't like seeing a boy indecently dressed (kuvaa mlegezo) or girls with short dresses.

Fear of God (hofu ya Mungu). Fear of God was not mentioned as frequently as many other competencies, but those who discussed it placed great importance on it, saying that a fear of God led to positive development of all competencies. Similarly, pursuing other competencies, such as truthfulness, can be an example of God-fearing behavior. One parent and one teacher quoted the proverb "msema kweli ni mpenzi wa Mungu", translated as "the one who speaks the truth is a friend of God" (School 4, Teacher 1; School 1, FGD 1). A God-fearing child prays a lot and worships God, for example in church or in the Mosque. God-fearing children are obedient, care for others, do not use abusive language or insults, follow school rules and can change their behavior in response to feedback.

How do Competencies Help Children in School?

We gained preliminary insight into the competencies that help children at school by examining differences in participant responses when we asked them "What are the qualities you would like your child/student to develop in life?" and "What are the qualities that help a child to succeed at school?" Several parents responded to the second question by saying that the competencies that helped children in life were the same ones that helped them in school. These comments are supported by an analysis of the relative frequency of parent responses to the first two questions: no competency was mentioned much more frequently in responses to question 2 compared with question 1.

By contrast, teachers' responses differed significantly between the two questions. Curiosity was mentioned by 17 teachers as being important for school but by only 4 teachers when initially asked about the importance of competencies for life in general. There were similar increases in frequency in response to the second question for being an *attentive listener* (16 teachers mentioned this relation to schooling versus 10 in relation to life in general), being self-directed (15 vs. 6), being *hardworking* (10 vs. 2) and having *self-belief* (7 vs 4). These four competencies were also those that were mentioned more frequently and valued more by teachers than by parents. Among competencies that were less frequently mentioned by teachers,

a few were also mentioned in connection with schooling rather than with life in general: *Time management; courageous, clever, seeking understanding* and *having goals*.

We also asked parents and teachers directly how different competencies helped children in school. Some responses referred directly to learning processes. Curiosity can help a child to "learn more" (School 1, Teacher 1). Being an attentive helps a child to take on board whatever is being taught, process it and use it to improve their knowledge. When pupils are polite and calm in class they can remember what was taught to them. Several other competencies were identified as important for expanding the range of activities and experiences available to children. Teachers said children who were daring and courageous were able to confidently engage in new learning activities. Being self-directed allows a child to learn in a variety of ways to widen his/her understanding. Seeking understanding helps a child to learn many things and acquire the experiences they need in life. Pupils who are persistent have the ability to work on many tasks, which gives them a range of experiences required for life.

Parents and teachers frequently mentioned the importance of accepting feedback and changing one's behavior in response. This behavior was mentioned in connection with being an attentive listener, being truthful, being obedient and having a fear of God. This behavior was perhaps behind the comment from a teacher that "talking freely and being transparent are important behaviors for learning and for studying in particular" (source needed). Certain competencies help success at school by building relationships with others. Respondents said that a respectful child is favored by teachers and fellow pupils and therefore easily gets help in the class. Similar comments were made about trustworthy pupils. Teachers also said that when a child is curious it makes their work easier. In that way, "teachers will love the pupil and give them special attention in class" (School 2, Teacher 2).

Children's Perspectives on the Competencies That Help Them in School

We analyzed responses from children relating to the second research question concerning the competencies that helped children adapt to school when they first arrived and the competencies that helped children to succeed in school once there.

Adapting to school

The most common response about the positive experience of starting school related to other children: meeting friends, playing games with them such as football, netball and jumping ropes. One child said, "I felt happy to have new friends" (School 2, Pupil 5). Children were also excited to be learning to read and write and to be getting educated in general. One said, "I love school because I want to be a doctor or a teacher" (School 2, Pupil 3). Several things in the school environment made children happy. Some children said they liked the chairs, desks, blackboard, books and pencils in the classroom. Other children liked the school gardens, which looked attractive, and trees from which they could get fruit. A few children said they were happy about their teacher. One said, "I was happy to meet my teacher, I love her deeply from my heart" (School 2, Pupil 3).

The most common surprising or unpleasant things about starting school related to teachers and other children. Some children feared the teacher and many said they didn't like being punished or hit by their teachers. Children were surprised at how many other pupils there were in the school or their class. Some had not seen that many people in one place before. Children said they didn't like arguing with other children, aggressive pupils and those who fought with them or hit them. Many children listed things in the school environment that frightened them, including a tree used for traditional

rituals, snakes, flowers, a court near the school, a window, electric wires, a telephone transmitter and a water tank. Many of these things were unfamiliar from their villages. Only a few negative responses related to learning. Some children said they found writing difficult. One child said, “at first I found it difficult to sit at a desk” (School 4, Pupil 1).

Competencies for School Success

Children told us indirectly about the competences and behaviors required for school success in two ways. Children reported on the things they did at home that helped them in school and the advice they were given by family members about their behavior at school. Children also told us the advice they would give to younger children who were about to start school. A key piece of advice was to respect teachers, to “receive them” (meet them and carry their bags), to obey them and to listen to them attentively in class. Many children stressed the important of being polite and humble (mpole), and calm (mtulivu) in class. This was the advice they had for other children and also the advice they got from home: “My grandmother told me to be polite and humble in school, and so I am” (School 2, Pupil 3). One child said, “I was so polite, and all the teachers loved me” (School 3, Pupil 2). Several other children mentioned that the result of their behavior was that teachers “loved” them.

Often, being calm was mentioned alongside the importance of avoiding bad behavior. Children told us that students should not talk too much, should not be arrogant, should not stare at people, should avoid abusive language (e.g. “do not insult someone else’s mother,” School 1, Pupil 2) should not fight or annoy others, should not steal or feel jealous of others’ belongings. Children frequently mentioned the importance of having positive relationships with others. Children’s advice to younger peers was “to love teachers” (School 4, Pupil 2; School 3 Pupil 1) and “to love others and play and chat with them” (School 4, Pupil 5). One child said, “when you love your schoolmates they will love you too and you will feel good in your soul” (School 2, Pupil 3).

Children were also told to be disciplined, and study hard so that they become knowledgeable. Children advised their peers to “love writing and reading” (School 4, Pupil 2). Children advised others not to be lazy. A few mentioned the goal of studying hard – in one case to help parents later and in another “to succeed in life” (School 2, Pupil 1). Some advice revolved around being on time for class – not to be outside class when lessons are going on, to return promptly when sent on an errand and to arrive at school and go home on time. Other individual competencies were mentioned less frequently. One child advised others to be confident and two children mentioned the importance of being intelligent. Many children mentioned being clean and smart, bathing oneself and applying body oil, washing clothes and keeping the school compound clean. One child said, “being clean and smart helps me to understand better in the class.” (School 2, Pupil 5). Another said they tried to “be clean to avoid corporal punishment” (School 1, Pupil 1).

How do competencies develop at home and school?

Parents and teachers were asked directly about the origin of competencies. In general competencies were seen as being innate or else developed or affected by home life. For example, some parents said that respect is inborn: "you know you are not responsible for children's souls. It was put by God himself, so it is their own decision to be what they want” (School 1, FGD 1). However, other parents said that respect may be affected by having good or bad companions, in appropriate upbringing or parental separation. Family break-up was a common theme in understanding the development of children’s competencies. For example, parents discussed how children differ

in their level of attentiveness. This was attributed in part to the fact that divorce is common in the region, which disrupts families and leads to poor nurturing of children.

A frequent conversation among the parent focus groups was for one respondent to claim that a competency was in place at birth and for others to point to the role of children's upbringing. This exchange took place for the competencies of both self-motivation and curiosity. Respondents told us that some competencies developed from others. One parent said, "discipline is the genesis of other children's qualities" (School 1, FGD 2). Others said that when a pupil is disciplined s/he will have all the other qualities needed for success. Another said that "attentiveness is like a 'safe box' where all other qualities are found" (School 1, FGD 1). Similar comments were made by parents about how fear of God underpins all other qualities.

Parents and teachers also discussed how their own behavior can make a difference to children's competencies. Many respondents mentioned the importance of a child's upbringing. One teacher said, "children start off with good behavior which is then corrupted by a poor upbringing" (School 1, Teacher 4). Providing a role model and examples to children is important. Parents and teachers mentioned this strategy regarding respect. Parents also mentioned this in relation to being truthful and civilized. Parents and teachers also developed competencies, such as being polite and respectful, with verbal guidance, for example explaining to children the consequences of being disrespectful.

Some parents said that politeness and calmness can be developed through giving children chores to do at home. Reprimanding children can help develop respect. Both parents and teachers said they need to use physical punishment to ensure children are obedient. Other parents cautioned against the use of physical punishment, saying "when a teacher is too strict, children will develop a bad character" (School 1, FGD 1). Other punishments to encourage children to behave and greet people properly involved denying them meals. Parents and one teacher quoted a proverb "Mkaidi hafaidi hata siku ya idd," translated as "a disobedient child will not be given rewards even during festivals (when giving children food and gifts is common)" (School 4, FGD 1; School 3, Teacher 4). As a last measure, some parents threatened to incarcerate them in the village government office.

Both teachers and parents saw an important role for school in developing children's obedience. One teacher said, "Teaching is a vocation and a call from God. Teachers need to fulfill their roles to mold children to be obedient" (School 1, FGD 1). Teachers said they dealt with misbehavior by sending cases to a class teacher or headteacher, by using punishments, such as corporal punishment, and sending for parents to discuss suspending a child from school.

Teachers gave several examples of how school can help develop curiosity. For example, teachers can relate what they learn at school with their home environment, they can conduct field trips, provide opportunities for children to ask questions and to show appreciation for those who ask questions, ask children difficult questions which will make them think critically and give them frequent assignments. One teacher said, "I discourage children from using the Makonde language at school to promote their curiosity to learn things in using Kiswahili" (School 3, Teacher 2).

School can develop children's cooperation by allowing them to work in groups. Teachers also spoke of their attempt to encourage pupils to interact with each other and be sociable. Some teachers said they did this through jogging, the morning parade and other physical exercises. Others said that pupils are given freedom to take part and interact in the morning parade activities. Some parents said that they wanted

morning parade to be a daily routine as it is a source of discipline, respect and other qualities desirable for pupils.

Gender and Age

Most competencies were seen as important for both boys and girls, with a few exceptions. Most parents told use that girls need to be more obedient than boys while teachers generally considered obedience to be equally important for both sexes. Several parents felt that boys should be more socially active than girls, and that boys should be more hard-working. A few parents expressed the opinion that boys are more self-directed than girls and achieved a higher level of understanding. One parent expressed the opposite opinion – that girls were more self-directed than boys.

Participants were asked how competencies developed with age from four years old to eight years old. In general, participants said that competencies developed with age. This was mentioned in relation to obedience, politeness, attention, trustworthiness and curiosity. Some competencies – such as trustworthiness – were described as being absent at four years but developing by eight years. However, one parent said that you could see a child's qualities, even at a young age. This was described with a weather analogy: "you can tell it is going to be a good day from early in the morning" (School 1, Teacher 1). Some competencies were thought to decline with age. Teachers said that older children can be less self-confident than younger children and added that younger children can be more motivated and hard working. Other competencies manifested differently with age. For example, "with cooperation at age 4 they play together at age 8 they work together" (School 1, FGD 1).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to characterize Tanzanians' perspectives on the social and emotional competencies children should develop and those that help them in school. We were particularly interested in perspectives that differed from those discussed in literature from Western societies. The study was not a comparative one, and we were unable to find studies in the Western countries that used a methodology like ours. Thus, our analysis contrasts the findings of this study with our interpretation – based on experience and literature – of the competencies valued in the Western countries and that underpin the design of social and emotional competency assessments currently in circulation.

The most apparent difference between responses in this study and the conceptual classifications of social and emotional competencies used to date was the overwhelming focus by adults in Mtwara on *social responsibility*. This was apparent in several ways. First, the competencies mentioned most frequently and valued most by teachers and parents were those associated with social responsibility, including being an attentive listener, being obedient, disciplined, polite and humble, and respectful. These competencies are demonstrated by children who fit in and do what is expected of them. The focus on social responsibility is well documented in sub-Saharan Africa. It is perhaps surprising that the focus on social responsibility persists even when respondents are discussing the competencies that promote learning. Parents especially said that the qualities of respect, obedience, attentiveness, and politeness were key to children's learning. For example, paying respect to the teacher can help a child receive more attention and support.

Second, it is worth noting that respondents were not initially directed to restrict their answers to social and emotional competencies rather than cognitive competencies. Interestingly, cognitive competencies were not mentioned frequently and did not feature in the ten most mentioned competencies.

Third, even though we categorized several competencies as *individual*, those competencies were typically mentioned in the context of social relationships. For example, curiosity is an individual competence that has the potential to help an individual learn more about the world independently of others. Respondents acknowledged this function of curiosity but also discussed its role in developing relationships between teachers and pupils. Curious pupils make teachers' work easier and consequently teachers will favor them in class. Similarly, confidence may be seen as a quality that aids self-reliance and yet respondents also discussed this competency as helping cooperation; confident children are more able to help others and ask for help themselves. Being sociable was seen as a means for ensuring harmony and cooperation with others. Some behavioral examples of being sociable included "fulfilling responsibilities willingly" and "working wholeheartedly" which closely relate to social responsibility. Similarly, being clever and knowledgeable was defined by some as "doing the right things."

Fourth, children's references to their behavior in the classroom were focused on the response of the teacher. Some children were pleased that teachers "loved" them because of their behavior. Advice given to other children to pay attention to the teacher was often motivated by the desire to avoid punishment. Only two children mentioned the goal of learning at school and for one of them this goal was to support their parents in the future. It is not clear whether this finding is evidence of the cultural value of social relationships at school or that young children are particularly concerned with pleasing their parents and teachers. It is also worth noting that some children did mention that they enjoyed reading, writing and drawing in class. However, taken together, these findings do suggest that social responsibility and social relationships loom large when adults and children discuss both interpersonal and individual competencies required for success in school.

A second theme in the responses we observed is that teachers and parents valued different competencies, consistent with other research in Africa (Wober, 1972). The difference emerged in responses to questions about the competencies that were important for school. Teachers mentioned *curiosity, being an attentive listener, self-directed* and *hardworking* and *having self-belief* more in connection with schooling than they did in connection with life success in general. Although parents also valued being an *attentive listener*, the other four competencies were mentioned significantly more frequently by teachers than parents. One parent implied that devotion to Islam left little room for curiosity in children's upbringing at home. These competencies valued more by teachers than parents are all concerned with individual development and learning more than with social responsibility.

One interpretation of the difference between the competencies valued by teachers and parents is that schools require a different set of competencies than those valued by the community. Using the theoretical framework presented in the introduction (e.g. Greenfield, 2009; Greenfield, 2016) one could argue that the values of schooling become integrated into society in general when education is widespread and becomes critical for economic productivity in the society. In this transition many values change, including a shift from social obligation to individual development. Culture in rural Mtwara has yet to make this shift and, until it does, there may be differences in the cultural values endorsed at home and at school.

The conclusion that the culture of school and home are at odds is plausible and supported somewhat by our data. Other interpretations are possible, however. Even in societies where education is widespread, there are differences in the way that teachers and parents assess a child's behavior (Stanger & Lewis, 1993; Winsler

& Wallace, 2002). Perhaps parents focused on obedience in discussions because they have more opportunity to observe their children demonstrating this competency as compared with curiosity. But when questioned directly on this issue, parents told us that children should ideally be both obedient and curious.

In Figure 1 we present our analysis of how responses from participants in this study mapped onto the CASEL (2017) framework of social and emotional competencies. This analysis gives us some initial understanding of the similarities and differences between Mtwara, Tanzania and educated/industrialized countries in the conceptualization of social and emotional competencies. The most valued competencies in this study fell into the category of social responsibility. This category mapped somewhat onto the CASEL category of social awareness, although our respondents placed little emphasis on competencies such as empathy and perspective taking. The second category of social relationships mapped quite closely onto the CASEL category of relationship skills. The CASEL framework includes two sets of individual competencies: self-management and self-awareness. In general, we found that respondents in Mtwara placed less value on individual competencies, compared with social responsibility and social relationships. Most mentions of individual competencies came from teachers. Consequently, we had only included one category of individual competencies in our analysis. Nevertheless, those competencies that were mentioned map quite closely to those in the CASEL framework. Being self-directed (Mtwara) is closely related to self-motivation and self-discipline (CASEL). Goal setting is also mentioned in both our research findings and the CASEL framework. The competencies of curiosity, carefulness and persistence were mentioned by our respondents and are compatible with the self-management category of the CASEL framework, although they are not highlighted in this framework. Competencies of impulse control and stress management were not mentioned by respondents in the study. The self-awareness category also had commonalities with findings from the current research. In fact, the competency of self-awareness was mentioned by several parents and teachers, although all the behavioral examples given were also common to being an attentive listener. This raises the possibility that the term had a different meaning for respondents in our study. Other competencies mentioned by respondents – self-belief and courage – map onto the CASEL constructs of self-efficacy and self-confidence. Finally, we note that the CASEL category of responsible decision-making was omitted from the figure because it did not map well onto responses from our respondents.

To summarize, there is a good deal of overlap between the responses of participants in this study and the competencies outlined in the CASEL framework. Respondents differed mainly in placing a greater focus on social responsibility as compared with other aspects of social awareness and as compared with individual competencies. One caveat to this conclusion should be mentioned. Figure 1 compares the responses of parents and teachers in one context with the results of research and expert analysis in a different context. The importance of some competencies in the CASEL framework– such as self-control (Moffitt et al., 2011) – emerged from years of research on children's behavior rather than from the perceptions of parents and teachers in the US or elsewhere. It's likely that the application of expertise and a systematic research program in Tanzania would produce a different conceptualization of social and emotional competencies from the one suggested by our respondents.

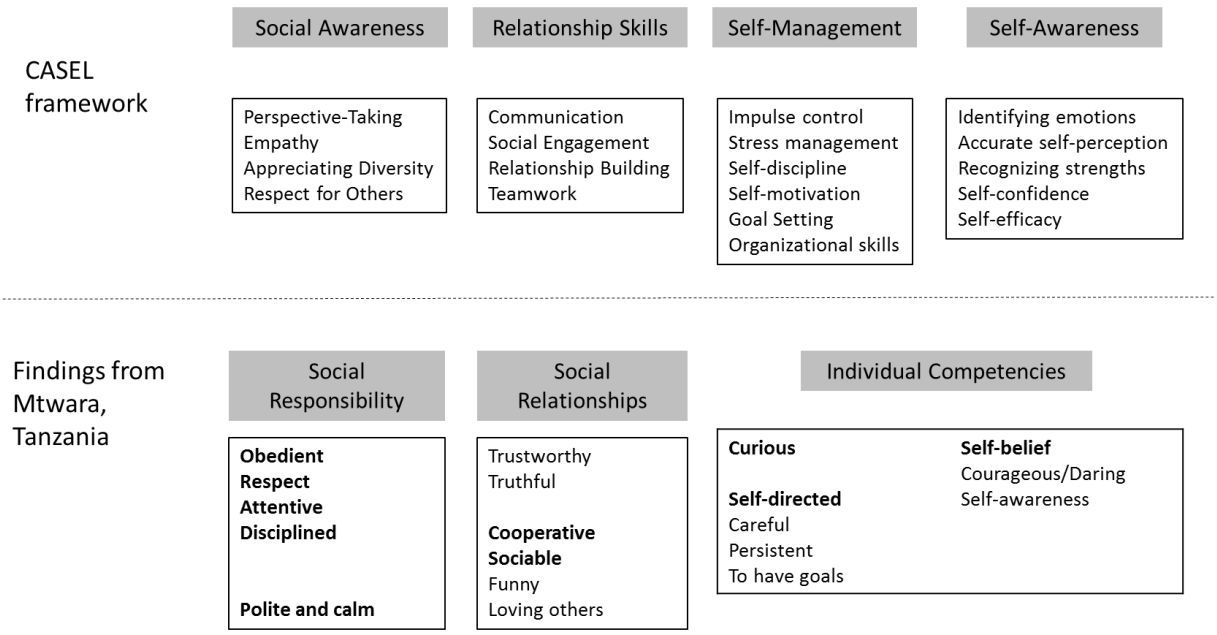

Figure 1. The relationship between findings from the current study and the CASEL (2017) framework of social and emotional competencies.

Bold text indicates competencies mentioned frequently or rated as important.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to our research. Our findings are based on interpretations of seven individual researchers and are filtered through their beliefs and prior experience. It is worth noting that this study was motivated by the belief that assessments of social and emotional competence should be tailored to context. It is possible, therefore, that we tried harder to find differences, rather than similarities, between existing frameworks and the perceptions of the study participants, despite making efforts to guard against this outcome in our research process.

Second, we note that the task we gave our respondents – conceptualizing and defining the competencies they valued – was not something with which they had experience. Our perception was that respondents, particularly parents, struggled to give precise definitions of competencies. Based on the behavioral examples, it appeared that some parents grouped several positive competencies together, reasoning, for example, that an obedient child tends also to be respectful and disciplined. This kind of reasoning sometimes made it difficult for us to differentiate among competencies. Furthermore, some example behaviors appeared to refer to the causes or consequences of a competency, rather than a demonstration of the competency itself. For example, parents mentioned "having a good upbringing" (cause) and "will have a good life" (consequence) as example behaviors of some competencies.

The study was not designed to have external validity. We hypothesize, however, that the findings from this study will have relevance to other subsistence-agricultural communities in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond, based on the theoretical framework presented in the introduction (Greenfield, 2009; Greenfield, 2016; LeVine et al., 1993). Some findings will be specific to Tanzania and others will have relevance only for Mtwara region. We recognize that the culture of the region, as with all cultures, is changing. Our focus on subsistence agriculture as an explanatory variable in this

culture becomes less appropriate with increasing participation in schooling and with diversification of the economy in Mtwara. However, subsistence agriculture still predominates in the region and to the extent that change is taking place, we anticipate that some cultural factors are slower to change than the sociodemographic factors that give rise to them.

Implications

Our findings have implications for research and practice in three areas: assessment, curriculum and community engagement. For assessments of social and emotional competencies, our research suggests that emphasis should be placed on the construct of social responsibility for assessments conducted in Tanzania and in other similar contexts. Further research could help understand the relative importance of this and other constructs for the development and education of children in Tanzania. For example, research could help understand which social and emotional competencies are most predictive of academic success.

Our research findings are relevant to the design of curriculum in two ways. First, our findings point to the needs young children have when adapting to life in school. Responses from students in our study suggest that many aspects of the school's physical and social environment are unsettling for them. These findings support the approach of the recently launched Tusome Pamoja Pre-Primary program, which allows for children to visit the school and meet new classmates. Second, our findings suggest some ways in which it would help to develop the social and emotional competencies of children in school. For example, responses from students suggest that relationships with teachers and other pupils are a source of stress. Children fear corporal punishment from teachers and bullying and abuse from other pupils. Other programs in sub-Saharan Africa have had some success in improving interactions in school (Torrente et al., 2015). The curriculum of USAID Tusome Pamoja provides opportunities for children to develop social and emotional competencies. For example, pupils' sense of responsibility is developed through a class committee and "circle time" is used to involve pupils in cooperative work, and to allow them to interact with one another and to give expression to their feelings.

Finally, the study has implications for efforts to engage parents and communities in their children's schooling, which are widespread across the continent (Majgaard & Mingat, 2012). Our findings suggest that parents and teachers emphasize different social and emotional competencies of children. Parents focus less than teachers on individual competencies of curiosity, self-direction and self-belief. Education programs could help parents understand the importance of these competencies in their children's schooling. Such an approach could also help efforts (RTI International, 2016) to encourage parents to engage with their children in certain ways in the home – for example by asking them questions – that are designed to support children's development and education. Tusome Pamoja uses circle time as an opportunity for parent-teacher interaction. Such interactions could help parents understand the competencies that will help their children succeed in school.

In conclusion, we note that very little scholarship on human development in sub-Saharan Africa is rooted in a local understanding of key concepts. Nsamenang (2006, p. 295) argues that in the African worldview the "seminal concept is socio-genesis, defined as individual development that is perceived and explained as a function of social, not biological, factors." This conclusion is consistent with our findings, in which social responsibility and social relationships were seen as central to all social and emotional competencies that children need in life and in school. Taking this worldview into account has the potential to improve the quality of assessment and program evaluation and can

be the foundation of an education system that works with and not against cultural values of those it serves.

Notes

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5. Grace Jeremiah - St. Augustine University of Tanzania
6. Jovina J. Tibenda - USAID Tusome Pamoja
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Appendix A
Interview Questions for Parents

Key research question: What are the non-academic characteristics that children need to succeed at school in rural Mtwara

Note that interview questions for teachers were very similar and largely involved replacing the term *children* with *pupils*.

1) What are the qualities that you would like your children to develop in life?

Ungependa mwanao ajenge sifa za namna gani maishani?

Possible prompts:

a) What are the qualities you would like all children to develop

Ungependa watoto wote wajenge sifa zipi?

Use "sifa za kimalezi", "sifa za kimwenendo"

b) What are the characteristics you would want for your child

Ungependa mwanao ajenge tabia gani?

Ungependa mwanao awe na matendo yapi?

c) What are the differences between a good child and a bad child?

Tofautisha kati ya mtoto mwenye sifa nzuri na sifa mbaya

d) (Describe how you would want your child to behave)

e) How would you want a child age 4 years to behave? How would you want a child age 8 years to behave?

Ungependa mtoto wa miaka minne awe na tabia gani? Ungependa mtoto wa miaka minane awe na tabia gani?

f) (What kind of qualities would make a child successful in life? – use as a probe if they are not answering well)

Ni sifa zipi zinamwezesha mtoto afanikiwe maishani?

g) Read the list of qualities back to parents. Ask them, which of these is the most important for a child? List the top 5 in order.

Wasomee wazazi hiyo orodha ya sifa.

Waulizee, "niambieni ipi kati ya hizi sifa ni muhimu zaidi ili kufanikiwa". List the top 5 in the order they are mentioned.

h) Are any of these qualities more important for girls than boys? Are any more important for boys than girls?

Je, kuna sifa yeyote kati ya hizi ambazo ni muhimu zaidi kwa wasichana kuliko wavulana? Kuna sifa yeyote ambazo ni muhimu kwa wavulana zaidi kuliko wasichana?

2) What are the qualities that help a child to succeed at school?

Ni sifa gani unadhani zitamwezesha mtoto kufanikiwa vizuri shuleni

Possible prompts:

a) What are the differences between a child who succeeds at school and one who doesn't?

Tofautisha kati ya mtoto anayefanikiwa vizuri shuleni na yule asiyefanikiwa?

b) (How do these differences look like on day 1 of school?)

Tofauti hizi zipoje kwa siku ya kwanza shuleni?

If the question focuses on cognitive abilities ask, "what are the behaviors, attributes, character of children who succeed at school"?

If the interviewee focuses on cognitive abilities, ask "ni tabianitabia au mwenendo gani ya watato wanaofanikiwa shuleni?"

c) (Is your child doing well at school?)

Mtoto wako anafanya vizuri shuleni?

d) What are the things that children do at home that help them adapt to school?

Ni mambo gani mwanao anafanya nyumbani yanayomsaidia kuzoea maisha ya shule?

Understanding key terms

3) Return to the key concepts raised above. For each one ask:

a. Give me examples of when children aged 5-8 show this quality?

Naomba mifano ya watoto wa umri kati ya miaka 5-8 wanaoonesha sifa hii?

The behavior should be specific and generalisable.

(i) It is specific and observable. If several people observed the child, they would agree whether the behavior has been performed or not

(ii) It is generalisable. Every child has the opportunity to perform this behavior.

(iii) Does a child aged 5-8 perform this behavior

b. Keep probing until you get something specific and generalisable. Ask for more examples. Check whether the behavior is appropriate for young children

c. Why is it important for children to develop this quality?

Kwa nini ni muhimu watoto wajenge sifa hii?

d. How do you help children develop this quality?

Utamwezeshaje mtoto kujenga sifa hii?

e. (Why does this quality help children at school?)

Kwa nini sifa hii inamsaidia shuleni?

f. (How do children at age 4 show this quality? How will the same same child demonstrate this quality at age 8?

Jinsi gani mtoto wa miaka minne anaonesha sifa hii? Jinsi gani mtoto huyo huyo ataonesha sifa hii akiwa na umri wa miaka minane? Akifika miaka kumi na mbili sifa hii itabadilikaje?

g. Ask if not answered by d - How does school help your child to develop this quality?

Shule inasaidiaje mtoto kujenga sifa hii?

h. (If you want get from a behavior to a competency try asking: Why do some children have this behavior and others don't?)

Ni kwa nini baadhi ya watoto wana hii tabia na wengine hawana?

The questions will be asked of each quality identified in the first phase of research

4. Je, unadhani _____{mention other sifa} ni muhimu kwa watoto

a. Give me examples of when children aged 5-8 show this quality?

Naomba mifano ya watoto wa umri wa miaka kati ya 5-8 wanaoonesha sifa hii?

The behavior should be specific and generalisable.

(iv) It is specific and observable. If several people observed the child, they would agree whether the behavior has been performed or not

(v) It is generalisable. Every child has the opportunity to perform this behavior.

(vi) Does a child aged 5-8 perform this behavior

b. Keep probing until you get something specific and generalisable. Ask for more examples. Check whether the behavior is appropriate for young children

5. How have these competencies changed over time?

Je, unadhani sifa hizi hubadilika vipi jinsi muda unavyoenda/miaka inavyoenda? Jinsi mtoto anavyoongezeka umri?

Appendix B
Interview Questions for Students

Please ask the teacher to leave you for this part. Explain that we want the children to be free to draw whatever they like without showing to the teacher

Tafadhali waruhusu waalimu kuendelea na shughuli zao. Waeleze kwamba tunahitaji wanafunzi wawe huru zaidi kuchora wanachokitaka bila kuwaonyesha waalimu.

We would like you all to draw two pictures for us. In one picture draw something you enjoyed in your first week at school. Something that made you happy. In the second picture draw something you found difficult. We will collect the pictures later. They are just for us – we will not show them to the teacher or your parents.

Tuanataka mchore picha/michoro miwili. Picha/mchoro ya kwanza ioneshe kitu ulichokipenda/ulichokifurahia siku za mwanzo ulipofika shuleni. Kiwe ni kitu ulichokifurahia. Kwenye picha ya pili chora picha/mchoro wa kitu kilichokutatiza. Tutakusanya picha hizo. Tutazichukua na hatutawaonesha waalimu au wazazi wako.

1. Ask the children about the pictures to explain what they have drawn.
   Waulize wanafunzi waelezee picha/michoro waliyoichora.
2. (How did you feel on your first days at school (or preschool)?
   Ulijisikiaje siku za kwanza ulipofika shuleni (au chekechea / madrassa / awali)?
   If they did not answer these questions already ask:
   1a) What did you find easy in your first days at school? What about in the classroom?
   1b) What things did you find difficult in your first days at school? What about in the classroom?
   Wasipoweza kujibu haya maswali waulize zaidi: Nini kilikuwa rahisi siku za kwanza kuwa shuleni au darasani? Na ni kipi kilichowatatiza/kilichowakwaza? Shuleni au darasani?
3. What upbringing did you have at home that helped you for your first days at school?
   Ni malezi gani uliyoyapata nyumbani ambayo yamekusaidia siku za mwanzo shuleni?
4. On your first day at school what things surprised you? What things were you not prepared for?
   Ni vitu/mambo gani vilivyokushangaza siku za mwanzo shuleni? Ni mambo gani unadhani hukuwa umejiandaa kukutana nayo?
5. If you were giving advice to a younger sibling or friend who is about to start school, what would you tell them?
   Ukipewa nafasi yaku mshauri mdogo wako ambaye anakaribia kuanza shule, Je, utamshauri nini?
6. (What advice would you give a younger child about how to do well in school?)
   Utamshauri nini huyu mdogo wako ili aweze kufanya vizuri katika masomo yake hapa shuleni?