Understanding the Social Classroom

The Foundation of Effective Pedagogy?

Matthew Jukes, Fellow, RTI International
1. Literacy programs in LMICs have large room for improvement
2. Because many teaching activities (group work, gradual release) have little evidence in LMICs and are patchily adopted by teachers
3. Because teaching involves social interactions which are culturally conditioned
4. In ways that are predictable
5. And which limit the effectiveness of some pedagogical strategies
6. Stop changing how teachers fundamentally interact with other humans
7. Co-create teaching activities that are (i) culturally appropriate (ii) adhere to principles of effective learning
8. Where possible, build SE skills of students and teachers
Outline

The problem

The social classroom: students

The social classroom: teaching activities
Limited Gains in Reading Fluency

Effective literacy instruction in low-income countries

Pedagogical goal
- Phonics
- Interaction with text

Activity Structure
- Small group work
- Paired reading
- Gradual release model

Efficacy in LMICs: ☑️
Implementation in LMICs: ☑️

“[new teaching activities] need to be congruent with the values and past experiences of those who are expected to adopt it or else tissue rejection (Hoyle, 1970) will occur”
### Developmental/Behavioral Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respect, obedience</th>
<th>Expression, curiosity, independence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shyness</td>
<td>Extraversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender roles ascribed</td>
<td>Gender roles chosen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on others</td>
<td>Focus on self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy for others</td>
<td>Internal feeling states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less self-esteem</td>
<td>More self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitting in</td>
<td>Standing out, uniqueness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Social Classroom

Part 1 – The Students
USAID Tusome Pamoja

- Grades 1–4 Reading and Mathematics
- Pre-Primary
- $68 million
- 1.4 million children
- 26,000 teachers
- 3,025 schools, 5 regions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 focus groups with 95 parents</td>
<td>9 focus groups with 95 parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 interviews with teachers</td>
<td>27 interviews with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 interviews with students</td>
<td>80 interviews with students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What qualities do your children/students need in order to learn in school?

**What Parents Value**
- Respect
- Obedience
- Disciplined
- Being polite and calm

**What Teachers Value**
- Curiosity
- Confidence
- Self-directed

Goals for Schooling

- Julian Huxley, first Director of the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1932). The dual mandate of education:

  “…education should be adapted to the local environment of time and place, and yet give the opportunity of transcending that environment.”
What social-emotional competencies should children develop?

**What Parents Value**
- Respect
- Obedience
- Disciplined
- Being polite and calm

**21st Century Skills**
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Information literacy
What social-emotional competencies should children develop?

**What Parents Value**
- Respect
- Obedience
- Disciplined
- Being polite and calm

**What Teachers Value**
- Curiosity
- Confidence
- Self-directed

Who Participates in Classroom Activities?

“Those pupils who volunteer are **courageous**, they love to be close to teachers, they trust their teachers in a way that nobody else can teach them.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>% Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupils who raise their hands are the active and sociable ones.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils who raise their hands are the curious ones.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils who do not raise their hands are shy and fearful.</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Respect is an investment.”
Curiosity Prevalent Among More Educated and Wealthy
Urban Migration and Cognitive Abilities in the Gambia

More Urban Classrooms Have Children Who Ask Questions or Express Their Ideas (MELQO, 2017)

- **URBAN (n=22)**: 55% No, 45% Yes
- **RURAL (n=48)**: 79% No, 21% Yes

Pearson's chi-squared test ($\chi^2$) = 4.48, $p$ = .03
What social-emotional competencies should children develop?

**What Parents Value**
- Respect
- Obedience
- Disciplined
- Being polite and calm

**What Teachers Value**
- Curiosity
- Confidence
- Self-directed

**21st Century Skills**
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Information literacy

Some parents said girls should be more obedient than boys and boys should be more sociable.

Most teachers said that boys and girls should be equally obedient.
## Gender – associations with parent-rated competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Variable</th>
<th>Pupils’ Overall Score</th>
<th>Obedient</th>
<th>Curious</th>
<th>Conscientious</th>
<th>Emotional regulation</th>
<th>Sociable</th>
<th>Polite</th>
<th>Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.1**</td>
<td>0.07**</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.15**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.06**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.2**</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Education</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.38**</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 4 or Higher</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.63**</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents live together</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.17**</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.17**</td>
<td>-0.77**</td>
<td>-0.61**</td>
<td>-1.32**</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>-0.51**</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>-0.92**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Girls' Education
The Social and Cultural Basis of Pedagogical Choices

Study 1 – Observed classes of 36 teachers in Iringa, Mtwara and Zanzibar + Interview

- Reading activities almost all choral
- Little “you do”
- Little group work
- Children were asked the same questions repeatedly
Study 2 – Presented 5 scenarios to 17 teachers in Morogoro

Example Scenario

In one classroom teacher Musa asks the students to read together as a whole class. In another classroom, teacher Sultan sometimes asks students to read in pairs.
The Social and Cultural Basis of Pedagogical Choices

**Study 2** – Presented 5 scenarios to 17 teachers in Morogoro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogical Choice</th>
<th>Togetherness (Umoja)</th>
<th>Fairness</th>
<th>Making students happy</th>
<th>Avoiding Embarrassing Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asking repeated questions</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paired reading</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Avoiding Embarrassment

“[If students are asked questions they do not know the answer to] they will be laughed at by their fellow students and develop bad feelings about themselves and can result in teachers being seen as incompetent and unfit for the teaching profession”

“The children were happy because it gave them the easy to answer the question, students naturally do not like to be in tension when in class, so they were happy with repeating same answers.”
Togetherness (Umoja)

“When you [teach as a whole class rather than differentiate], you bring unity among them; they help one another in learning.”

“[Differentiated instruction] is very bad because it perpetuates the gap between weak and strong students. The weak students will feel isolated and disregarded in the class.”

“When you ask different questions students can sometime feel divided.”
Fairness

“this is a fair approach because all students are treated equally. It brings cooperation among them. All will be happy and will understand the lesson. It makes them be one and feel they are together and united. They will love one another.”

“[the students] felt happy because the learned together and were equally treated by their teacher. They were not treated differently.”
Predominance of Teacher-Led Activities

“It is a waste of time to ask [students] things they do not know.”

“You know when you do something together with your pupils, you get connected to them.”

“...[independent group learning] is very bad because the weak students will feel bad and isolated. The teacher should treat all students equally by teaching them addition first and not to leave it for them to do on their own”
Cooperation

“Pupils learn best when they share a book together. Distributing a book to each hinders cooperation among them.”

“Independent learning is not effective because pupils always cooperate with others in life, even with normal things, so it will take time for pupils to understand when taught alone compared to being in a group.”
Teachers’ Pedagogical Attitudes

- Children can practice skills on their own: 44%
- I should admit when I don't know the answer: 63%
- Pupils learn best when they try things for themselves: 76%
- Pupils can be encouraged to ask me questions: 84%
- I can help children speak up during class: 94%
- Learning begins when I ask pupils questions they can't answer: 94%

Forced-choice questionnaire with 131 teachers from 36 schools
Conclusion: Effective Pedagogy =

- Compatible with Cultural and Social Norms of the Classroom
  - But student SE skills built where possible
- Follows Key Cognitive Learning Principles
  - Students participate in their own learning
  - Children learn at different paces and in different ways
  - Teachers need to gauge student understanding to provide instruction at the right level
  - Students practice skills independently

- Co-designed by Teachers?
Examples

- **Thumbs up/thumbs down**
  - ✓ checking for understanding
  - ✓ without embarrassment

- **Teacher-directed group work** –
  - ✓ individual practice
  - ✓ students feel free to speak up

**BUT** co-design with teachers to ensure that:
  - ✓ teacher retains sense of control
  - ✓ small groups retain sense of togetherness with their class
  - ✓ easier to manage
Research Partners

Jovina Tibenda, Tusome Pamoja
Dr. Nkanileka Mgonda, University of Dar es Salaam
Dr. Prosper Mosha, University of Dodoma
Florentina Nsolezi, University of Dodoma
Grace Jeremiah, St. Augustine University
Yasmin Sitabkhan, RTI International
Kellie Betts, RTI International
Prof. Kristen Bub, University of Illinois, USA
Sarrynna Sou, RTI International
Corina Owens, RTI International

Funding: U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Tusome Pamoja,
RTI Early Childhood Development (ECD) Strategic Investment Fund, RTI Fellowship, IRnD SEL funds
Thanks!

mjukes@rti.org

@matthewchjukes