

Speak English: Assessing Tanzanian Rural Opinions of Success on National Exams and  
Language Comprehension

Dennis John Smith

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Committee:

James Long

Benjamin Gardner

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Dennis John Smith

University of Washington

**Abstract**

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Language Comprehension

Dennis John Smith

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

James Long

Political Science

This study uses a mixed methods approach to assess the perception of rural students and teachers in order to explain the link between exam success rates and the English only policy. Data was first collected from the NECTA (National Examination Council of Tanzania) website to determine which secondary schools are not performing well on their exams. I used opinion surveys to gather data from rural secondary school students and teachers, matching similar approaches used by scholars who work on the impact on urban schools of government education policy. This research was collected from 4 rural secondary schools, 322 students, and 22 teachers in the Southern Highlands in September 2018. Most intriguingly, responses by subjects related to rural institutions of secondary education, located in the Southern Highlands, demonstrate little to no difference in their opinions about their own level of English language proficiency compared with their urban counterparts, notwithstanding the dramatic degree to which rural students are unsuccessful in their attempt to pass the national exams. This study claims that the apparent cognitive dissonance between subjects' evaluation of their own abilities and the examination passage rates that call that into question are essential components for deepening our understanding of the difficulties rural Tanzanians face as a result of the government policy.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to fill a gap in existing literature to explain why, despite their poor national exam assessments, rural Tanzanians continue to support existing education policies. This project's initial hypothesis focused on the Swahili-to-English language transition for students entering secondary school; all education up until about 8<sup>th</sup> grade was taught using the Swahili language. Upon entering secondary school, or about 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the language of instruction shifts to English. I believed Tanzanian students and teachers residing in rural areas would have different views about current education policies than their urban counterparts who support policy that quantitatively benefits students in urban areas. This hypothesis was grounded in the idea that, due to the insufficient number of educators, as well as poor infrastructure and lack of educational supplies, educational facilities in rural communities would believe themselves worse-off compared to urban students, especially when one considers the shift in the language of instruction between primary and secondary schools. People learning and teaching in more populated areas inevitably have access to more educators, sound infrastructure, and are more likely to have access to the electric grid, thus providing more sustained access to educational materials on the internet.<sup>1</sup> These urban areas also have a higher population of people fluent in the English language. This provides urban students real-world opportunities to listen to and practice English outside of the classroom.

After returning to Tanzania's Southern Highlands in September 2018, I revised my original hypothesis after discovering a new puzzle: both urban and rural students and teachers answered their surveys similarly. In other words, both populations of Tanzanians reported that

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<sup>1</sup> Map of Tanzania's electric grid included in index.

they support current language of instruction and believe themselves to have achieved proficiency of the English language.

This trend in the data begets the question this study aims to solve. Why, given the quantitatively supported notion that rural areas are significantly less likely to have access to proper education and proficiency in the English language, do rural Tanzanians have faith in current language of instruction policies and a misperception of their own mastery of the English language?

My claim is that Tanzanians in rural areas are unaware of their lack of proficiency surrounding the English language due to a Dunning-Kruger effect setting. Teachers with limited English skills pass on their abilities to their students. These students believe in their teachers' English-speaking abilities due to a long-standing cultural respect for elders and educators. A vacuum effect takes hold and students remain unaware of the fact that they are not proficient in the English language. It is not just teachers conditioning students into believing they have mastered the English language; shopkeepers, parents, and other community members are factors that make up each student's self-perception. Because students hear little or no English from shopkeepers and family members, they are reinforced by their environment. Speaking and hearing English at school and understanding what is said outside of the classroom creates a self-perception that a student is excelling in the language when in reality they lack the awareness of how limited their language skills are. This lack of awareness regarding their own English proficiency, alongside the rural desire to learn a global language, makes both students and teachers believe another factor, rather than the institutional policies, national exams, and their English proficiency, is the true reason for a lack of success on national examinations.

The background of this paper observes the national examination scores in both rural and urban areas. This quantitative data highlights how geographical location changes the success rates of public school national examinations. The regions with exam scores lower than those in urban areas were selected to complete surveys and interviews to learn student and teacher opinions on language of instruction in secondary schools. It became necessary to find a rationale behind rural Tanzanian backing of language of instruction policies after data collected showed significant rural support for policies that have not fostered educational growth in its secondary school student and teacher populations. This section provides the opportunity for the thesis to look into quantitative measures with a qualitative lens; it allows room to explain the support of an education system that is supported by the populous who are factually not benefitting from its structure.

The literature review provides rationale from other international scholars on why education policies have not changed in Tanzania. Some scholars have argued Tanzanians have faulty beliefs about why the system is unable to change. My research relies on the opposite: Tanzanians do not recognize there is an existing concern regarding the language of instruction policies in the country. I take surveys used by one scholar and replicate their city-focused research in farming communities located in the Southern Highlands to create a wider picture of Tanzanian public opinion surrounding language of instruction policies.

The data and methodology section provides information I collected in the Southern Highlands in September of 2018 from 4 rural secondary schools, 322 students, and 22 teachers. Questions on the survey provide insight into whether or not my hypothesis is correct. This information, alongside my data analysis, does support my claim that rural Tanzanians are

unaware that they are not proficient in the English language. This state of unawareness is the major reason why rural Tanzanians have remained silent about making a change in language of instruction policies.

As the Dunning-Kruger effect is one potential explanation for why policies in education have remained essentially the same since the inception of Tanzania, I provide a discussion chapter to give insight into other reasons Tanzanian policy-makers may have for the current state of rural education. While I provide data that claims the Dunning-Kruger effect is central to lack of change, I also provide alternate explanations in my literature review. While my literature review looks exclusively into education, this discussion investigates issues Tanzania faces outside of education policies.

## II. BACKGROUND

A young boy stood leaning on a stick in a rural community located in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. The sign stood in front of a secondary school, “SPEAK ENGLISH” written in black paint across the weather-worn wooden plank. This is not a unique sight for secondary schools across the country, and the phrase has been seen in and outside of classrooms since these educational institutions were put in place by colonists decades before. Colonial impact on language did not go away after Tanzania gained independence in 1961, as the English language remains the method of instruction in secondary school.

I experienced Tanzania’s struggle with quality education firsthand throughout my two years living in a rural community starting in 2015 as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Children growing up in the community I called home were primarily from the Hehe tribe, one of the more prominent tribes located in the Southern Highlands. These children would move into primary school around the ages of four to five, where they would learn Kiswahili, the nation’s dominant language and lingua franca. Kiswahili comes from the Zanzibar archipelago off the coast of Tanzania’s mainland. The language is a mix of Bantu derived dialects, traditionally tied to the mainland tribes of Tanzania, and Arabic which comes from the influence of centuries of trade with Oman, as well as periods of colonization under Middle Eastern powers. English becomes the language of instruction for students in secondary school after seven years of instruction in Swahili. This creates a disadvantage for Tanzanian students who are in areas that do not have the English language exposure necessary to make an immediate switch from Swahili in primary school’s to English in secondary school.

The background on language in education policy in Tanzania is vast: from pre-colonial times to present day, sociolinguistic trends have been central to the development of the regions and states residing in East Africa. In Tanzania, the debate on whether to transition all schooling to English or Swahili shaped the formation of policies that contributed to its current state of a divided lingua franca between primary (Swahili) and secondary (English) school.<sup>2</sup>

Sociolinguistic policies on Tanzania's Ministry of Education website have been in place since independence; Swahili continues to be the language of instruction for primary school students who are then expected to immediately transition to English as the language of instruction in their first year of secondary school and beyond.

Language policies in Tanzania are laid out in four different time periods by Zaline M. Roy-Campbell: Pre-Independence (Pre-1964), Independence (1964), Interim(1968), and Current(1987).<sup>3</sup> During both German and British colonization (Pre-Independence), there were a multitude of schools hosting different languages of instruction. Overall, Swahili was used in primary schools and English became a subject halfway through primary education. English became the language of instruction at the start of standard six in primary school.<sup>4</sup> At the time, there were eight standard levels of education in primary school.

During the Independence period there was a divide between African and English schools which determined the lingua franca. English did not become the medium of instruction until the last standard grades; of primary school's eight standards, English was used in Standard 7 and 8. English was the medium of instruction at all 8 levels in primary school and all 4 levels in

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<sup>2</sup> Sa, Eleuthera. "Language policy for education and development in Tanzania." (2007).

<sup>3</sup> Albaugh, E. "Language Policies in African States—Updated, January 2012." (2012): 1-73.

<sup>4</sup> Roy-Campbell, Zaline M. "Globalisation, Language and Education: A Comparative Study of the United States and Tanzania." *International Review of Education* 47, nos. 3-4 (2001a): 267-282.

secondary school within Colonial English schools. These schools then introduced Swahili as a class in standard three.<sup>5</sup>

Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's first president after independence, was intent on making Tanzania home for over 100 tribes that lived inside the geographical boundaries that were drawn by colonizers. President Nyerere relied on sociolinguistic policy to accomplish his nationalizing political objectives. *Ujamaa*, a word in Swahili that loosely translates to "family" and the title to Nyerere's book, is often used in conjunction with the word "socialism." With over 100 tribes came over 100 tribal languages or dialects, immediately differentiating people who were forced into this new state during colonial rule and left within these arbitrarily-drawn colonial states post-independence in 1961.<sup>6</sup> Nyerere determined the best approach to create cohesion and a sense of national identity was to create a national language. Nyerere's designation of Swahili as the new national language did indeed create cohesion and a sense of national identity with over 95% of the country fluent in the language.<sup>7</sup> This also explains Tanzanians' ongoing reverence for "Mwalimu" Nyerere's beliefs and his policies' pertinence years after his time as president.<sup>8</sup>

The Interim period and the Current period are when we see how language policy in the country took its shape today. In 1967, Tanzania stated that the lingua franca across all public education systems would become Swahili with English serving as a compulsory course. It was not until 1982 that the federal government, still under Julius Nyerere, declined the pitch to expand Swahili as the language of instruction to secondary and tertiary institutions.<sup>9</sup> It is not

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<sup>5</sup> Roy-Campbell, Zaline M. "Empowerment Through Language: The African Experience – Tanzania and Beyond." Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc, 2001b.

<sup>6</sup> Nyerere, Julius Kambarage. "Ujamaa-essays on socialism." (1968).

<sup>7</sup> Brock-Utne, Birgit. "Language-in-education policies and practices in Africa with a special focus on Tanzania and South Africa—Insights from research in progress." *International handbook on globalisation, education and policy research*(2005): 549-565.

<sup>8</sup> Mwalimu translates from Swahili to English as "Teacher".

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

until 1987 that language of instruction is discussed again when Britain decided it would only provide development aid to the country as long as “the Ministry of Education should ensure that English remains the medium of instruction for secondary schools.” This was accepted by the Tanzanian government in 1985, led by President Ali Hassan Mwinyi.<sup>10</sup>

This background leads scholars to current education policy and the state of education in the country. In order to properly assess the nation’s growth regarding education, there must be a quantitative measurement for how students are doing on their examinations. Existing data for the NECTA (National Examination Council of Tanzania) examination results were gathered directly from the Ministry of Education’s national exam website to provide this sort of quantitative measurement.

## **NATIONAL EXAMINATION COUNCIL OF TANZANIA EXAMINATION RESULTS<sup>11</sup>**

To better contextualize the results of my analysis, there must be a measurement of success before looking into survey and interview data. Educational success in this study is determined via national exam scores from students in Form II and Form IV. Form II is the second year of secondary school, and Form IV is the fourth and final year of secondary school. The NECTA examinations for Form IV students largely determine their ability to attend university or continue their education. The final NECTA exam scores for the public institutions in both the Southern Highlands and Dar es Salaam were collected. These scores come from the public secondary schools where surveys and interviews were conducted in the Southern Highlands, as well as the three randomly selected secondary schools in Dar es Salaam, the

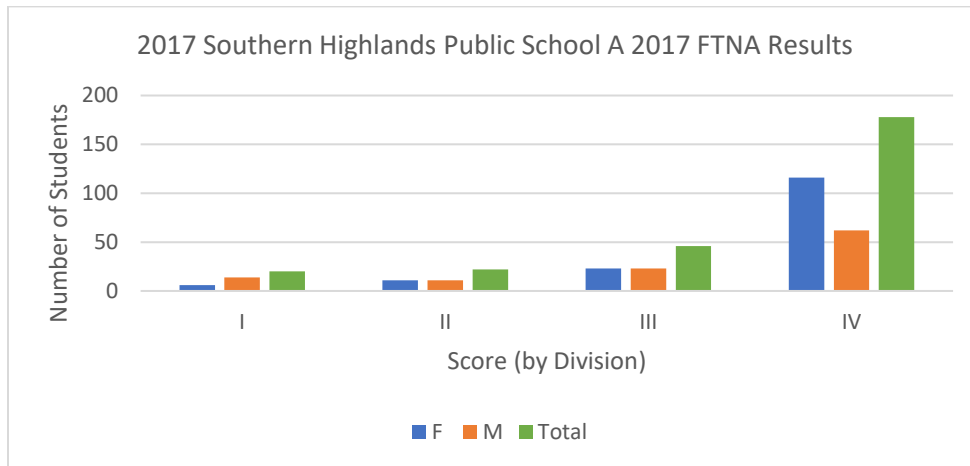
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<sup>10</sup> Roy-Campbell, Zaline M. “Globalisation, Language and Education: A Comparative Study of the United States and Tanzania.” *International Review of Education* 47, nos. 3-4 (2001a): 267-282.

<sup>11</sup> All Public School Examination information gathered from the National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) official website.

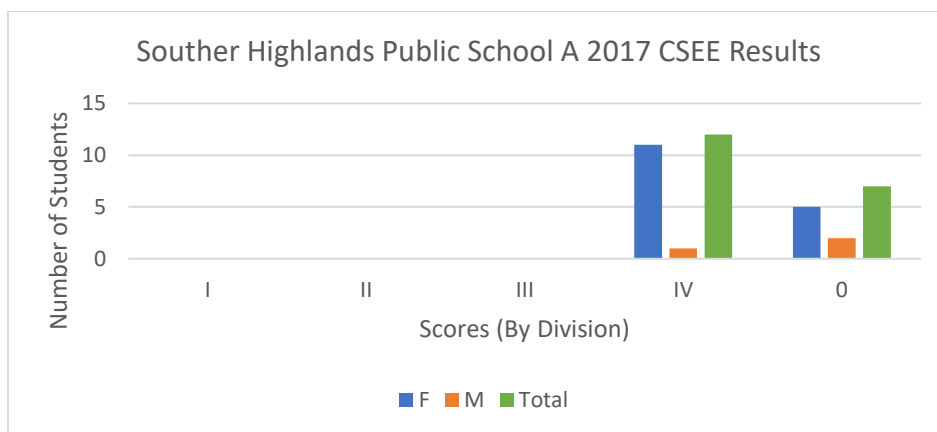
largest metropolitan area in Tanzania and the location of Hilliard’s research. All information comes from the 2017 Form II (10<sup>th</sup> grade) NECTA FTNA (Form Two National Assessment) and the 2017 NECTA CSEE (Certificate of Secondary Education Examination).

**Southern Highlands Public School A**



**Figure 2.1**

The above chart represents the total amount of students, male and female, who took the FTNA, with Division I being the best and Division IV not passing the assessment. Of the over 250 test takers, 33% scored sufficiently enough to be considered passing. This number becomes more concerning when looking at the same school and amount of students who took the CSEE, shown in Figure 2. Form II students drop out of secondary school if they are unable to pass their exams. This leads to a steep drop in Form IV students; of the roughly 250 youth that were in school for Form II lessons, only about 10% of those students stay in school to their 12<sup>th</sup> year of education. As explained by one teacher interviewed, the CSEE is graded differently. If a student receives a “0,” it is considered failing. In order to move past secondary school academically, a student is required to receive at least a Division III on their CSEE. So, while Division IV is technically passing, one cannot move forward with their education.



**Figure 2.2**

Using the information provided by both the secondary school teacher and the NECTA website, this data shows that there are significantly fewer students enrolled in Form IV than in Form II (over 250 in Form II and less than 25 in Form IV). Of this group of students, none will be able to continue their education due to their inability to score in Division III or higher on the CSEE.

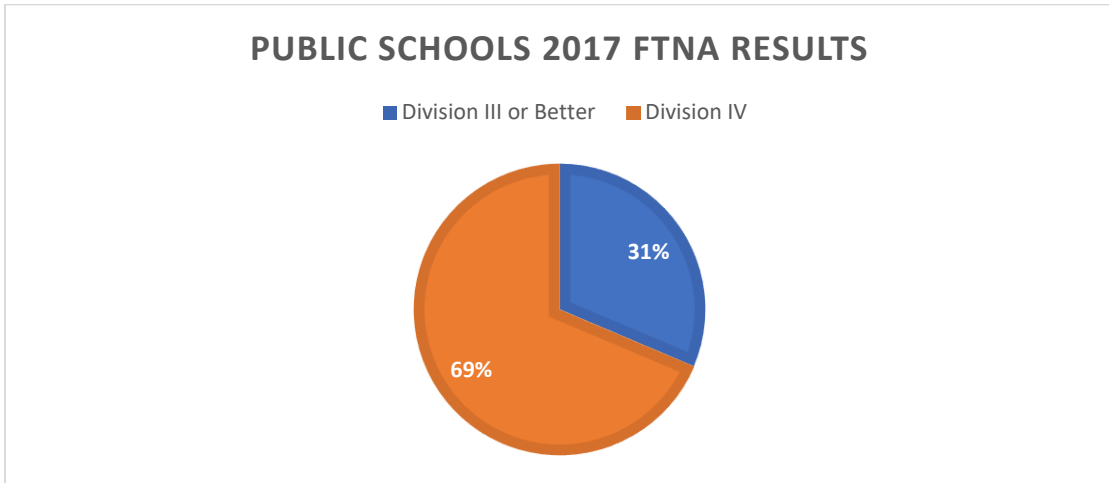
### **Southern Highlands Public School B and C<sup>12</sup>**

Southern Highlands Public School B follows similar trends to Public School A, with slightly fewer students able to continue their education (33% in school A compared to 25% in school B). The Form IV examination (CSEE) results show that students performed slightly better than those from School A. The statistics show that, even though some students were able to score in Division II and III, only 25% of School B students are able to continue their education. The amount of students enrolled in Form IV is also reduced drastically, with nearly one hundred students partaking in the FTNA compared to only sixty who took the CSEE Form IV exam.

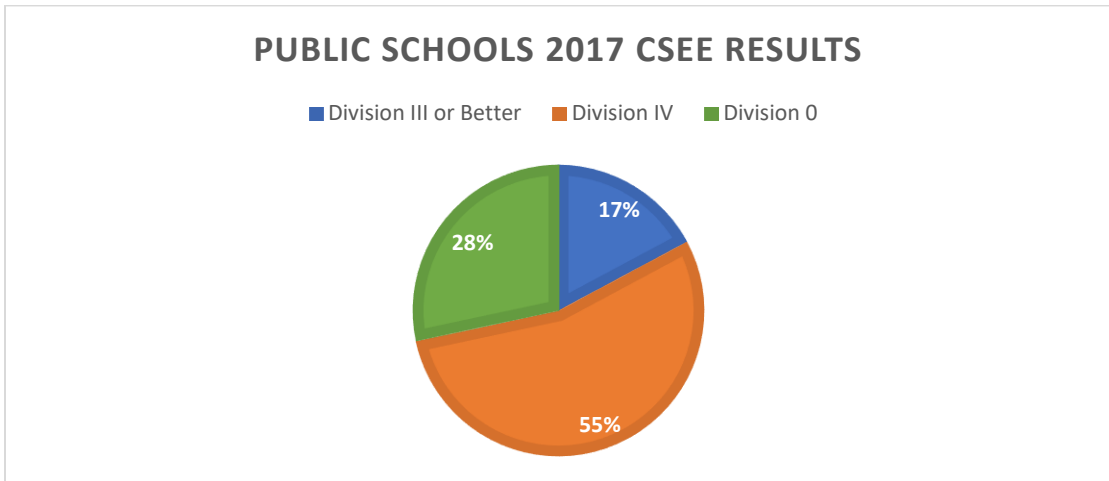
<sup>12</sup> All further charts elaborating on rural success for schools B and C can be found in the paper’s index.

The last public school's scores were similar to both School A and B. Form II had around eighty test takers, only a third of which had successful examinaion results. Around fifty students took the CSEE, and 20% performed well enough to receive a degree.

**Southern Highlands Public School Summary<sup>13</sup>**



**Figure 2.3** Data includes ~450 students from all three rural secondary schools. Division III or Better is passing.



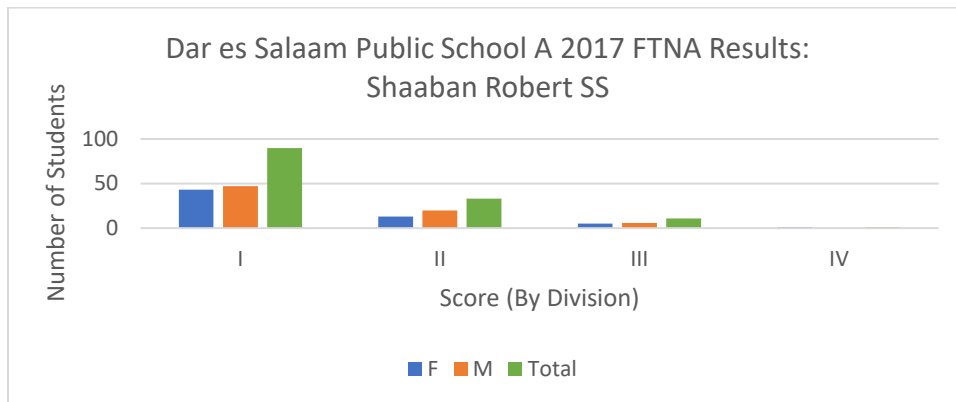
**Figure 2.4** Data includes ~130 students from all three rural secondary schools. Division III or better is passing.

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<sup>13</sup> The wording of this paper rounds to the nearest 10 to provide anonymity to volunteering secondary schools.

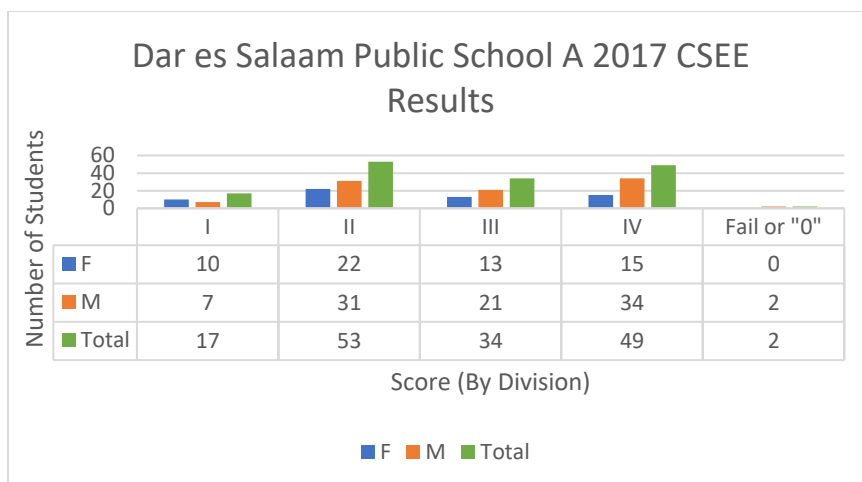
## Dar es Salaam Public School A

The comparison between the public schools in Dar es Salaam and the Southern Highlands uses the same NECTA website data sets. Three public secondary schools were picked randomly to compare data sets, the results shown in the following figures. The results from Shaaban Robert Secondary School, the first of the institutions, are nearly the opposite of the public schools in the Southern Highlands.



**Figure 2.5**

By these measures, nearly 100% of the students were able to continue onto Form III, a significant difference from what was recorded in farming communities. The data clearly shows the capabilities of urban area secondary schools, with nearly 150 students taking the Form IV examination. Of those 150, more than half will be able to continue their education. The numbers even indicate that the school had an increase in students from Form II to Form IV, potentially signifying people returning to school or transferring into the system. While it is necessary to recognize that a large portion of students will not be able to continue their education, the number who will is exponentially higher than that of public institutions located rurally in the Southern Highlands.



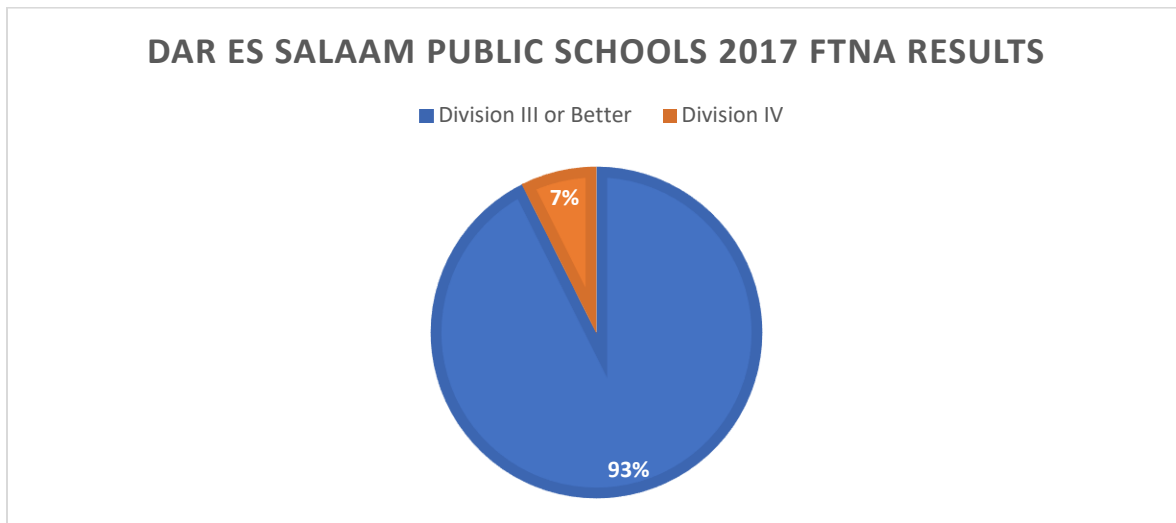
**Figure 2.6**

To avoid redundancy, charts for Dar es Salaam Public School B, Mzizima Secondary School, and Dar es Salaam Public School C, Benjamin William Mkapa Secondary School, will be included in the index. Very similar to Dar es Salaam Public School A, these institutions have an almost opposite scale when it comes to the pass/fail rates of their students compared to rural areas. Considering the FTNA, 2 of 35 scored in division IV from School B, 28 of 250 scored in division IV from School C. For the CSEE, Dar es Salaam School B had 10 of 31 score in Division 0 and 16 in Division IV. Dar es Salaam School C had 27 of its 253 students score in Division 0, 86 in Division IV. Only 9% of the urban students scored in Division 0 compared to the 28% in rural Tanzania, a drop just over 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of the population data was gathered on.

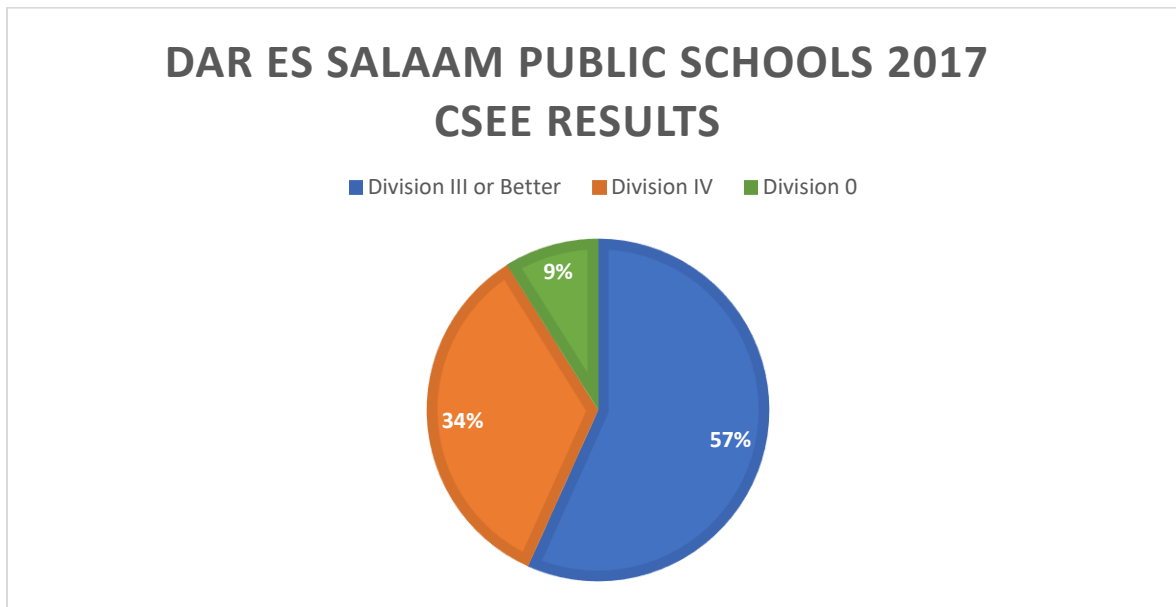
School	Examination	Students Passed	Students Failed
Mzizima Secondary	FTNA	33	2
	CSEE	21	10
Benjamin William Mkapa Secondary	FTNA	222	28
	CSEE	226	27

## Dar es Salaam Public School Summary

As shown in the following graphs, a vast majority of these Form II students pass their national exams, 93% compared to 31%. 57% of urban students, compared to 17% rural students, scored in Division III or higher on the CSEE. The results for urban and rural scores are so drastically different, it would seem obvious that students and teachers would feel differently about some aspect of their quality of education.



**Figure 2.7** Data includes ~420 students from all three urban secondary schools.



**Figure 2.8** Data includes about 440 students from all three urban secondary schools.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars view of Tanzania's language of instruction is heavily influenced by the historic sociolinguistic policies created by Tanzanian heads of state, as seen in the background section of this thesis. These scholars all have a similar view: language policies within educational institutions are detrimental to the educational development of Tanzania and should be transitioned to an English-only or Swahili-only lingua franca. My claim comes before deciding on language of instruction policy and focuses more on the ability of Tanzanians to ascribe their own agency. While it may be best for Tanzanians to learn using one language of instruction, attention must first be brought to the social reproduction of rural beliefs that a problem exists with existing language of instruction policy.

One example comes from Francis Vavrus who explains how current laws inhibit growth. Shee cites that colonial rule was responsible for the spread and acceptance of the English language which is the main contributor to Tanzania's failing educational language structure.<sup>14</sup> Colonists were not just responsible for bringing over language as a tool to colonize. Borders were drawn, causing the separation of existing tribes. Religion was spread by clergy to thousands of Tanzanians, President Nyerere included, indoctrinating them into the Christian faith well before decolonization. This attachment to the Christian faith was a facet leading to the acceptance of other colonial tactics, including language and its use in governmental institutions. Vavrus creates one lens into discussing the reasoning behind a lack of growth and answering my initial question of why there has not been change, but there remains a lack of collected

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<sup>14</sup> Vavrus, Frances. "Postcoloniality and English: Exploring language policy and the politics of development in Tanzania." *Tesol Quarterly* 36.3 (2002): 373-397.

qualitative data that I believe provides more insight into why language of instruction policies have yet to change.

Vavrus is not the only scholar to raise concerns with the lingua franca shift in education policy. Birgit Brock-Utne's publications have been directed at the perceived unfairness of the mode of education in Tanzania. Brock-Utne shares Vavrus' views and sees the current education system as held back from its potential by an inefficient language of instruction model.<sup>15</sup> Brock-Utne also makes a unique argument that while education is a barrier to development in Tanzania, the Tanzanian Government is responsive to other factors at play such as donor pressure and economic interests.<sup>16</sup> On this topic, Brock-Utne writes:

*When it comes to the choice of language of instruction in African schools sociocultural politics, economic interests, sociolinguistics and education are so closely interrelated that it is difficult to sort out the arguments. It is an area with strong donor pressure, mostly from the former colonial masters, who wish to retain and strengthen their own languages. There are strong economic interests from publishing companies overseas who see that they will have easier access to the African textbook market when the Euro languages are used.<sup>17</sup>*

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<sup>15</sup> Brock-Utne, Birgit. "Learning through a familiar language versus learning through a foreign language—A look into some secondary school classrooms in Tanzania." *International Journal of Educational Development* 27.5 (2007): 487-498.

<sup>16</sup> Brock-Utne, Birgit. "Language-in-education policies and practices in Africa with a special focus on Tanzania and South Africa—Insights from research in progress." *International handbook on globalisation, education and policy research*(2005): 549-565.

<sup>17</sup> Brock-Utne, Birgit. "Language-in-education policies and practices in Africa with a special focus on Tanzania and South Africa—Insights from research in progress." *International handbook on globalisation, education and policy research*(2005): 550.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Due to Western influences, it remains excruciatingly difficult for Tanzania to change its lingua franca policies due to the economic strain that would present itself, should the country choose to change their language of instruction at either the primary or the secondary school level.

In Brock-Utne's later scholarship, she addresses the hardships mentioned in the above quote but also claims that the beliefs Tanzanians hold about education are faulty<sup>18</sup> and that the views of Tanzanians in debates regarding language policy are fallacies<sup>19</sup> that prevent a change in language policies. Her scholarship suggests these commonly-held Tanzanian beliefs to be wrong:

1. There is a need for a European language to provide job security. As English continues to grow as a global language, Tanzanians see it as a language which can provide a foothold onto the global field. If Tanzania continues to strive towards economic development and global presence, then it is necessary to continue using English within education.
2. African languages do not have a developed scientific terminology. English and Arabic have long controlled the field of sciences and terminology. Tanzanians rely on this terminology to do work in hard sciences.
3. A language transition would be economically devastating. To replace all the school books that are already written in English and revisit the national examinations, also written in English, is time-consuming and expensive.
4. Tanzania is a country made of over 120 languages. There are so many languages, it is impossible to pick one outside of the colonial lens.

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<sup>19</sup> Brock-Utne, Birgit. "But English is the language of science and technology: The language of instruction in Africa, with a special look at Tanzania." *CIES conference in Salt Lake City*. 2004.

Her rebuttal to these concerns comes immediately. Tanzanians have advocated for a change to Swahili as the language of instruction. Her negation of the language of science claim has been that “any language can be the language of science and technology” and the cost of changing texts into a native language would be cost-effective in the long-run. With 95% of the country speaking Swahili, it is not difficult to choose a language to use rather than English.<sup>20</sup> Brock-Utne continues writing on her time in Dar es Salaam, seeing students struggle to understand their teachers in English. Brock-Utne proves herself familiar with the ongoing debate of the language of instruction in the country, making her claim to change the language of instruction to one that will be more beneficial to Tanzania both developmentally and economically.

While Brock-Utne sees concerns Tanzanians share regarding a change in language policy, data I collected shows the opposite: policy has not changed because there are no concerns within the current system. At the same time, we both share the same beliefs that, in the end, Tanzanian perspective does not take other factors into account. While she states four specific fallacies that may be responsible for lack of change, the research I collected supports my claim that the belief nothing is wrong is itself an incorrect belief held by rural Tanzanian citizens.

Brock-Utne’s later research establishes that “there was no-one from outside of Tanzania that supported the position that Kiswahili ought to be the language of instruction in secondary school and university.”<sup>21,22</sup> Brock-Utne quotes an education professional to assert her own claim that the lingua franca policy in Tanzania needs to change in order to benefit Tanzanians. Brock-Utne argues that Western powers are the primary beneficiaries of Tanzania’s policy to use

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Brock-Utne, Birgit. "The most recent developments concerning the debate on language of instruction in Tanzania." *Institute for Education Research* (2002).

<sup>22</sup> Kiswahili translates to “The Swahili Language.” Languages are signified by the ‘Ki’ at the front of the word (Kiarabu being Arabic, for example).

English as the secondary school language of instruction, and that the driver of their opposition to using Swahili as the language of instruction at all levels. It is potentially ironic, then, that Brock-Utne, a scholar hailing from a Western country, advocates for a transition to Swahili as the language used in education. It seems that Brock-Utne has entered the sociolinguistic debate that has been ongoing for decades, calling the beliefs of one side of Tanzanian citizens fallacies as she advocates for the transition to a single, national language of instruction in all institutions of learning.

While Vavrus and Brock-Utne explore the ‘what is wrong?’ of existing language of instruction policy, Amanda Hilliard takes their research and examines it through an anthropological approach, exploring how students and teachers feel about the language of instruction. Hilliard’s 2015 research “Tanzanian Students’ Attitudes Towards English” provides yet another alternative explanation. She demonstrates that while urban secondary students and teachers generally have positive attitudes about learning and teaching English in the school system, in part because they recognized English as an important tool for advancement in their careers and future studies, they also critiqued the quality of their English training, which significantly impacted their progress. Hilliard understood the necessity of reaching out to students and teachers to learn how they feel about the language of instruction in the classroom. Ultimately, if students and teachers believe the current method of education is successful, it should not matter what outside (Western) statistics or resources have to say on the matter. It seems common sense that Tanzanian students and teachers should decide what works best in Tanzanian educational institutions. While scholars such as Vavrus and Brock-Utne point to barriers of social mobility as a response to inadequate English preparation, which has been well studied, only recently have social scientists such as Hilliard begun to investigate the attitudes of

students toward the English policy regarding both learning and taking national examinations. Hilliard's research is an exemplary example of what local Tanzanians want and appreciate about their educational system.

Even with Hilliard's research, there is a dearth of research conducted in rural areas. All literature represented relied on information in Dar es Salaam, a city representing a population just shy of 4.4 million. Frances Vavrus completed her research about views on language in secondary schools in Arusha, a city with a population around 350 thousand in a region of 1.7 million. That means, even if everything thus far was accurate, current studies account for only 4.75 million of Tanzania's 57.3 million citizens. A clear majority of Tanzania's population, the rural population, remains unaccounted for. My thesis aims to fill the gap in existing literature by beginning to explore what rural Tanzanian students and teachers think about existing language policies in education and provide an explanation to my claim that rural Tanzanians, at no fault of their own, suffer from the Dunning-Kruger effect when it comes to self-reflection on their abilities with the English language and, subsequently, their abilities to learn and speak using English as the language of instruction.

One major difference between people in rural and urban settings is accessibility to goods and services. This is important to consider when applying my hypothesis to the opinions of students and teachers in rural Tanzania. It is important to gauge the opinions of teachers and students outside of urban areas to have a fair assessment on student and teacher opinions. However, what if the opinion of rural and urban students aligns despite the difference in trajectory seen through national examination scores? This phenomenon may be explained by the Dunning-Kruger effect. David Dunning and Justin Kruger, two psychologists from Cornell, published "Unskilled and unaware of it: how difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence

lead to inflated self-assessments.” Dunning and Kruger define this at the beginning of their journal:

People tend to hold overly favorable views of their abilities in many social and intellectual domains... This overestimation occurs, in part, because people who are unskilled in these domains suffer a dual burden: Not only do these people reach erroneous conclusions and make unfortunate choices, but their incompetence robs them of the metacognitive ability to realize it.<sup>23</sup>

To summarize: people do not know what they do not know which leads to overconfidence in their own abilities. Through their study, Dunning and Kruger learned that participants scoring in the lowest percentiles of the given tests also gave substantially higher opinions on their performance. Dunning brought forward four studies based on “humor [Study 1], logical reasoning [Studies 2 and 4], and English grammar [Study 3] (Dunning 1122)

Dunning-Kruger Study Results (1999)

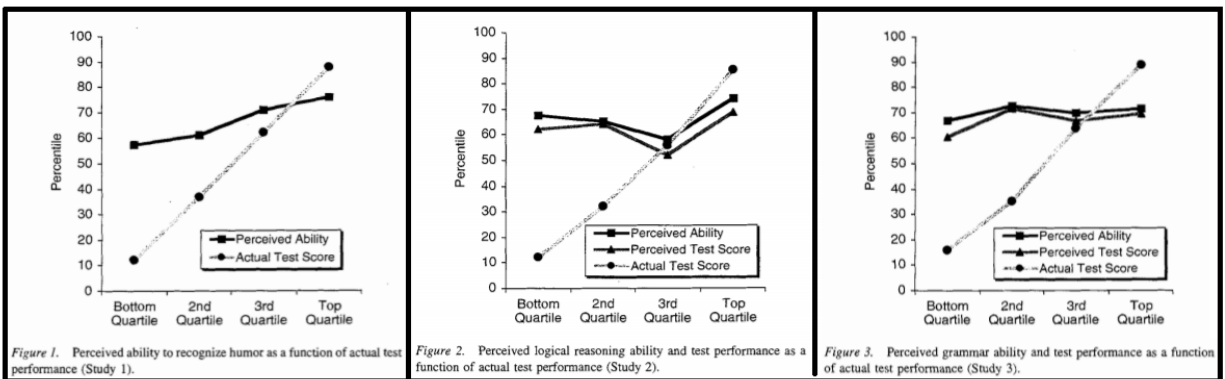


Figure 1.

<sup>23</sup> Dunning, David. "The Dunning–Kruger effect: On being ignorant of one's own ignorance." *Advances in experimental social psychology* 44 (2011): 247-296.

Figure 1 shows the results of all three studies that were conducted by Dunning and Kruger. The bottom quartile, or the worst of the test-takers, perceived themselves (solid black line) exponentially higher than their performance indicated (grey line). It is not until the third quartile, or the top 50% of test takers, that the study shows an accurate recognition of one's own abilities. The top quartile continues the trend, underestimating their abilities on the tests. Two of these studies relate directly to education. Each study provides an example that can be used to evaluate self-assessment of those underperforming on their exams in rural Tanzania, as is made clear in the data analysis section of this thesis.

The Dunning-Kruger effect applies directly to my claim: Tanzanian students in rural areas, who have not had access to proper education or have not been surrounded by multiple cultures and languages, including English, will have less of a grasp on English than those provided such luxuries. While I may argue with Dunning and Kruger's use of the word "unaware," I still believe that this is a productive model to use. The Dunning-Kruger effect shows how rural areas have been conditioned to believe they have a grasp on the English language due to the social reproduction that comes from speaking with their peers, families, and communities. Since most rural students only receive English via the instruction of their secondary school teachers, they already have limited interaction with the language. Due to the importance of respect for elders, family, and educators in Tanzania, students assume that their mentors in the classroom are proficient in the English language.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> While it is difficult to provide direct evidence on how respect is given to elders and mentors in Tanzania outside of personal experience interactions I have witnessed personally, several resources are available to provide some insight. See:

Davidson, Euan. "The pivotal role of teacher motivation in Tanzanian education." *The educational forum*. Vol. 71. No. 2. Taylor & Francis Group, 2007.

Juntunen, Anitta, Merja Nikkonen, and Sirpa Janhonen. "Respect as the main lay care activity among the Bena in Ilembula village in Tanzania." *International journal of nursing practice* 8.4 (2002): 210-220.

Theories such as the Dunning-Kruger Effect are not without their challenges, as is presented by scholars who respond in one of two ways: 1) unskilled people are no more unaware than anyone else 2) unskilled people are not actually unaware. Even so, these arguments against the Dunning-Kruger effect serve to reinforce my argument. In 2006, Katherine Burson (et al.) published an article that stated that not all situations confirm this sort of bias. "In a series of 12 tasks across 3 studies, the authors show that on moderately difficult tasks, best and worst performers differ very little in accuracy, and on more difficult tasks, best performers are less accurate than worst performers... judges at all skill levels are subject to similar degrees of error."<sup>25</sup> Burson acknowledges that Dunning and Kruger's effectiveness in showing the "better-than-average" effect where poor performers do in fact overestimate themselves. She also indicates that all participants, not just the worst, are likely to estimate themselves above-average on simple tasks and below on more difficult tasks.

Looking at Burson's first study, which is the most education-focused of the three studies, participants were given either an easy or difficult trivia exam about their university. The goal was to determine if poor insight comes from those ranking the lowest, or if this sort of miscalibration can happen from all people participating in the study.

*Participants in the bottom quartile on the easy trivia were actually in the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile but thought they would be in the 57<sup>th</sup> and on the moderate [difficult] trivia they were actually in the 9<sup>th</sup> percentile but thought they would be in the 48<sup>th</sup>. Participants in the top quartile on the easy trivia were actually in the 89<sup>th</sup> percentile but thought they would be*

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<sup>25</sup> Burson, Katherine A., Richard P. Larrick, and Joshua Klayman. "Skilled or unskilled, but still unaware of it: how perceptions of difficulty drive miscalibration in relative comparisons." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 90.1 (2006): 60.

*in the 72<sup>nd</sup> and on the moderate [difficult] trivia they were actually in the 86<sup>th</sup> percentile but thought they would be in the 58<sup>th</sup>.*

Of course, the more difficult test had a lower average score and a higher rated difficulty level by the 47 participants. When divided into quartiles, similar to the Dunning-Kruger figure presented above, the bottom quartile overestimated their success yet again.<sup>26</sup>

Burson argues that, because the top quartile also had difficulty determining their skill level, it is difficult to determine your performance whether you are at the top or bottom for scores. While this may be the case, it does not take away from the validity of the claim that people in the bottom quartile overestimate their success. I would argue that Burson's study is an *ignoratio elenchi*, a red herring, counter-point to the Dunning and Kruger scholarship. Dunning-Kruger show that the lower quartile, the under-performers, over-assess themselves. Those in the top quartile, from both Dunning-Kruger and Burson, overestimate themselves. Top performers have difficulty in assessing their performance, but this fact does not invalidate Dunning-Kruger's statement that underperformers over-assess themselves.

The second argument against the Dunning-Kruger effect is that all people are not actually unaware of their abilities. When discussing students and their abilities, Author Marian Krajič declares that the problem is not being unaware as much as it is an issue with inference. The author states that it is not a metacognitive problem facing those in the bottom quartile, but an issue about how these people in the bottom quartile are receiving information and feedback, if they are receiving information and feedback at all.<sup>27</sup> As he states: "It is exactly the lack of

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<sup>26</sup> Burson, Katherine A., Richard P. Larrick, and Joshua Klayman. "Skilled or unskilled, but still unaware of it: how perceptions of difficulty drive miscalibration in relative comparisons." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 90.1 (2006): 68.

<sup>27</sup> Krajič, Marian. *Are the Unskilled Really that Unaware?: Understanding Seemingly Biased Self-assessments*. CERGE-EI, 2008.

information/feedback about one's own position that makes it difficult for student subjects to make the appropriate inferences about where they stand relative to others." Again, I feel this does not take away from this thesis' use of the Dunning-Kruger effect, but actually helps solidify the intent of information gathered for this claim: a lack of proper education in rural areas has led to an improper self-assessment by students failing their exams and educators failing to teach effectively using the English language.

All of this literature leads directly to my claim: while many scholars have provided information on the role of language of instruction in Tanzania, research has been conducted in urban areas. By reaching out to secondary schools in rural areas, I claim that the Dunning-Kruger effect continues to prevent rural secondary school students and teachers from acknowledging that there is a fundamental concern with the language of instruction shift from primary to secondary school.

#### **IV. DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

I collected qualitative surveys in September 2018 that aligned with the same questions asked by Amanda Hilliard's research conducted in Dar es Salaam in 2015. My intention to focus on rural communities led me to reach out to secondary schools that have requested teaching assistance from international aid organizations, such as the United States Peace Corps. Secondary schools apply for teaching assistance due to the dearth of educators required to fulfill state obligations to teach all core requirements. These requirements, as dictated by the Ministry of Education, are: "English, physics with chemistry, Kiswahili, biology, history, geography, civics and religion."<sup>28</sup> The lack of teachers has caused secondary schools to stop offering curriculum related to particular subjects. This can be caused by faculty who taught a specific subject leaving without a proper replacement. Occasionally, teachers are forced to instruct classes outside of their specialty, which then can diminish pedagogical quality.

In addition, a secondary school will request an education volunteer if they believe having a specialist in a certain field, such as English or mathematics, will increase the success rate at that institution. Logically, this means the headmaster believes there is room for the school to improve; outside aid would offer fresh insight into effective pedagogical strategies that secondary school teachers may have not considered.

All initial quantitative data seen in the introduction was collected among the secondary schools who applied for Peace Corps Assistance. I chose those located in the Southern Highlands due to security concerns and time restraints associated with traveling across regions. Nonetheless, the substantial population of the Provinces residing in the Southern Highlands have

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<sup>28</sup> UNESCO-IBE. World Data on Education: United Republic of Tanzania. VII Edition. 2010-11.

a combined population of roughly 6.7 million, exceeding Dar es Salaam's population by over 2 million, made the area a compelling focus for an inquiry into rural educational trends.<sup>29</sup> There are other regions composed of a primarily rural populous. I urge other researchers to build upon this and Hilliard's research to create a comprehensive data set for public opinion on language of instruction policies. Ultimately, I selected three public schools and one private school to be part of the study. I worked with Peace Corps Tanzania to select communities that would be amenable to participating in my study and acquired permission from headmasters at each secondary school. The University of Washington Human Subjects Division vetted this data gathering process on May 15, 2018.

The data used in this study was gathered through two fourteen questions surveys, one for students and one for teachers. Each survey respectively focused on subjects' personal opinions about the education system and about how well they were doing at their school and with the existing language of instruction policies. This survey was made available in both Swahili and English for both students and teachers, all of whom are Tanzanian citizens. Data includes surveys from 275 students and 22 teachers. Questions on the survey, as well as the language students and teachers choose to take the survey in, provide evidence into whether or not students truly are comfortable using the English language.

As we noted in the introduction earlier, public schools A, B, and C in rural Tanzania did not share significant differences in the rate in which students passed or failed their national examinations. This apparent continuity suggests that students and teachers answered similarly in their surveys. Based on this assumption I have aggregated survey answers along linguistic lines, separating the responses to the English survey from those responses to Swahili language surveys.

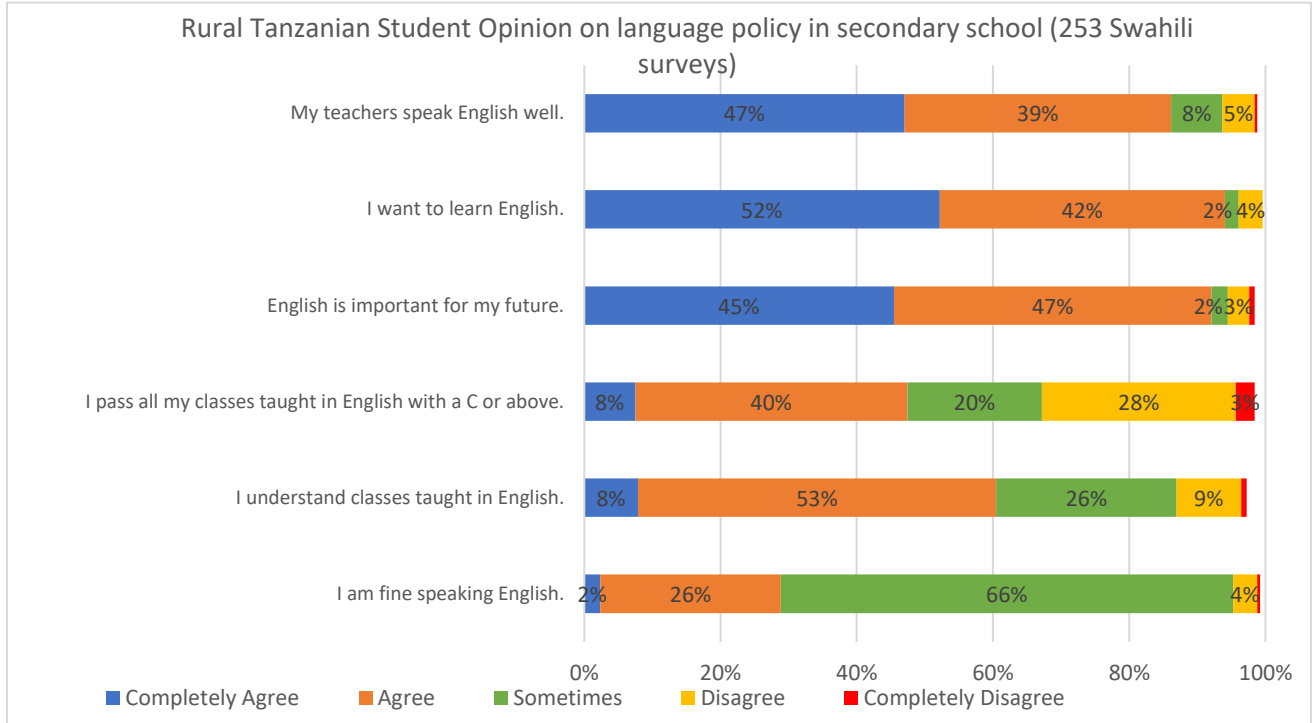
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<sup>29</sup> Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics. *Tanzania Population and Housing Census*. Census General Report. 2012.

This research aims to identify what is prohibiting educational success in rural areas. Given that students are expected to learn in English only starting in secondary school, it is a fair assumption to believe that the students and teachers choosing the Swahili language surveys are uncomfortable with the English language whilst those completing the surveys in English are truly confident in their language mastery. The data collected thus creates a conundrum: 92% of the 275 students who elected to participate chose the survey that was written using the Swahili language. Of these 253 students, 86% see their teachers as strong English speakers. What the data shows is that, even though students claim they are comfortable using the English language, and even though students claim their teachers are strong English speakers, they are still not comfortable enough to complete these surveys using the English language. These statistics are at odds with each other and their divergencies are essential when determining how this research fits into other relevant literature.

The following figures represent the findings of the opinion surveys taken by students and teachers at the three rural secondary schools located in the Southern Highlands. Note that because not every participant answered every question, total percentages may vary in the following figures.

## Surveys: Students



**Chart 4.1** Statistics of 1% or lower are included, but not expressively written numerically on the graph.

Chart one provides insight into the minds of Form II and Form IV students within the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. The data collected demonstrates several important points, perhaps most significantly a curious phenomenon wherein a majority of students claim that it is only ‘sometimes’ they believe they are fine speaking English, while at the same time the opinions of a majority of the rest fall into the ‘agree’ or ‘completely agree’ that they speak English proficiently. Almost all students responded that they like learning English, and over half claimed to prefer that English be the dominant language used to teach the entire curriculum. About half of students claim they pass their classes taught in English with a C or above, and a vast majority of students recognize the importance of English in their post-secondary school lives, which is the catalyst for their desire to learn the language now.

The second major indicator of this lack of proficiency stems from the way students answered their surveys. Despite the initial intentions of the survey, these questions prove pertinent to answering the question they created. The following questions were worded and ordered to follow Amanda Hilliard's survey and were asked on a sliding scale of one through five (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Due to the similarities of all three public schools, data collected will be presented together.

A series of two questions show a stark contrast between what the students have said and what the NECTA examination scores show. They are:

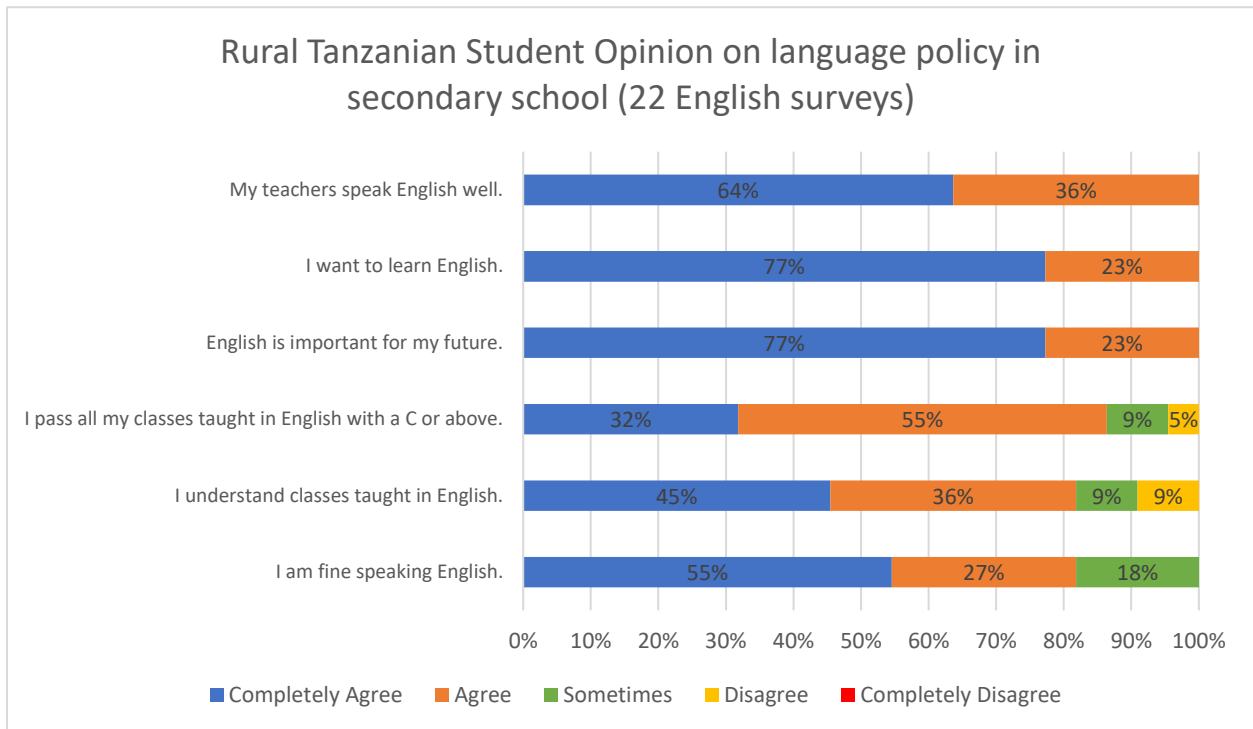
Question 5: I pass all my classes taught in English with a C or above.

Question 6: My grades would be better if classes were taught in Swahili.

We know most students are not passing their classes from quantitative data available from the NECTA. Despite that fact, most students answered "Agree" to passing with a C or above. At the same time, most surveys said that their grades would not improve if they were taught in Swahili. While that has not been tested, it can be assumed these students are either mistaken or lying. Since the surveys were filled out both voluntarily and anonymously, meaning the students faced no pressure to lie in answering these surveys, it is more likely that they are mistaken in how their education would change under a different lingua franca.

There is evidence to support the claim that the Dunning-Kruger effect is an explanation of students' inability to accurately assess their English abilities. These students see themselves passing all their classes when they are not able to graduate or continue their education. The graphs displayed from Dunning-Kruger's work, outlined in the literature review, show that those scoring low perceive themselves doing significantly better than they are. It does not help, of

course, that these students perceive their teachers to be capable of teaching English with a high proficiency.



**Chart 4.2** Statistics of 1% or lower are included, but not expressively written numerically on the graph.

Chart two represents the responses garnered by the English language survey. Significantly, it shows consistencies with its Swahili survey counterpart, meaning individual opinions remain similar despite the language selected to complete the survey. Responders to the English survey answered their questions with a higher level of certainty and fewer “sometimes” responses. More frequently, responders’ opinions inclined toward ‘completely agree’ or ‘completely disagree’. No students marked that they have difficulty speaking English, and nearly 90% understand and voiced a preference for classes taught in English. 100% of these students want to learn English and recognize its importance, as well as believe their teachers speak English well. Out of all 275 students to participate in this survey, 8% elected to take the survey written using English.

The option to choose which language to respond to the surveys help contour my findings.<sup>30</sup> Conflict is created by allowing students to choose their survey language. Identical copies of the survey created were available in both English and Swahili. Of all the surveys completed at these rural secondary schools, 253 students chose to complete it in Swahili (92%), compared to the 22 students (8%) that decided to fill out the English version. While I understand the possibility that students prefer to complete the survey in Swahili, 92% of all surveys being taken in Swahili is an overwhelming number. This is the first major indicator that students do not possess English language fluency.

In addition to these fourteen questions and the ability to choose which language to take the survey in, I included an optional written response on each of the surveys. The question was: “What is the difference between education here where you live and education in Dar es Salaam?” There were nearly one hundred different responses to this question. I am including the answers that were most commonly reported on these student surveys rather than list each different response.

Overwhelmingly, students answered that there was no difference between schools in Dar es Salaam and their rural secondary school. Coming in second, with less than half the responses that supported the ‘no difference between rural and urban secondary schools’ response, is that urban areas such as Dar es Salaam are surrounded by more people and places that use the English language every day. This transitions into the third most-written response: with a variety of people comes a variety of knowledge and resources. This answer included ideas ranging from library and laboratory access, stronger infrastructure, better access to educational services, and

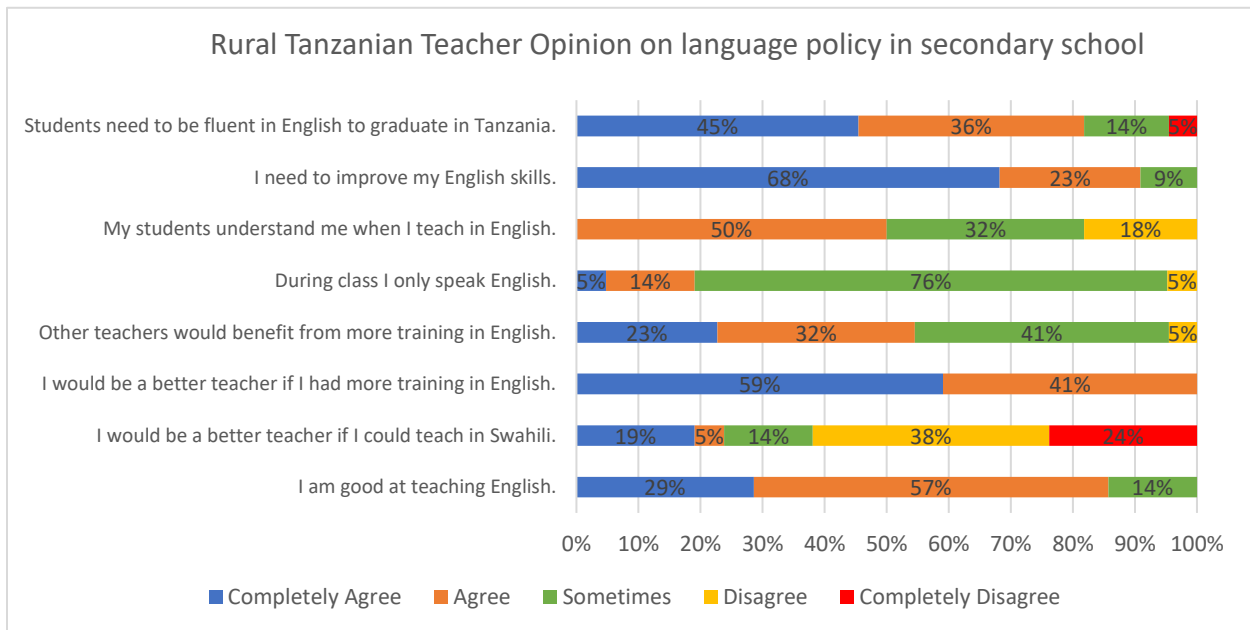
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<sup>30</sup> All data collected from surveys in Tanzania’s Southern Highlands in September 2018 available in the index section of this paper.

all-around better services for students than experienced in rural areas. The last response worth noting is that students believe there is a higher rate of using Swahili and tribal languages in rural areas compared to Dar es Salaam.

Comparing the quantitative data collected for these schools on Tanzania’s NECTA website to the qualitative data I collected in September 2018 yields important insight. The national exam success rate, which statistically show the students do not have a master of the English language when completing national examinations using the English language, is directly at odds with what students declared about their own abilities in the classroom. They are completely unaware that they are not passing their classes because they are unaware of their own issues using the English language. This comparison supports my claim that the Dunning-Kruger effect has a hold on the rural population of Tanzania.

**Surveys: Teachers**



**Chart 4.3** Statistics of 1% or lower are included, but not expressively written numerically on the graph.

Surveys directed towards teachers included fourteen questions.<sup>31</sup> The eight generated survey responses, seen above, provide the most insight into why belief in the current system perpetuates.

Twenty-two teachers participated in this survey; eight chose the Swahili language survey (36%) and fourteen completed the English survey (64%). Data from both surveys is compiled into Chart 3, as in the case of the students where there is little to no difference in how teachers answered the survey questions.

Nearly all teacher participants say they are strong educators when teaching in English. The lowest answer given for this question (I am good at teaching English) was ‘sometimes’ at 14% while the remaining participants agreed. At the same time, over half of these teachers believe their performance would increase if they were able to provide the same curriculum but using Swahili as the language of instruction. 100% of teachers reported that they would benefit from increased English language training, but only 55% of those teachers said other teachers would benefit from similar training. 41% believed that only some teachers would benefit from extended English language training, yet all of these survey participants believe it is a necessity to improve their own English skills.

100% of teachers themselves believe they require more training and 91% of these teachers say they need to improve their English skills. The students surveyed above, most of which are unable to continue their education due to grade deficiencies and a lack of English language proficiency (even when 82% of students believe they are fine speaking English [question 14] and 81% claim to understand classes taught in English [question 12]), follow the

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<sup>31</sup> Some questions have been removed from this specific data set, and all questions in the survey are included in this paper's index.

model created by the Dunning-Kruger Effect: they believe themselves to be fluent and successful with English as the language of instruction when, in reality, it is central to their inability to continue their education.

A vast majority of teachers, 76%, answered ‘sometimes’ when asked if they only speak English in the classroom, despite the national expectation that English be the primary language of instruction in secondary schools, mirroring the expectations of the annual NECTA examinations. Responses to other questions offer potential explanations for why primary use of English is only ‘sometimes’ executed. One third of the responders demonstrate skepticism with regard to the degree of student absorption of curriculum taught in English only, and 18% indicated an awareness that their students have difficulty grasping the English language in an educational setting. Even so, half of teachers indicate their students understand them when teaching in English, not acknowledging that students have a difficult time grasping curriculum that is presented in English and further supporting the claim that the Dunning-Kruger effect exists in rural areas.

We can infer a low state of English language proficiency through official national examination scores and by the conscious decision to complete the surveys written in the Swahili language. This low proficiency goes directly against the responses to the question of whether or not students require fluency in English to graduate. While a clear majority voice an opinion that English language fluency is essential to graduate secondary school (81%), 14% believe that it is only sometimes necessary and 5% completely disagree that it is mandatory to be fluent in English. Similar to the students, those who selected the survey written in English were more certain in their answer, 50% completely agreeing that English language proficiency is necessary to graduate. At the same time, 100% of the teachers who selected ‘completely disagree’ were

teachers that completed the English survey.<sup>32</sup> This creates some skepticism: teachers continue to show a lack of command of the material despite official state statistics proving their students are not passing, and there remains little to no resistance to language of instruction policies despite this reality.

## **Interviews**

Names of individuals will remain anonymous to protect the Tanzanian citizens who participated in this voluntary interview. Subjects who participated were asked only one question: how do they feel about current education policies? Four interviews were conducted in September 2018 with two secondary school teachers and one Headmistress. For these interviews, I simply asked their opinions on the state of education in their communities and country. Outside of secondary school faculty and administration, I interviewed two Tanzanians who graduated from secondary school. These individuals were asked to provide, in order, a list of the top concerns Tanzania faces in 2018 and beyond. Lastly, I interviewed a Tanzanian USAID worker on the state of education and foreign presence in Tanzania. All information gathered in interviews and on surveys has been translated from Swahili when necessary.

I was first able to speak with a secondary school teacher in School A. She immediately discussed the differences between rural and urban areas, and that there is “a noticeable higher percentage of students in the city that are going to be doing better because they will just be speaking English more.” She continues speaking about opportunities that people in cities have that those in rural areas do not, such as being surrounded by English speakers in businesses, at work, and even on the bus. Because of this conclusion, she said she is “not sure if [rural] students

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<sup>32</sup> All survey questions were based on research completed by Amanda Hilliard. Hilliard, Amanda. "Tanzanian Students' Attitudes Toward English." *TESOL Journal* 6.2 (2015): 252-280.

think their English is good... they have this expectation to speak English in school and take it on their exams.” She believes that teachers are passionate about what they do. This passion is guided from the top down, as professionals from cities will come to rural areas. “They watch a few teachers, see how the programs, it was a regional district education man that came in to view the school... the inspector, cares and does official things even if I am not aware of it. The district tells the [headteacher] ‘you need to improve!’ and the [headteacher] tells the teachers ‘you need to improve!’ and the teachers tell the students ‘you need to improve!’”

There is an obvious theme of a desire for improvement. Even so, she states that change must come from the top. She shows some concern for change happening at the local level and affirms the statement that Tanzanians want the change to start with those at the top of the policy ladder. “[We] follow policies by president of country and so I think the rural level will always tell you ‘that is not what the district tells me’ or ‘that is not what the region is telling me’ or ‘that is not what the department of education is telling me.’ ... they follow the rules... Change must come from up top to force [teachers] to try something.”<sup>33</sup>

The second teacher I spoke with provided insight into student self-perception. She holds a concern that these students are comparing their abilities in all classes to their peers. Specifically considering English, she states “other students and other people around them they believe they are good and so they build up an idea they are strong at English when they are not so fluent. But they are compared to other students and other people in [their community].”<sup>34</sup> Because of the lack of exposure, students do not have the opportunity to compare their abilities to fluent English

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<sup>33</sup> Secondary School Teacher A. Personal Interview. 6 September 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Secondary School Teacher B. Personal Interview. 5 September 2018.

speakers. This lack of exposure makes it so students are unaware of their lack of knowledge. As this teacher said:

*You see [students] in math tests where you do not know what you do not know. So you see some students go in and taking a test and they walk out and say 'I did well' and they get results and scored poorly. Students who are comfortable in math take the test and see when they do not know an answer so they think they did poorly but they get their results and they did well.*

Students have daily interactions with their students, creating a space where each of them speaks to the other in limited English. These conversations lead students to believe that their small interactions foster a fluency of the English language. This happens at home as well, where parents may have not had the same access to English that students in rural areas do in 2018-2019. Since they are better in English than their elders, they have a false sense of confirmation that they also have a mastery of the English language.

The final teacher I spoke with discussed the idea of globalization. The headmistress at her secondary school, she is a strong proponent for the current education policies. If anything, she would prefer both primary and secondary school use the English language.

*English is an international language so that means that everyone now needs to know and because of the synchronization [inaudible] ... I think it is better if we can put emphasis of English from primary school and then when you move to secondary everyone is familiar about everything and it will be easier even for students and even for teachers.*

This goes back to Brock-Utne’s discussion on language in the classroom and the fallacies she discusses. Tanzanians believe they require a global language to be more relevant and less aid dependent.<sup>35</sup>

### **Tanzanian Secondary School Graduates<sup>36</sup>**

I spoke with two Tanzanians living in the city Iringa, the capital of the Iringa region. Both participants have jobs that put them well above the poverty line and provide enough income to own a house with electricity and running water. Both also graduated from an urban secondary school within the last ten years. When asked about the current largest issues facing Tanzania, the first gave three answers: First, the economy. Second, freedom of expression. Last, he was concerned about unemployment. The other gave similar ranked responses: economic decline, infancy and pregnancy deaths, education quality, unemployment, and poor infrastructure. While this is only two people, it is interesting to note that the economy is first for both and unemployment was also considered. Education was listed but comes following other issues Tanzania currently faces. This information is important when considering other explanations as to why Tanzania supports current language in education policies.

### **USAID Employee<sup>37</sup>**

I was unable to record the USAID Employee’s interview due to current events happening in Tanzania.<sup>38</sup> The USAID employee provided a much more historical approach to Tanzanian rationale behind supporting current education policy. Former President Kikwete, concerned that

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<sup>35</sup> Secondary School Headmistress. Personal Interview. 5 September 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Secondary School Graduates. Personal Interview. 12 September 2018.

<sup>37</sup> USAID Employee. Personal Interview. 12 September 2018.

<sup>38</sup> This interview took place the same day that President Magufuli declared he would defund women’s healthcare and only days away from the statement that those conducting research going against the government’s official findings would be subject to a fine or time in jail.

infrastructure was necessary to benefit Tanzania's economy, focused on the construction of schools. This increased the number of schools, but not the number of teachers. The logic is that no immediate benefit comes from training teachers, but there is immediate gratification from erecting new structures across the nation.

This policy forces Tanzania to face a strain on having enough trained teachers to fill all the vacancies in the country. When President Magufili made school free, there was a sharp increase in students while the number of teachers stayed the same. According to this USAID employee, nothing has been done to alleviate the stress these teachers face. If the Tanzanian government would focus on promoting secondary school graduates to go into education there would be an increase in education quality. Instead, free school has created a burden for teachers, especially teachers in secondary schools that remain understaffed.

During the interview, there was concern about the 'ludicrous' state of education and the position the federal government has put teachers into. He stated that any ideas or plans for education have been and will be abandoned because construction and infrastructure are more important for the Tanzanian government.

## V. DISCUSSION

Data provided shows little has changed regarding language in education policy. Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), the major political party in Tanzania, has remained in power since independence.<sup>39</sup> Faith in Mwalimu Nyerere led to faith in the party, securing nation-wide victories up to the current presidential election. History shows the party's stance on education and the necessity to create infrastructure rather than promote education as a profession or attempt to alter policies created by preceding presidents. History also shows Tanzania's ties to the English language through foreign aid; England promised to continue providing assistance as long as their lingua franca remained in the secondary school system.

What does it mean to have the same political party in power for over fifty-five years? Fundamentally, the same political party remaining in power shows citizen support for top-down solutions in the country. Tanzania's first truly contested election was held in 2015 against the ruling party, CCM, and Chadema, the second largest party in the nation.<sup>40</sup> Even so, CCM won with nearly 60% of the vote. The man running for Chadema, Edward Lowassa, was a member of CCM until he lost the party's primary for the 2015 presidential election. That shows how much faith the people of Tanzania have in the ruling political party and the government's change-making agency.

For all of their lives, CCM has continued to provide an increase in GDP, infrastructure, and aid to the country. In many ways, CCM is responsible for the changes, or lack of changes, that have continued to provide opportunities for people living in both rural and urban areas. They

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<sup>39</sup> Chama Cha Mapinduzi, or CCM, translates to "Party of Revolution."

<sup>40</sup> Chadema is short for "Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo" and translates to "Party for Democracy and Progress."

are the ones who come in from the city, or the ‘top’, to declare a specific area needs improvement. Since citizens have seen change from CCM, they trust that positive work is happening now even if they do not see it, just as the quote from Secondary School Teacher A says. Since the ‘top’ of the state has made immediate, visible, and high-impact decisions with education, such as making school free in 2016, constituents believe in higher government officials to continue making changes that benefit everyone.

People who attempt to challenge the state, like Edward Lowassa and Chadema, do not receive support because they have not been responsible for positive visible change in Tanzania. It is not their fault that they have been refused the opportunity; as a young country founded out of colonialism, Tanzania is a case that shows how power can be held by a single party for multiple generations due to visible change. CCM has continued to make these changes in the country that are seen as moves in the right direction by Tanzanian citizens. Unsolved issues, such as actually recruiting and hiring teachers, do not create an immediate impact to the country. If buildings and roads are enough to keep the people happy with the ruling party, is there incentive for CCM to change the way they have been presiding over Tanzania?

This speaks volumes about rural populations, their personal agency, and why there has not been a change to the status quo. The provisions given by CCM convinces people they have the resources necessary to succeed. Because of that, these same people continue to make the most of their situations. Since the government has provided to them, then government cannot be at fault. Therefore, any faults that happen must come from somewhere else. It appears that many Tanzanians place that fault upon themselves. If we are to be hopeful for bottom-up changes in the country, then the people themselves need to be able to define the problem.

This faith in a single ruling party brings up another necessary discussion point: who is to blame for the current state of education? More explicitly: as the gap in educational abilities continues to widen via success of national examination scores, who is then responsible for creating a new policy or plan to create equality in proper educational access? Tanzanians who support top-down policy change have yet to stand up to the current language in education policies that continue to hinder many rural students. Pockets of citizen activists and parties like Chadema have continued to combat the current cabinet and their political decisions regarding language in education among others.

As this thesis states, Tanzanians who fail on their national exams are the same Tanzanians who do not see a problem existing in language of instruction policies. It is possible that there is no accountability because Tanzania does not see a need to blame the government or the teachers. Tanzanians may not see the gap in educational success between rural and urban areas because they face more detrimental concerns.<sup>41</sup> As seen from the interviewed secondary school graduates, language in education may not be a priority for the nation. Global forces such as foreign governments and non-government organizations have specific agendas that may differ from Tanzania's own. Tanzania continues to battle high HIV/AIDS rates in the Mbeya and Njombe regions and high Malaria rates in the coastal regions of Tanga and Mtwara.

The state avoids blame because people blame themselves. This may explain the lack of revolution in regard to a multitude of issues. Rural Tanzanian citizens do not see inadequacy as a problem of the state or a structural problem or even a problem of a global economy; Tanzanians see this inadequacy as something they are just unable to overcome. This makes it easier for CCM

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<sup>41</sup> Green, Maia. "Globalizing development in Tanzania: policy franchising through participatory project management." *Critique of anthropology* 23.2 (2003): 123-143.

to continue not addressing a greater problem. Peoples' political selves have been conditioned in resource-poor environments that they hold their government accountable to what they are able to assess. Since rural Tanzanians can only assess themselves by their surroundings, the thought that the government is holding back educational progress, or any other sort of progress, is drowned out by the constant that they just could not quite pass the national examination because they did not study hard enough or they were too focused on other events in their lives to pass this government-administered test.

Blame can be placed on a multitude of parties, but rural Tanzanians have difficulty pointing a finger at anyone but themselves. Tanzanians heavily rely on global powers which in turn creates a desire for global language. For many in Tanzania, the ability to comprehend the English language is an opportunity to better themselves and their families. All of this is said to show why it is hard to change the status quo, and will remain difficult to encourage rural Tanzanians to speak against the status quo. To create change or to recommend change to a group of people, there must first be an understanding as to why they have not argued against the status quo.

Question 4 on the student survey (I would rather secondary school use English) and Question 7 (Learning English is important for my future) may also hold clues as to why Tanzanians support the current education system. A vast majority answered "strongly agree" or "agree" to both questions, while at the same time expressing their desire to learn English in Question 8. If Tanzanians believe English is necessary for their future, why would they want to change the only system of education they have known? Surveyed students, overwhelmingly, like the English language and strongly agree that it is necessary after their time in secondary education.

This sentiment is shared by teachers, who believe that students require English proficiency to graduate in Tanzania. The secondary school headmistress interviewed supports this concept and the rationalization made by these students and teachers. She believes knowing English creates more opportunity for students in Tanzania. Students will be able to enter the global workforce more successfully if the country continues to build upon the English language sooner than in secondary school. If these same students would prefer to move into the cities, where there is a larger global population, having access to a global language would benefit them in the long term.

Those aspiring to learn the English language see it as a symbol of modernization. There is support for the English language in public education because Tanzanians understand the world is globalizing; knowing a major world language will benefit Tanzania in a growing global economy. Rural students and teachers do not see the issue as one revolving around language, infrastructure, or the number of teachers at their school. Instead, an individual student's NECTA performance is based on the perception of the student or the teacher. Teachers believe the problem is not from their teaching and place the blame of failure on the test or the student. The student may in turn blame their educators for underpreparing them for the examinations. Students believing their teachers to be proficient in the English language then believe themselves to be strong English speakers. These individuals believe that the problem has less to do with their proficiency and more to do with how well they prepared, personally, for the exam. If they are good at English, and their teachers are good at English, and the national exam is in English, then the missing factor, is that they did not try hard enough or did not study enough to continue their secondary or tertiary education.

100% of teachers believe they require more training and 91% of these teachers say they need to improve their English skills. The students surveyed above, most of which are unable to continue their education due to grade deficiencies and a lack of English language proficiency (even when 82% of students believe they are fine speaking English [question 14] and 81% claim to understand classes taught in English [question 12]), follow the model created by the Dunning-Kruger Effect: they believe themselves to be fluent and successful with English as the language of instruction when, in reality, it is central to their inability to continue their education. Knowing all of this creates a glimpse into the thoughts of a Tanzanian student or teacher in rural secondary schools.

All of the above shapes rural desires, despite the lack of competency. Attachment to English, explained as an object imbued with transformational power, accounts for the Dunning-Kruger effect in rural Tanzania. Rural survey opinions reflect the Dunning-Kreuger Effect and show the consequences of educational policy; chronic gaps in the capacity of rural schools to inculcate English language proficiency has generated an illusory cognitive perspective on the benefits and advantages of two different languages in primary and secondary school educational policy.

Patterns in data provide insight into why the education system, with its faults, is nonetheless perpetuated within Tanzania. While I initially hypothesized that the lack of rural data that could reflect how the policy was not conducive to educational equity was a factor contributing to the perpetuation of the policy, the results of my surveys of rural subjects yielded a different vantage point for explaining the policy's recalcitrance to change. This study lays out several obstacles to grassroots mobilization such as social reproduction, perceptions, and knowledge production. Rather than blame the government for a lack of resources, rural

Tanzanians build their lives using resource-poor avenues; they blame themselves for an incredible burden that they cannot control. Rural Tanzanians have agency and the ways they act to be successful show that. The actions and self-perceptions about themselves and their communities work against the structural challenges that remain due to a lack of policy changes, not just with language but with infrastructure, health, job security, and technology. Language of instruction may not be a primary issue, but a focus on shifting resources or policy would alleviate pressures Tanzania faces in other sectors.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Tanzania's Ministry of Education has a wordy yet broad mission statement: "To put in place and strengthen structures and procedures which will enable a country to get educated and continuous learning Tanzanians that add value to national development." To summarize, Tanzania's goal is to provide citizens educational access that promotes national development. They remain successful insofar as the cities Arusha and Dar es Salaam receive proper education. Private schools scattered across the country also receive strong marks and put forth Tanzanian citizens that add to the country's GDP and national development. Tanzania's previous president even ensured the construction of a secondary school in each village community across the country!

Even so, the number of teachers is lacking. What exists in structure lacks in procedure; empty school buildings are scattered across the regions and public schools in rural areas do not have access to quality teachers, textbooks, electricity, and running water the same way urban areas do. Tanzania's national exam scores point to this. Only a fraction of students move on to Form IV, and the comfort level using the English of students I surveyed was so low that a vast majority elected to take the survey in Swahili. While no students at a specific private school in the Southern Highlands are failing their 2017 NECTA (National Examination Council of Tanzania) exams, a school in Dar es Salaam sees a failure rate of 21%. This failure rate jumps to 81% of rural students at the same education level. Tanzania has historically seen a lack of access to quality education. This lack of access, especially in rural areas, goes against the Ministry of Education mission statement in the sense that a lack of quality education correlates with a lack of

national development. The current administration, alongside the Ministry of Education, has yet to create policy changes to promote learning in lesser developed areas of the country.<sup>42</sup>

This paper claims that the misperceptions rural Tanzanians face is best understood using the Dunning-Kruger effect. This claim is supported by the evidence provided via surveys and interviews, though it is essential to continue this discussion and research in other regions of the country. Rural areas struggling to pass their national examinations would benefit from understanding how their self-perception is preventing institutional and educational growth. By pointing out that personal misconception remains pervasive within rural communities, students will see their proficiency in the English language is lower than anticipated. Teaching curriculum style methods could be developed to accommodate to, or adapt to, such circumstances where this misperception is most pervasive. Teachers would recognize they would benefit from further training in English. Most importantly, Tanzanians would more clearly understand that their previous success rates have nothing to do with how hard they studied or how attentive students were in class, but with a lack of support from state or regional governments. Knowing this allows students and teachers to recalibrate their expectations of each other and of governing bodies, creating a sense of mutual recognition, feedback, and growth. This recalibration benefits students and teachers by creating an ability to recognize goals and have more realistic expectations for classroom outcomes.

This is an opening for both rural and urban citizens to see that the current top-down approach for public education policy has created a divide between the two areas. Stifled progress in rural areas should not be an assessment of students and teachers, but an assessment of the federal

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<sup>42</sup> References in this section are pulled from personal experiences in 2015-2017 or the NECTA official webpage.

government's ability to provide quality education and quality training to students and teachers living outside of cities and urban areas. Knowing that the fault lies on those creating policy, rather than on those following policy, could provide a moment for students and teachers to reassess their own perceived abilities. It is possible that Tanzania would see an immediate shift in actual ability if a singular language were used as the language of instruction and on national exams. This could happen if students and teachers were aware of the Dunning-Kruger Effect and how it may have altered their sense of language proficiency in the classroom.

Tanzanians are smart, resourceful, and capable. That does not change just because someone lives in a farming community rather than on a city block. Tanzanians effected by unrealistic self-perceptions of their language skills, explained using Dunning-Kruger Effect, must be provided with this insight to recognize that they did their best, given their situation. Once that is recognized, it is important for teachers and students disassociated with successful schools to draw their own conclusions on what would benefit their schools and communities. Tanzanians must come to the conclusion themselves that maybe it should not be up to the 'top' or the Ministry of Education and that their opinions and input is valid and important when creating language of instruction policies and other education policies that are affecting all Tanzanian citizens. This creates an opportunity for the rural populous, and potentially rural government offices, to push for change from the bottom rather than wait for the top to make the decision, should they ever decide to make a new decision on the language of instruction in public schools. If those involved in community generated thought on policy, it would be more suited for student and teacher success. This research shows that policy built from the bottom-up by those that better understand the language of instruction in rural communities would generate better learning

outcomes for both students and teachers due to being further informed on the current status of education between communities.

Tanzanian voices are the key to making sweeping political changes regarding language policy. Tanzania's first monumental change came with their independence and the leadership of 'Mwalimu' President Julius Nyerere. The president's forethought on the English language allowed him to state his belief that the economic condition of students in Tanzania learning English would be better than if they only learned Swahili. Even though he used language to unite the country, Nyerere recognized that a more global language, such as English, would provide opportunities unavailable to Tanzanians who were fluent in only Swahili and/or their tribal language. Rural voices are necessary to create realistic and informed policies, especially in regard to language of instruction. This research acts as a model for other situations where there are divergent results between rural and urban developing countries with similar post-colonial backgrounds, creating a comparative dimension to policy implication and implementation in other areas of the world.

Since Tanzania was heavily nationalized due to its independence after colonial rule from both Germany and Britain, it would make sense to believe that change needs to come from within rather than from the opinions of someone who did not grow up within the Tanzanian rural education system. It creates a sense of irony, then, that I write this thesis from outside Tanzania and use the data gathered from a USAID employee to justify this declaration. The USAID employee stated that the government would rather focus on infrastructure than human capital, as the gains can be seen immediately. From there, citizens see the development projects and approve of the direction the government is taking. This individual from USAID stated that to

create a better secondary school environment, the government would just need to focus on promoting secondary school graduates to look into education as their profession after graduation.

The first interview conducted agrees with this concept, stating that teachers do care about teaching and that there are regional inspectors who come to check in on their secondary school each year. This teacher believes that change can only happen if it comes from the top. If President Magufuli can prevent girls who became pregnant from returning to school, then he also has the power to control the message and actions being taken towards education development regarding the lingua franca. Coming into a rural area as a development worker and attempting to create a dialogue surrounding language in education will only be met with disapproval because the people at the top are saying something different. It does not matter what Western scholars say if there is not a current political Tanzanian force voicing these concerns, and these concerns will remain unaddressed until rural Tanzania has a realization of how the Dunning-Kruger Effect is intertwined within their secondary schools.

In many ways, this thesis is a call to Tanzanian scholars and teachers. I am not the first, nor will I be the last, to discuss their concerns with current education policies in Tanzania. While foreign scholars can continue to dissect ‘why’ the current system perpetuates, despite the lack of success seen across the country, it is necessary for a native scholar, teacher, or local government official to bring up these qualitative and quantitatively-backed concerns to promote changes that support success beyond the areas that are already benefiting from this educational system. Early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it may be time for Tanzania to rethink current language policies in education and create a system that, first and foremost, looks out for all Tanzanian students and teachers.

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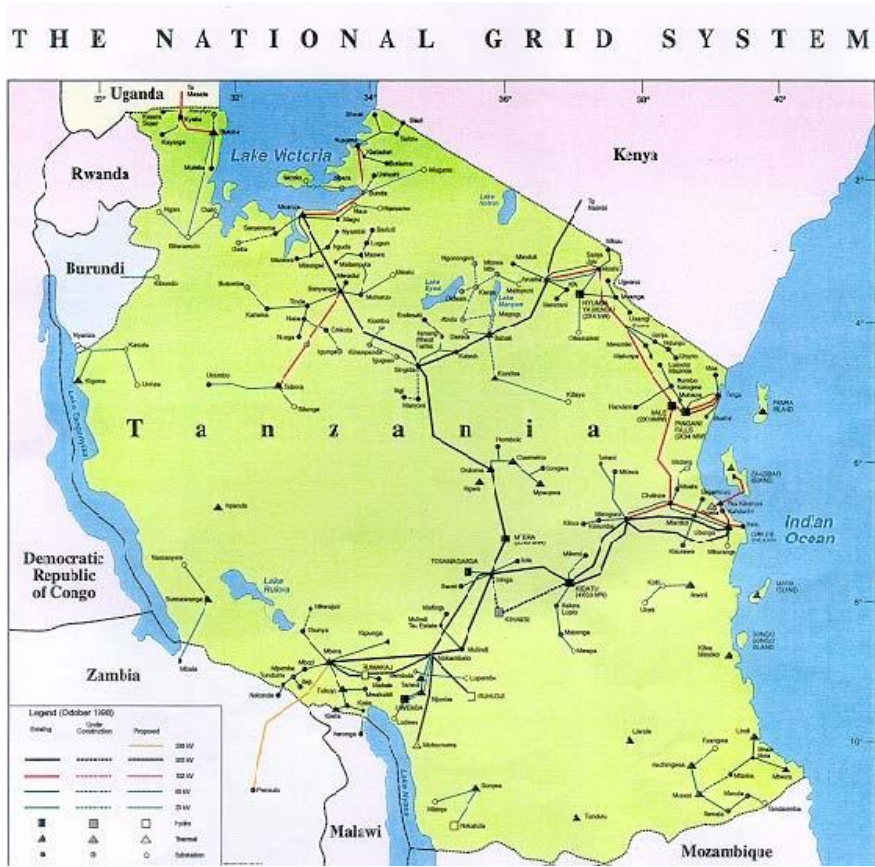
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# Index

## I. Introduction

### Footnote 1. Tanzania's National Electric Grid System



## II. Background

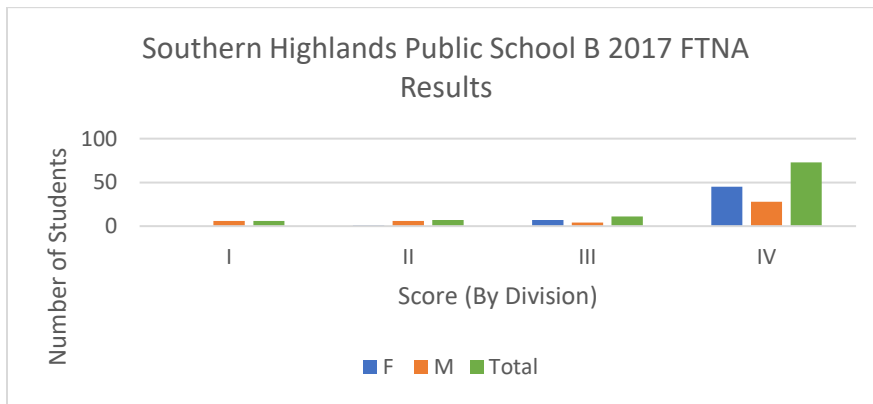
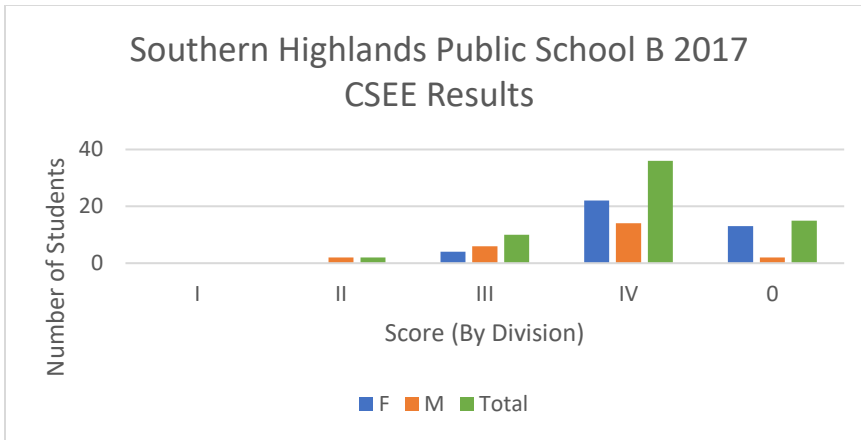
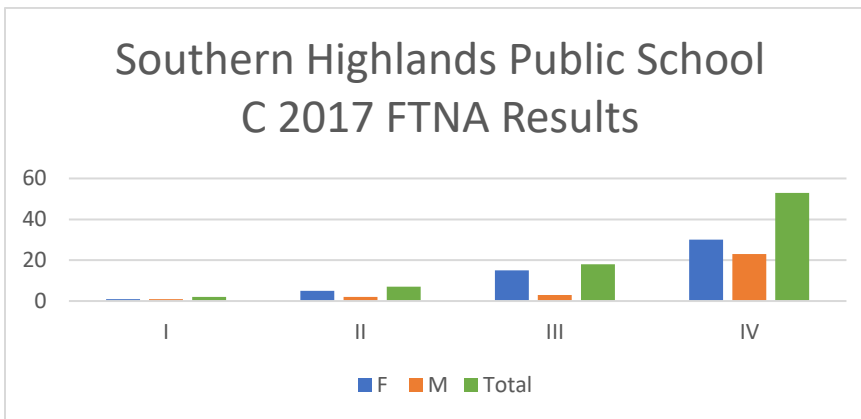


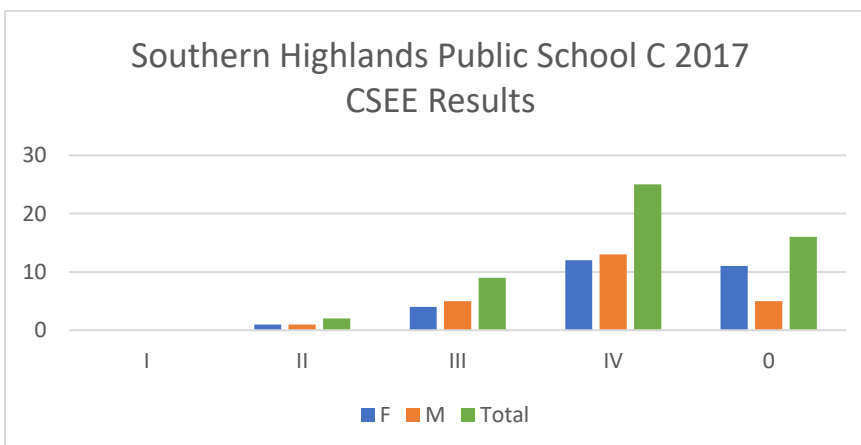
Figure 2.9



**Figure 2.10**



**Figure 2.11**



**Figure 2.12**

### III. Data

<b>Student Survey Questions. (Hil 1) Signifies the first question in Hilliard's survey, and so on.</b>
1. I am fine speaking English. (HIL 1)
2. I do not like to speak English with friends and teachers. (HIL 2)
3. I understand classes taught in English. (HIL 3)
4. I would rather secondary school use English to teach than Swahili. (HIL 4)
5. I pass all my classes taught in English with a C or above. (HIL 5)
6. My grades would be better if classes were taught in Swahili. (HIL 6)
7. Learning English is important for my future. (HIL 7)
8. I want to learn English. (HIL 10/11)
9. After secondary school I will not need English. (HIL 9)
10. I do not like the English language. (HIL 13)
11. You need money to learn English well. (HIL 14/15)
12. My teachers speak English well. (HIL 19/20)
13. My secondary teachers only speak English in the classroom. (HIL 21)
14. I think all tests in secondary school should be given only in English. (HIL 22)

<b>Teacher Survey Questions. (Hil 1) Signifies the first question in Hilliard's survey, and so on.</b>
1. I am good at teaching in English. (HIL 1)
2. I would be a better teacher if I could teach in Swahili. (HIL 2)
3. I would be a better teacher if I had more training in English. (HIL 4)
4. Other teachers would benefit from more training in English. (HIL 7)
5. During class I only speak English. (HIL 9)
6. I am better at teaching in English than most secondary school teachers. (HIL 5)
7. I use Swahili because my students do not understand English. (HIL 10)
8. My students understand me when I teach in English. (HIL 10)
9. I need to improve my English skills to be a better teacher. (HIL 13)
10. Students need to be fluent in English to graduate in Tanzania. (HIL 14)
11. After finishing school, students do not need to know English. (HIL 18)
12. Students do not like to learn English. (HIL 19)
13. Students need money to learn English well. (HIL 20)
14. I believe the NECTA should continue to be written in English. (HIL 22)

### **Secondary School Teacher A<sup>43</sup>**

On the differences between rural and urban areas:

*I expect [public opinion] to change, and I speak Swahili when I travel, but I do believe there is a higher percentage, a noticeably higher percentage of students in the city that are going to be doing better because they will just be speaking English more. They will live around business Tanzanians that speak English at work. Even [westerners] on the bus that speak English. They [students in Dar es Salaam] are exposed to [English] more...*

On rural student opinions:

*I am not sure if [rural] students think their English is good. I think students know they do not know English. They have this expectation to speak English in school and take it on their exams.*

On local education:

*Teachers here are passionate about teaching. They have masters in education and studied practices of classroom management. They care [about the students]... we have inspectors that come to the school every year. They watch a few teachers, see how the programs, it was a regional district education man that came in to view the school, he had a sit down meeting with the teachers about management techniques. He, that, he, the inspector, cares and does official things even if I am not aware of it.*

*The district tells the [headteacher] 'you need to improve!' and the [headteacher] tells the teachers 'you need to improve!' and the teachers tell the students 'you need to improve!'*

On changing education and national policies:

*Change, it has to come from the top. Once [President] Magufuli was elected, he decided he wanted to make an announcement saying 'no these girls cannot come back [to school after becoming pregnant]' and since then it has been much stricter because these [headteachers, schools] follow policies by president of country and so I think the rural level will always tell you 'that is not what the district tells me' or 'that is not what the region is telling me' or 'that is not what the department of education is telling me' uhm, they follow the rules. Change must come from up top to force [teachers] to try something.*

### **Secondary School Teacher B<sup>44</sup>**

On student self-perception:

*When they compare themselves to their classmates, other students and other people around them they believe they are good and so they build up an idea they are strong at English when they are not so fluent. But they are compared to other students and other people in [their community].*

*You see [students] in math tests where you do not know what you do not know. So you see some students go in and taking a test and they walk out and say 'I did well' and they get results*

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<sup>43</sup> Secondary School Teacher A. Personal Interview. 6 September 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Secondary School Teacher B. Personal Interview. 5 September 2018.

*and scored poorly. Students who are comfortable in math take the test and see when they do not know an answer so they think they did poorly but they get their results and they did well.*

On the difference between Tanzania and Kenya:

*I think if you compare Tanzania to Kenya they are not so different but you see Kenya has good English. I think Tanzania, I think my point is Tanzania is proud [of Swahili] and perhaps, I do not know, perhaps people fear an English medium... then they lose Swahili as a national language.*

*I think that a lot of people recognize English as an important language. As a global language. I think a lot of people recognize the importance of English and the importance of learning English.*

### **Secondary School Headmistress<sup>45</sup>**

On globalization:

*English is an international language so that means that everyone now needs to know and because of the synchronization [inaudible] ... I think it is better if we can put emphasis of English from primary school and then when you move to secondary everyone is familiar about everything and it will be easier even for students and even for teachers.*

*Since there are changes in the world, I think it is better to change all curriculum, even primary, to be in English so students in primary understand everything and it will be easier when they come to secondary.*

*In the city there is more interaction of the people... the opportunities which are in the city and everything, the interaction. That kind of life, the city life, the one which forces people to be more advanced.*

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<sup>45</sup> Secondary School Headmistress. Personal Interview. 5 September 2018.