
Context Matters

— RESEARCH GRANTS —

2019 Grant Recipients

**Research title: Voice for Space:
Girl Empowerment through Language Literacy and Use in Debating**

Principle Investigator: Dr. Justus Bwonderi Aungo with the Elimu Ya Kenya School- Altenburgerland, Mombasa, Kenya

Research location: Mombasa, Kenya

Research dates: January 15, 2020 – December 30, 2020

Dr. Aungo is currently a part-time Lecturer at the Technical University of Mombasa. His research interests include Social dimensions of health- gender, poverty, population and human ecology and Community health and development strategies. He holds a PhD. Sociology and Social Anthropology- Central European University, Budapest, Hungary; a Master of Arts- Sociology and Social Anthropology; Central European University, Budapest, Hungary; a Master of Arts- Sociology,- University of Nairobi, Kenya; a Master of Education, Administration and Planning, University of Nairobi, Kenya; and a Bachelor of Education Arts (Honours)- University of Nairobi.

Summary: This research project proposes to study how the practice of debating as a teaching method and school activity might improve language proficiency and articulation in girls. The study will test the assumption that learners' ability to communicate and express themselves enhances their capacity to learn more and enjoy the school experience hence improves chances of retention and completion. Empowerment will follow when girls are more confident, better able to express themselves, and participate in decision making processes. The study will focus on these three questions:

1. How can debating be used as a language teaching method in Kenyan schools?
2. Can debating contribute to girls' improvement in language proficiency and literacy?
3. Can debating in and out of class enhance girls' awareness, confidence and self-expression?

The study will document English language competency (literacy); Self-esteem, Increase in confidence (psychology); and gender empowerment through increased participation in decision making. The project will develop and test manuals and guidelines, train teachers to facilitate debates, and host a series of debates with 60 students in the Elimu Ya Kenya School- Altenburgerland in Mombasa, Kenya.

Through the involvement of both teachers and learners in a continuous cycle of study-learn-apply and selection of debate issues from learners' everyday lives, this study will provide a "real world" opportunity for an intensive experiment that aims to contribute to the available data and literature on literacy and empowerment. It will provide insights to decision-makers in developing solid and relevant equitable education policies and strategies.