



Report

# Community Consultation: Understanding how the community in Olepolos sees education and the future

Keir Thomson

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## Background

Osiligi Charity Projects is a UK registered charity with two areas of activity:

**The charity provides a primary school education to the most disadvantaged children in a Maasai community around Olepolos, near Kisamis, in Kajiado West County.**

About 250 children receive a first-class education at the Osiligi Obaya Primary/Junior Secondary school. Children are individually sponsored by an army of UK sponsors. After Primary school, sponsors normally continue to support the education of their sponsored child at one of many secondary schools across Kenya. About 100 children (Forms 1-4) are currently at secondary school, including prestigious National schools such as Alliance Boys and Alliance Girls.



*Figure 1: Map of Kenya showing Olepolos*

**The charity also provides Kenyan people access to drinking water in Southern Kenya through repair and rehabilitation of broken water pumps.**

This is achieved through a team of Kenyan volunteer engineers. The charity pays for the repairs, trains the local communities in pump maintenance, as well as helping to support the education of engineer family members. To date, more than 2000 pumps have been repaired benefiting over half a million Kenyans. Related to this, the charity has recently started school agriculture projects, providing irrigation systems and agricultural training so that schools benefiting from the water pumps can be self-sufficient, and pupils skilled and well nourished.



*Image 1: A person using a repaired water pump*

## The Story of the School

Osiligi Obaya Primary opened in 2012 with the aim of providing a high-quality education to the most disadvantaged children in the Maasai community. It has gone from strength to strength, incorporating digital technology and modern teaching practices to enhance the pupils' experiences. It is the only school in the county with a well-stocked library and a culture of reading in every class. The most recent mean Kenyan Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) score was 383, which makes Osiligi the second highest performing school in the sub-county.



*Image 2: The front of the Osiligi school*

## Education System in Kenya

For 32 years, the education system in Kenya was the 8-4-4 system. This involved eight years of primary education, four years of secondary education and four years of university (optional). The curriculum was mainly knowledge-based, dependent on rote learning and progress was measured by exam results. Children had no active participation in their learning. There was no link between education at school and preparation for life and work.

In 2017, the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) was introduced to change the focus from a knowledge based educational experience to a skills-based one.

The structure is now 2-6-3-3-3. This comprises, early years, lower primary, middle school, upper primary, junior secondary, senior secondary and university or technical education.

The new curriculum has been gradually phased in over the last seven years. There are many ongoing challenges:

- Lack of appropriate resources for teaching and learning
- Limited teacher engagement and training,
- Lack of general understanding of the CBC rationale by all stakeholders (parents, pupils, partners)
- Schools navigating how to become child-centred rather than subject focused
- New assessment practices

The CBC identifies seven core competences, at the heart of the curriculum, to be acquired by every learner in basic education. See figure 2 for the seven core competencies.

These are essential skills for learning, for life, and for work. The CBC is likely to produce holistic learning in which learners are spared the pressure that comes with national examinations which bring about stiff and unhealthy competition among stakeholders (Amutabi, 2019)



Figure 2: Core competencies of the CBC

### Classes and Teachers

There are ten teaching staff, one Head Teacher and nine non-teaching staff. There are currently eight classes, Grade 1 – Grade 8 and a new PP1 class will begin in April 2024. Although there is no PP2 class at present, it is hoped that this gap will be filled in 2025 to ensure continuity of education.

- The maximum Class size is 25 pupils in PP1 and PP2. The maximum is 30 pupils in all other classes. The numbers are strictly limited to ensure the quality of education delivered.
- Each PP1 and PP2 class may have up to 23 sponsored places and up to two non-sponsored places.
- Each other class may have up to 25 sponsored places and up to five non-sponsored places for children who meet certain criteria.
- Private pupils may also be admitted if there are spaces.
- Only two children per mother can be offered a place at the school.



- All parents of children attending the school are required to pay a termly contribution (currently Ksh 1500)

### **Secondary Education**

In Kenya, until this year, Senior Secondary Schools were allocated to pupils according to their exam grades. There is uncertainty as to how this will be managed in the future, as the Grade 8 exams will no longer exist. This has meant that pupils, particularly successful ones, can be sent far from home to continue their education.

Osiligi provides education up to the end of junior secondary level, at our campus.

It is a requirement that all pupils attend school until the end of Form 4 in Senior Secondary school. Although education is technically free, there are many additional costs that must be met such as books, supplies, food, boarding, and travel, etc. It is very challenging for poorer parents to meet these costs and the dropout rate is more than 33% (Muchunguh, 2022).

As a result of this, Osiligi provides ongoing sponsorship and full funding for our pupils throughout Senior Secondary. It is one of the very few charities to provided wrap around financial support in this way.

In December 2024, our first cohort of Senior Secondary pupils will finish their schooling. It is the challenge of “What next?” for our pupils that has been the driving force behind this consultation. There are very few employment opportunities in the local area, as of 2022, less than 10% of Kenyan adults have permanent, full-time jobs (Mutua, 2022).



*Image 3: The school cafeteria building*

## **Consultation Rationale**

The Charity aims to empower the local community in Olepolos, through providing an excellent education. We are aware that although our primary school provision is very successful, there are not always positive outcomes for the children, to help secure jobs in the future.

The charity wanted to gather views from members of the community to understand what a positive future looks like for everyone. The charity organised a series of consultations with the community, to form a report, to help future decision making.

The objective of the consultation is to give a clear and holistic overview of the communities' views on the future they want with consideration of careers, skills, journeys, and barriers. This overview is intended to inform the UK charity and the local community to enable collaborative planning.

To be able to reach that objective the following scope was outlined:

1. Develop an inclusive consultation approach alongside local stakeholders to ensure it was community centred.
2. Run a series of consultations over a two-week period, facilitated by a community member and recorded by the UK social researcher.
3. Analyse and write a report to summarise the findings.
4. Share the report with all the stakeholders and the community and identify next steps.

## **Consultation Questions**

1. What future do you want for the pupils?
2. What future do you want for the community in Olepolos?
3. What skills would benefit the child for their future?
4. What skills would benefit the community for the future?
5. For the future you want for your child, do you think it's better for your child to achieve this through academic qualification or skills-based qualification?
6. What are the barriers to achieving this?

## Method

### Design

This consultation was designed, with members of the school, to gather a broad range of community perspectives. Literature discussing anti-colonial approaches to qualitative research emphasise the importance of including members of the community in research process and designing reciprocal and respectful methods (Kennedy, et al., 2022).

It was important to allow natural discussion to take place in a comfortable environment and to avoid any challenges around literacy. The UK researcher did not participate in the consultation sessions other than to note take. This was to avoid any bias in the room and to have familiar people from the school community leading the process. An experienced teacher facilitated classroom discussions using the technique; think-pair-share.

Think-pair-share is a collaborative learning strategy where people work together to solve a problem or answer a question about an assigned reading. This strategy requires people to (1) think individually about a topic or answer to a question; (2) share ideas with a partner; (3) discuss ideas with a group made up of two or three pairs: and (4) feedback the discussion to the class.

There was additional support provided during the parent and community sessions to navigate language differences as people in the community of Olepolos can speak English, Kiswahili or Maa. A female teacher co-facilitated the consultation with the female parents to add additional support. The parents and older pupils were invited to a lunch after their session. This was to thank them for their participation and allow conversation to continue. where conversations continued.

### Participants

The total number of students who were consulted was 118 and the number of adult members of the community was 73. The final sample included 90 men and 101 women. The parents who participated had children from PP1 up to Class 8. See a further breakdown in table 1.



*Image 4: The female parents using think-pair-share*



| Participant Group    | Total | Male | Female |
|----------------------|-------|------|--------|
| Class 7              | 29    | 13   | 16     |
| Class 8              | 27    | 12   | 15     |
| High school students | 62    | 32   | 30     |
| Parents              | 53    | 22   | 31     |
| Teachers             | 11    | 5    | 6      |
| Non-teaching staff   | 6     | 3    | 3      |
| Governors            | 3     | 3    | /      |
|                      | 191   | 90   | 101    |

*Table 1: Sample details*

## Analysis

This research was designed to hear from as many members of the community as feasible with limited analytical resources. It wasn't suitable to record or transcribe the discussions in the room. The researcher took notes by hand to avoid distraction in the room. In each session, the groups were given paper and pen to note their answers as well. The analysis and extracts presented were a combination of the researchers notes and the participants notes.

Thematic analysis was identified as the most suitable analytical approach for the data. A light touch thematic analysis was used due to resource (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019). The researcher was part of each step of the analytical process and spent time familiarising themselves with the data. The researcher coded and generated initial themes. These themes were developed and reviewed before being refined further and written up.

Results

The responses for each question gathered during the consultation have been thematically analysed and presented below. Each question includes a thematic map to visualise how the central ideas interact. To interpret a thematic map, first look at the question underlined at the top, branching below are the bubbles with thick borders which are the main themes. Some of the main themes will have sub-themes, these are ideas that exist under the umbrella of the theme and focus on one notable concept.

One of the main findings was the levels of interest and engagement in the community. Participants, particularly the parents, stated appreciation for the opportunity to share their views and be listened to.

Question 1: What future do you want for our pupils after leaving Osiligi?

This question was centred around work/occupation. There were four main themes that emerged from the community for this question. These were: aspirations for a successful and secure career, self-reliance, becoming valuable members of society and giving back, and to overcome cultural/gender challenges. Each of these themes is made up of sub-themes.

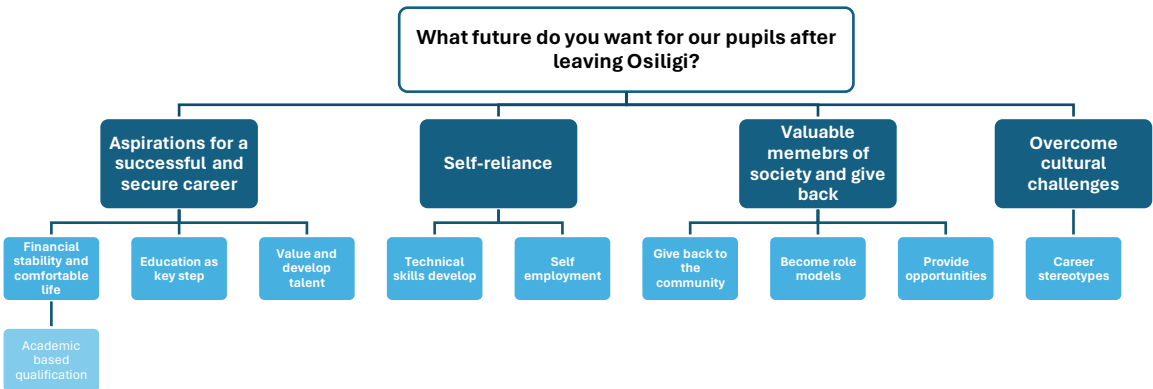


Figure 2: Thematic map of responses to question 1.

The first theme was **aspirations for a successful and secure career**, and this has three sub-themes. The first, and most prominent, sub-theme was the desire for financial stability and the ability to live comfortably. Students from class 8 talked about wanting a “*comfortable life with no stress*” and “*get a better job with a good income*”. The female parents discussed their children having a “*good future and a good occupation*”. This was a theme across all the groups

in response to the question. It was also common for participants to name specific careers they wanted as part of their future. The majority of the named careers across the groups required academic based qualification. It was also notable that the range of these careers was limited. Typically doctor, lawyer, engineer, nurse, teacher and pilot.

The second sub-theme was centred around recognition of education as a key step towards their future career. The older pupils mentioned *“to join a good campus to vie for good professional life”* and teachers discussed *“the kind of learning they are doing will enable them to compete with market”*. This sub-theme consistently featured across the student participants and teachers.

The third sub-theme which has been drawn from the consultation is a drive for the range of talent/ability in the community to be developed and valued. The governors mentioned that students are *“talented differently and some of these are not fully realised in school”*. This sub theme was most prominently mentioned by parents, teachers, and governors.

This theme was strongly linked to self-reliance and becoming valuable members of society and giving back. The students of class 7 demonstrated this, as they said they wanted to *“help community, family and self”*.

The second theme was around **self-reliance**, and this had two sub themes. The first sub-theme is the value of technical skills development, and this theme was most prominent in governor, teaching, and non-teaching staff sessions. Male parents talked about the *“need for technical education centres for children”*. A variety of careers were mentioned that require technical education by parents and teachers e.g. plumbing, electrician, bead work/design.

The second sub-theme was self-employment, and this was a core idea from the male parents, teachers, and the older student consultations. One of the male parents’ groups said that *“mechanics with an opportunity for self-employment”* and linked this to the lack of employment opportunities for graduates. This theme is tied to the ideas of financial security and comfortable living as well as providing opportunities for employment for the community.

The third theme was **becoming a valuable member of society and giving back**, and this had three sub themes. The first sub-theme was the desire to give back to the community in the future. One of the groups in class 8 talked about *“getting a good career to be able to come back and help the community”* and the older students said they want to *“help the society I come from out of poverty”*. The male parents discussed wanting their children to get *“exposure outside*

*community to bring experience back*". This was shared across all groups that the students in Osiligi have an important role in the development of Olepolos.

The second sub-theme is the interest in becoming a role model in the community. This was particularly shared by the students. Students from class 7 said they wanted to *"motivate people"* and be *"important people in society"*. A group from the older pupils said, *"we would like to become the role models in society and abolish some inhumane cultural practices e.g. early marriage, FGM"*.

The third sub-theme was the interest in providing opportunities in the future for children, particularly in education but also employment. Across the student groups, sponsorship, and donation to schools. Class 8 talked about *"at the end of the sponsorship at least we can be able to help one person in one way or another e.g. buying books for them, paying some fees for them"*. This theme is associated with the first theme of having a successful and secure career as the foundation for being able to support the community.

The fourth theme was to **overcome cultural/gender challenges** and this had one sub themes. Also, the governors discussed the improvements in attitudes toward girls' participation in education in the community, but that FGM and early marriages still impact upon girls. The sub theme was to challenge gender stereotypes in career choices. One of the governors shared their experience, explaining they initially wanted their daughter to pursue law, but her decision was to pursue industrial engineering, a male dominated industry. The daughter wouldn't be persuaded and is graduating this year and has a job in a local factory. This highlights the importance of allowing individuals to pursue their ambitions.



*Image 5: The session facilitators introducing the consultation*

## Question 2: What future do you want for the local community in Olepolos?

This question was purposefully broad to capture a wide range of ideas. The purpose of Osiligi Charity Foundation is to improve the community through education. It was essential to understand the multi-faceted vision that members of the community have for Olepolos. There were three themes that emerged from this question: community development and infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and economic empowerment.



Figure 3: Thematic map of responses to question 2.

The first theme was **community access and development**. This has 2 sub-themes: essential infrastructure, and social change. The first sub-theme was essential infrastructure, and this could be broken down into three components: physical and operational transport network, water access, health, and electricity. The construction of roads and bridges to connect people in the community to each other and resources was consistent across all groups. Older pupils talked about *“improving transportation by constructing roads and bridges to enable the local people and the students during rainy season to go to school and jobs”*. The female parents were in favour of a school bus as well. Older pupils mentioned *“water facilities should be improved since most of our parents have to travel long distances for water”*. The impact of water access on livestock and farming was heavily emphasised. One of the non-teaching staff said, *“where there is water, there is life”*. The need for more boreholes throughout the community was mentioned by all the groups. Health access was prominent in the consultations with all the parents. The male parents wanted to make sure elders were valued and proposed *“educating children to help elderly and sick and create a small centre”*. The construction of health centres and hospitals was common across groups. Electricity access was most prominent with female parents and older



pupils, *“we need electricity in our community”*. A strong link was drawn between water access, sustainable livelihoods, and opportunities to make a living.

The second sub-theme was centred around social change for girls and women. This was specifically related to two elements: early marriage and female-genital mutilation (FGM). The governors described the end of these practices as *“very important if achieved”*. The teachers discussed how *“women will be empowered in the community”* and how they need to *“reduce and kill negative cultural practice”*. This was shared by class 7, governors, teachers, older students, and male parents.

The second theme that emerged from this question was **environmental sustainability**. This had two sub themes: conservation and sustainable livelihoods. The first sub-theme was conservation, and this was shared across all the learners and the male parents. The male parents talked about aspiring to be a *“green community”* and to *“use what we have like wind/solar”*. Students from Class 7 and 8 both talked about the need to *“stop cutting trees”* and *“plant more trees”*. One of the older pupils’ groups said, *“we would like to plant more trees and reduce the rate of deforestation and reduce the effect of global (climate) change which will help in agricultural activities”*.

The second sub-theme was sustainable livelihoods. This was mentioned across governors, parents, and older students. One of the governors discussed how *“we used to have large areas of land but less now, due to sales and climate change. If the community can also have knowledge to keep animals but maybe improve with animals (that need) less areas of land (for grazing) then that would benefit the community directly from the education”*. The students of class 8 talked about the need to *“avoid use of excess chemicals on the farm”* and *“teaching people how to avoid soil erosion”*.

This was often related to water access. A governor explained how drought changes resource allocation *“if there is no rain the people must buy water”*. One of the female parent groups mentioned how irrigation and water could allow people to *“plant maize, beans, vegetables and there will be no poverty as the community will be busy and there will be self-employment for community members”*. The teachers proposed *“community water for modern farming”* as well. Similarly, the governors talked about how *“drought has seriously impacted community wealth and it drives the need for alternative livelihoods in the community”*.

The third theme was **economic empowerment**, and this had two sub-themes: skill development and technical education, and opportunities to make a living. This theme was consistent across all the groups in the consultation. The first sub-theme was skill development and technical education. The governors talked about how *“practical farming knowledge could be valuable”* and that *“first, people need knowledge, then the community will go far and that (knowledge) is acquired through education”*. From the older student’s discussion, they explained that *“we know our people keep livestock, you (the charity) can advise them how to sell and start up farming activities or set up a jua kali (small market)”*. The male parents talked about the value of *“local knowledge of local resources e.g. stones for houses or sand”* and also the introduction of *“self-help groups to support community education”*.

The second sub-theme was opportunities to make a living. The idea of building new schools and hospitals was mentioned in every session as a means of creating local jobs. One of the groups from the older pupils talked about aspiring to *“start a business and employ the community members”*. The teachers mentioned the importance of beadwork so that *“women in the community can have an avenue for passing out their work to the world”*. Another group of older pupils talked about *“more construction of industries and factories so that people in the village will get employed”*.

A few notable isolated ideas also stemmed from this question. One group of older pupils talked about construction of law schools and court in the community to increase legal education and access to justice. Social change for girls and women was a theme across groups. Additionally, one of the groups in class 7 talked about wanting LGBTQ education for everyone in the community. A group of male parents mentioned the need to value the elders as a resource and that there could be an opportunity to educate children to help the elderly and sick and create a small centre.



Image 6: Two male parents leading thanks for the opportunity to be heard

### Questions 3: When children finish their education what skills are most helpful for them to have learned for their future?

This question was introduced with an explanation of skills as the application of knowledge in your wider life, alongside a list that included some examples. Participants varied in their responses to this question. Some provided lists of skills and others provided detail for a smaller number. This means that there are less expanded quotes here. The responses for this question can be split into three themes: CBC related, personal development, and earning skills.

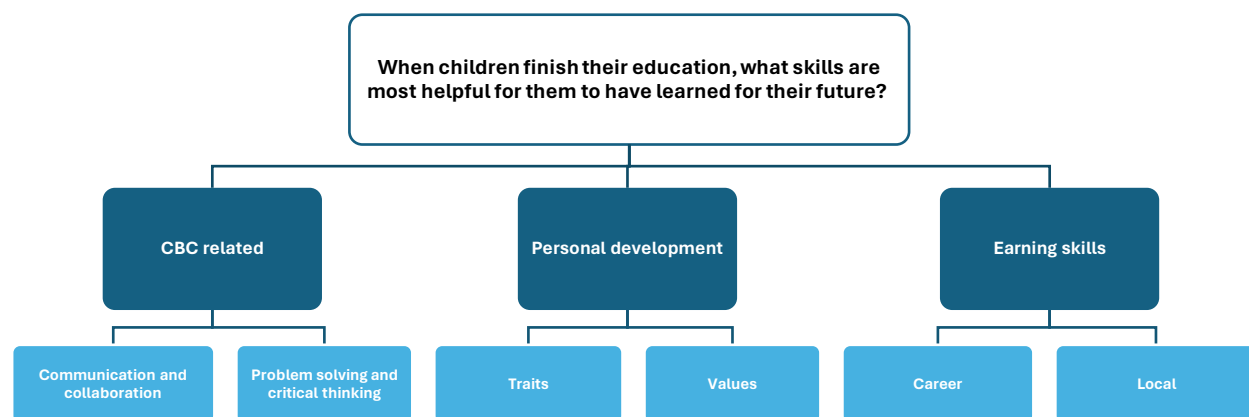


Figure 4: Thematic map of responses to question 3.

The first theme that emerged from this question was, skills that are related to some of the core competencies in the **CBC**. There were two sub-themes here in particular: communication and collaboration, and problem solving and critical thinking. The first sub-theme was centred around communication, and this was mentioned by every group. The older pupils talked about the need to *“be a good listener to follow instructions given”*. The governors talked about how *“the world is becoming a global village”* and how our students *“need to interact with everyone, English is key, but we also have a situation where Kiswahili is very important, and we need to continue to embrace our own mother tongue”*. One of the groups from the female parents talked about the need for their children *“to know how to stay and work with all kinds of people in the community”*. A few related concepts were mentioned here as well with male parents talking about *“teamwork”* and teachers discussing *“interpersonal skills”*. Digital literacy is another CBC competency that was mentioned, particularly by teachers, but not frequently enough to be a sub-theme.

The second sub-theme was problem solving and this was shared by all groups. The older pupils talked about the ability *“to see what the community is lacking and have an idea to help”*. The teachers raised the need for *“problems solving in and out of the community”*.

The second theme that emerged from this question was **personal development**. This has two sub-themes: traits and values. Several traits emerged across groups. In every group there was mention of time management and punctuality. One of the governors mentioned *“timekeeping is particularly important in the international marketplace”*. The older pupils shared that *“one can manage their time well at their place of work to avoid being sacked or fired”* and another group talked about their aspiration to be *“a good time manager”*. The idea of being a hardworking person came up. Older pupils talked about *“commitment to work”* and *“to be a hardworking person”*. This was also shared by female parents who talked about *“self-management and discipline”*. Another trait that was mentioned was self-confidence and this was mentioned by male parents, class 8, and teachers.

The second sub-theme was around values. This was most strongly shared by female parents but was also mentioned by governors and older pupils. Female parents talked about the importance of children having a *“good heart”* and *“kindness”*. This linked to an idea shared by the male parents, where one group wanted the next generation to *“stop criticising others”*. The older pupils highlighted *“honesty, fairness and justice”* as well as *“courtesy which is important for interviews”*. One of the governors mentioned the importance of *“being passionate about what you’re doing”*.

The third theme in response to this question was **earning skills**, which had two sub-themes: local and career. The first sub-theme of local earning skills was shared particularly by parents. The female parents highlighted the importance of *“how to communicate with people and do the work that is near”* and *“buying and selling livestock”*. The male parents valued *“the ability to easily integrate skills into the local community and beyond”*.

The second sub-theme was career earning skills and a lot of groups expressed this as *“entrepreneurial skills”*. Skill sets related to specific careers were also mentioned frequently. In class 7, some of the careers mentions include *“engineering”*, *“medicine/doctor”*, *“pilot”*, *“plumbing”* and *“farming”*. Groups also shared practical skills which have earning capacity. For example, in older students talked about *“carpentry and fishing”*. Female parents also mentioned *“catering”*, *“designing and marketing”* and *“hair salonist and tailoring”*. The governors also mentioned that students needed to know *“how to handle customers”*, which links to communication and collaboration.

#### Questions 4: When children finish their education, what skills are most helpful for the local community in Olepolos?

This question is like the previous question but with an emphasis on the community. It was important to understand if the skills needed for the children in their future differed from the skills needed in the community. The responses for this question can be split into three themes: CBC related, personal conduct, and commercial.

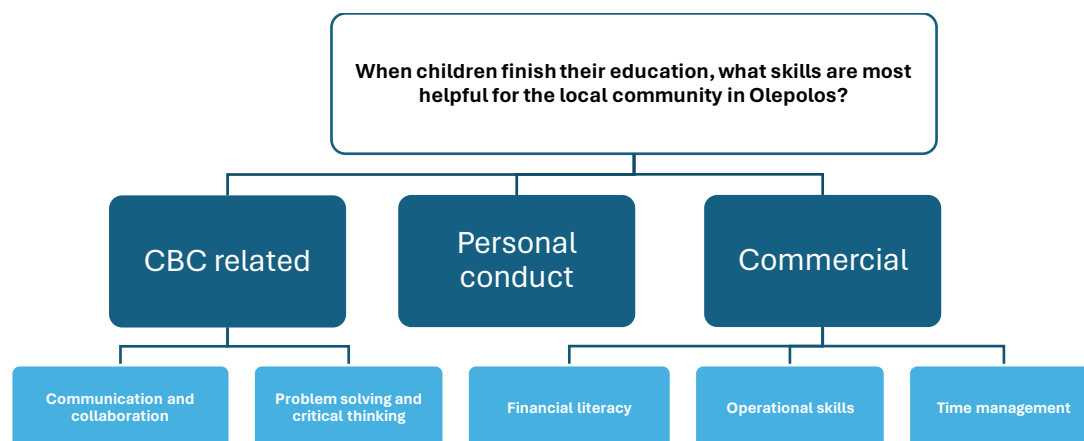


Figure 5: Thematic map of responses to question 4.

The first theme is identical to the previous question and was centred around **CBC related** skills. This had the same two sub-themes: communication and collaboration, and, problem solving and critical thinking. The first sub-theme was shared across groups. The governors gave an example of the value and need for collaboration in farming. For maize and bean farming it can be common for baboons to clear the land and ruin the crop, this can be significantly mitigated by farmers who collaborate on solutions. The older pupils raised the importance of *“communication skills to support illiterate people in the community”*. Female parents mentioned *“being a good listener in the community”* and *“good communication with people”*. The male parents raised *“interacting skills”* and *“building good community relationships”*. There was also mention of *“conflict resolution”* by Class 8.

The second theme was **personal conduct**. This was particularly expressed by the parents. The male parents talked about the importance of etiquette, listing *“to be humble, social skills, audible and speaking skills, self-discipline and eye contact”*. They also mentioned a



*“good attitude”, “moral behaviour” and “transparency to avoid corruption”.* The female parents mentioned *“self-control”, “good discipline and responsible” and “patience”.*

When parents were asked to think about the skills, they think are most important for the future of the community, it was clear they believed that educational institutions have both a holistic and pastoral role to play. In response to the first two questions around when children leave education, they want good, well-rounded people to be part of, and leaders in, the community.

The third theme for this question is **commercial skills**. This had three sub-themes: financial literacy, operational skills, and time management. The first sub-theme was financial literacy, and this was particularly prominent with teachers and male parents. The teachers talked about *“money management and financial skills”, “entrepreneurships skills”, “resource exploitation, understanding what local resources we have and how to benefit from them” and “banking, saving and budgeting”.* They also mentioned *“disaster management skills”* in relation to financial stability during drought or flash floods. The male parents raised *“negotiation skills having efficient and cost-effective knowledge to be relevant in the competitive market”.*

The second sub-theme was operational skills. The idea of *“good management skills”* was mentioned by male parents. Older pupils mentioned *“consultative and advising skills”.* Also, *“planning skills”* were mentioned by female parents, male parents, older pupils, and class 8. The value of *“observation skills”* was raised by older pupils, class 7, and the male parents gave an example of *“understanding the community, terrain and weather”.* The responses here are linked to both CBC related skills and decision making.

The third sub-theme that emerged in this area was **time management**. This was emphasised by the older pupils where multiple groups mentioned, in particular, *“time management in schools, hospitals and business”.* This links to operational skills.



Image 7: Class 8 discussing in groups

**Question 5: For the future you want for the children, do you think it's better to achieve this through academic qualification or skills-based qualification?**

This question was intended to draw participants together following questions 1 and 2 about the futures they wanted and questions 3 and 4 about the skills that they needed. This question generated the most discussion across groups as people shared ideas and debated. The responses were simply split between people who thought the best option was academic qualification, skills-based qualification, or a both.

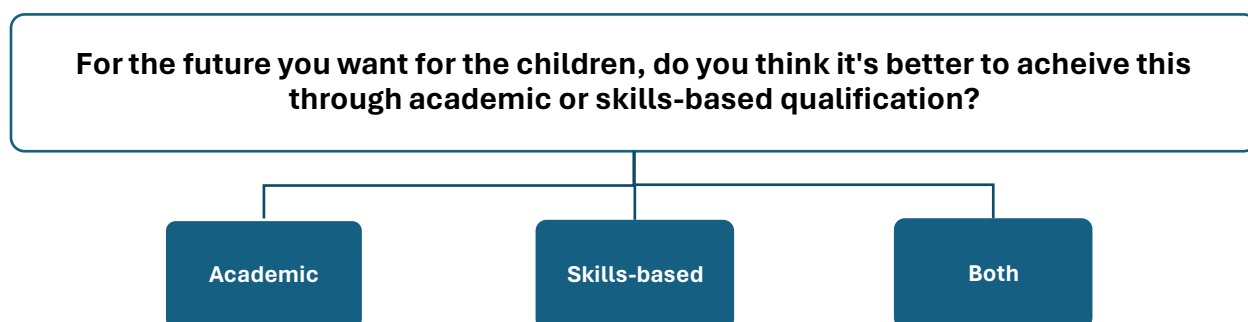


Figure 6: Thematic map of responses to question 5.

The first theme was responses in favour of **academic-based qualifications**, and this was the least held view across the groups. This view was expressed around the strong importance of careers that require academic-based qualification in society. Teachers shared that *“the number one priority is academic qualification”*. It was also related to the value of opportunities for academically gifted students.” One of the groups in class 8 talked about how academic education leads to *“better careers, better salary and better travel opportunities”*. One of the teachers shared, *“we need to identify academically smart children”*.

The second theme for this question was people who felt **skills-based qualifications** were better. One of the core reasons for this was that people felt that there were not enough employment opportunities for graduates and that skills-based education could lead to self-employment. A male parent talked about how *“the current situation means that after university there can be no job so must go to skills-based”*. A female parent felt that skills-based qualifications are better because *“it saves time, it’s affordable and not all children are capable of academic learning”*. Several older students discussed similar ideas,”

*“Skills are more preferable since in Kenya today you can be through with your studies but not job opportunities because of the population density but with skills you can start your own business e.g. jua kali industry”. (Class 8)*

*“Through skills-based education you can be your own boss by employing yourself instead of education-based skills that you learn and wait to be employed”. (Class 8)*

Students in class 8 talked about how *“it requires less knowledge and book work”* and *“less school fees”*. This was repeated by class 7 as well who talked about *“less book work”*. One of the governors said,

*“If we develop skills and people go onto academic education they can still fall back on the skill.” (Governors)*

The third theme in response to this question was participants who valued **both**. This was a regular response and was mentioned in every group. It was particularly common among the parents. A male parent group shared that,

*“Our children are gifted differently: some can excel academically while others can achieve things through skills-based knowledge depending on the ability of each child and their career choice.” (Male parents)*

The same idea was shared by female parents *“those bright children go to university institutions and those slow learners must go to polytechnic schools”*. The female parents also highlighted that their children had *“different visions”*.

*“It depends on the course/career one has chosen to take i.e a neurosurgeon can't use skill-based without academic skills first.” (Class 8)*

One of the male parents' groups said that *“it's important that either way they are self-reliant”*.

Although these cannot be shared as themes it is valuable to highlight additional ideas shared in response to this question. The community is aware of issues beyond the classroom.

*“We have outstanding pupils, we do have those pupils who can be doctors, but the problem is the system, if you're academically good then there is no way you cannot have a career. The blame is on the system and opportunity.” (Teachers)*

One of the governors talked about the importance of a *“paradigm shift away from the idea that you can only make a life if you are an A-grade student”*.

## Questions 6: What are the barriers to achieving this?

This question was included to understand some of the challenges the community consider when thinking about their future. It was introduced with an explanation of barriers. The responses for this question can be split into four themes: social environment, opportunity, continuity, and exposure.

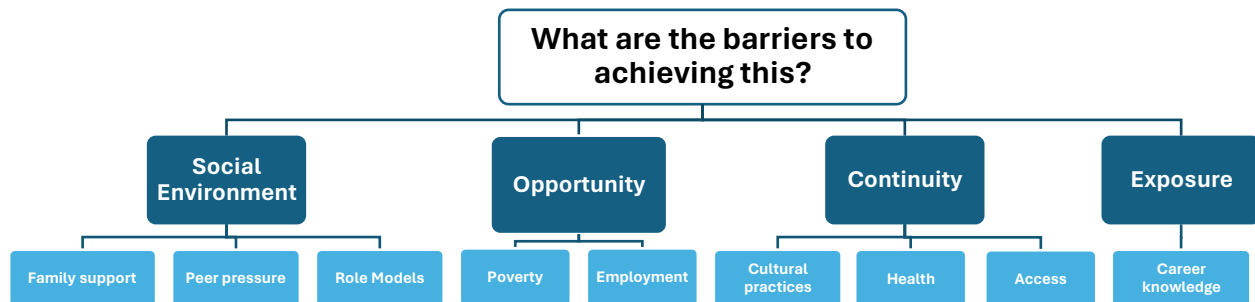


Figure 7: Thematic map of responses to question 6.

The first theme that emerged from the consultation was **social environment**. There were three sub-themes in this: family support, peer pressure, and role models. The first sub-theme for family support was shared by the male and female parents, class 7, class 8, and older pupils. A group of older talked about *“a lack of parental support to some careers”* and *“people around you lowering your self-esteem”*. They also mentioned how *“certain beliefs from the community like a man cannot do certain work”*. Class 7 and 8 both had groups mention *“lack of support”* and a class 8 group mentioned,

*“Family disagreement, if you want to be a doctor but your parents have a different career for you it can be hard”*. (Class 8)

A group of male parents raised *“lack of parental guidance”*.

The second sub-theme was peer pressure. The phrase *“keeping bad company”* was mentioned by the female parents, class 7, class 8, the non-teaching staff, older pupils, and teachers. This idea wasn’t developed or explained in great detail but was linked with the idea of drug abuse found in the continuity sub-theme of health.

The third sub-theme was role models, and this was linked closely to the two other sub-themes. It was shared across the groups. Governors raised the need for *“role models in the community”* and teachers also said,

*“Role models because most of these learners come from the community and don’t know people with academic qualifications.”* (Teachers)

Multiple groups of older pupils flagged *“poor role models”* as a barrier. One of the groups of male parents said a barrier is,

*“Role models in the community as elders don’t have education”.* (Male Parents)

The second theme in response to this question was **opportunity** and this had two sub-themes: poverty and employment. The first sub-theme was poverty and teachers mentioned *“poverty, people can’t fund tertiary education”* and *“financial aspects”* as barriers. Older pupils talked about *“poverty-stricken parents”*, *“lack of funds”* and *“amount of salary”*. Class 7 and 8 also had groups raise *“poverty”*, *“school fees”* and *“lack of capital”*.

The second sub-theme was employment. When talking about unemployment one group from class 8 highlighted that *“you could achieve your degree but not be employed”*. Similarly, a group in the older pupils said, *“you want to do a career and it has no opportunity based on jobs in Olepolos”*. The male parents also raised the *“lack of industrial opportunities”*.

The third theme for this question was **continuity**. This consists of three sub-themes: cultural practices, health, and access. The first sub-theme of cultural practices was consistent across groups. The groups named female genital-mutilation (FGM) and early marriages as barriers to the future they want for children after leaving Osiligi. These are two barriers that impact girls’ learning journeys.

The second sub-theme was health. Students in class 8 raised the impact of *“drug abuse”*, *“sickness like tuberculosis or cancer”* and *“lack of food”*. Teachers raised *“drug abuse”* and *“diseases”*. Older pupils talked about *“drug and substance abuse”* and *“health problems”*. Issues around substance abuse were linked to peer pressure. Female parent’s raised *“early pregnancies”*, which is linked to cultural practices but also has health impacts.

The third theme was access. Male parents talked about the *“lack of local institutions”* and how the charity and school have *“stopped parents pulling children out of education”*. This is linked to



financial barriers as many families cannot afford for their children to go to school away from home. The governors also raised the “*lack of local education infrastructure*”.

The fourth theme for this question was **exposure** and within this there was a sub-theme of career knowledge. The male parents talked about “*lack of career coaches*”, “*lack of industrial opportunity*” and “*interest from home in career conversations*”. Teachers talked about a lack of “*knowledge of who they want to be after school*”. The governors mentioned that “*successful people in the community do not return*”. This theme had close links to the earlier sub-theme of role models.



*Image 8: Female parents discussing as a baby plays*



*Image 9: Female parents and the facilitators sitting for lunch*



*Image 10: A male parent standing to feedback his groups discussion*



*Image 11: Non-teaching staff in the consultation*

## **Narratives from the consultation**

As demonstrated above, there were a range of perspectives shared by the community. This section of the report is about drawing together the themes across different questions and groups into narratives.

### **People want a stable, good life**


One of the key overlaps across the responses, was aspiration for success and security. Both for pupils and members of the local community, there was a significant desire for financial stability and a comfortable life. There was a strong narrative across groups that academic qualifications are seen as essential for accessing better career opportunities, leading to financial security. However, across the groups it was also recognised that skills-based qualifications are valuable as they offer avenues for self-employment, addressing the issue of limited employment opportunities. The emphasis is on both academic and skills-based qualifications, recognizing the diverse abilities and aspirations of individuals.

### **Education to empower the community**

Education emerges as a central tool for empowerment, enabling individuals to pursue their aspirations and contribute meaningfully to society. Both academic and skills-based education are valued for their potential to uplift individuals and communities, albeit in different ways. By equipping pupils with a diverse skill set and a strong educational foundation, the community aims to foster resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges. Climate change was raised in different groups and people recognised the impact to life in the community due to changing weather. This was linked with the need to have critical thinking skills and the ability to be solution focussed in adverse situations. It was also apparent that the range of opportunities with academic or skills-based education are not well known. The specific careers mentioned across the groups suggests that there are a limited range of academic futures that people are aware of and fewer skills-based careers. There is community awareness of this through the themes of role models and exposure that emerged. This is an opportunity for the charity and school to meaningfully meet the needs of the community through career guidance and support.

### **There is a disconnect between the careers people want and the careers they think the community needs**

One thing that stood out from this piece of work was the strong emphasis and value placed on academic success. The majority of specifically named jobs and careers across the



groups were ones that require high academic competency and qualification. The future that many people shared did not focus to the same extent on academically qualified roles in the community. Furthermore, in relation to question 5, more people advocated for skills-based education, or a combination of skills based and academic education than exclusively academic education. Across the two skills-centred questions, people talked about skills to earn money and make a living. This was alongside personal traits, values, and conduct. Both the children and the adults of the community want a future where the people in Olepolos are self-reliant, considerate, and collaborative. There is an opportunity for a paradigm shift towards promoting a broad range of futures consistent with these shared values beyond traditional academic centred careers.

### **The importance of holistic growth as part of education**

There is a significance placed on development of students in the school and members of the community to become valuable members to society. This includes a desire to help the community, reduce the presence and impact of poverty, and provide opportunities for future generations. As well as academic skills, there is a need to develop life skills as part of education journeys. For example, making health choices with your body, being able to resist peer pressure and developing a strong moral compass. Skill development, whether through technical education or entrepreneurial endeavours, is seen to contribute meaningfully to personal development. Communities are made up of people. The importance of education in facilitating community empowerment and progress is highlighted across all responses. This holistic approach to education underscores the interconnectedness of individual well-being and community development, emphasizing the role of education institutions as agents of positive change.

### **Equality in the community is desired and must be actively cultivated**

Education plays a pivotal role in challenging traditional practices like early marriage and FGM, empowering girls and women in the process. Skill development is seen to challenge gender norms in career choices, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities. The community emphasizes the importance of allowing individuals to pursue their ambitions freely, irrespective of societal expectations. For the girls in the community to thrive, they must be encouraged and able to maintain their education. It is linked to the holistic development mentioned above. A lack of continuity in education does not only impact academic development, but also social, financial, and personal development.

The community's vision for the future is inclusive, aiming to create opportunities for all members irrespective of gender, background, or academic inclination. By advocating for a blend of academic and skills-based education, the community seeks to cater to diverse talents and aspirations, ensuring that no individual is left behind. This inclusive approach not only fosters social cohesion but also strengthens the resilience and sustainability of the community as a whole. The charity and school have a key role to play, given this requires support, collaboration, and sensitivity.

**The CBC aligns with the communities’ values and aspirations**

Previously, the direction of learning in the school has been set by the Kenyan curriculum, the school and the charity. It was important to understand, through this consultation, how to move forward making the community a valued partner in this process.

*“Competencies are the knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours that contribute to individual and organisation performance” (National Institutes of Health, 2024)*

Questions 3 and 4 were centred around understanding the skills that the community valued for their children and for the future of the community. The table below shows the alignment of those values with the core competencies of the CBC.

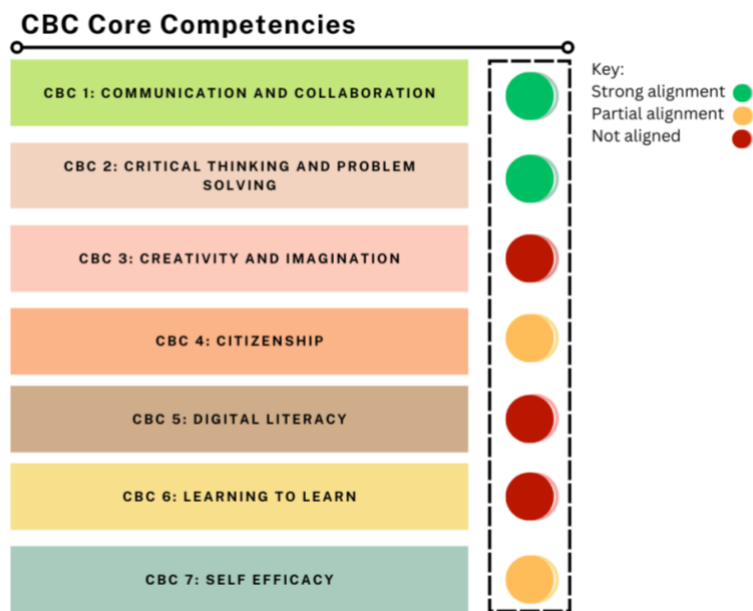



Figure 8: This table shows the seven core competencies in the CBC. A traffic light system shows the alignment with ideas from the consultation.



There was a clear emphasis and familiarity with the first CBC competency, ‘Communication and Collaboration’, and the second ‘Problem Solving and Critical Thinking’ for both the students’ and the community’s futures. These were primarily expressed in the language of how they’re described as part of the seven core competencies in the CBC. However, across the groups people shared ideas that related to additional CBC competencies. The seventh competency ‘Self-efficacy’ is your confidence to be able to learn and this relates to the ideas shared around confidence, hard work, and discipline. Moreover, several contributions related to ‘citizenship’. Groups talked about moral behaviour, avoiding corruption, and helping others. When groups talked about communication it was often to facilitate supporting people in the community. There were three core competencies that were touched upon but featured less in responses: ‘Learning to learn’, ‘Digital Literacy’ and ‘Creativity and Imagination’. It is important that all seven competencies are developed in children during their education. As part of this, it is important that they are understood, valued and encouraged at home.


This presents an opportunity for the charity, community, and teachers to raise the profile of these competencies, particularly in relation to the communities’ visions of the future. For example, there could be an assembly at school by Eripare, a local collective of women who make beadwork jewellery and crafts, to showcase the creativity that is already in the community.

### **Visualising education pathways is important for everyone**

It was apparent across the groups that there was a perception of education as an opportunity to improve your life. There is an established vision, which many people aspire to, that involves working hard in school, getting good grades, going to university, and having a good, well-paid career. However, the current employment landscape in Olepolos doesn’t reflect the realisation of this vision. People expressed concerns with employment and the value of investing in education without assurance of a job afterwards. This led to a parallel narrative of entrepreneurship, self-employment, and financial sustainability. Through education, it is important to provide people with the skills and knowledge to live positive and sustainable lives. Recognising this is an opportunity to deliver education that enables students to stay in the community in Olepolos or to explore career development elsewhere.

In summary, the overlapping ideas across the community's vision for the future underscore the interconnectedness of individual aspirations and community development. By prioritizing education as a pathway to empowerment, fostering holistic development, and embracing





inclusivity, the community of Olepolos aims to create a future that is prosperous, resilient, and equitable for all its members.

### Considerations

It is important to look at the findings of this piece of work in the context of the methodological approach and challenges. The aim of this research was to capture a broad view from the community about the future they wanted for their children and the area in which they live. The sample for this consultation was 191 and there was limited resource for analysis therefore, a deeper exploration of participants' views was not feasible. This is the first community consultation, and it was essential that participants felt comfortable and understood their experience and the research. The approach developed was centred around this principle with community members in groups and the ability to participate in multiple languages. This had the intended impact of a positive response to the engagement. However, it led to the recorded information being a high-level summary of the discussion in the room and may have the limitation of being unable to capture the nuance of some people's perspectives.

The consultation allows a broad understanding of common aspirations and barriers identified across the community. However, it doesn't enable links to be drawn between specific ambitions for the future and the barriers people are most conscious of. The charity has an ethos of 'improving the community through education' and several of the barriers were wider than that that scope. It's important to reflect upon what was said by the community whilst acknowledging the limitations of the resources available to the charity to work towards its core mission. The purpose of this report was to provide insight to the charity about how to move forward with the community. It is also an opportunity for the community in Olepolos to see consensus and initiative among its members towards a positive future for the area.

### Recommendations

As the community in Olepolos continues to develop, it is important to build upon the valuable work that has already been done. Below are some key recommendations from the report to be taken forward:

- **Opportunities for skills-based education:** A clear conclusion of this research is the need to raise the profile, knowledge, understanding and paths to skills-based education for

the children. It is important to consider opportunity and accessibility (financially and geographically). The provision of skills-based education would be of great value to the community. This should be developed, if possible, locally. It may be of benefit to form partnership with local skills providers and businesses.

- **Skills for life:** Effective education is more than just academic knowledge, and this was made clear across the consultation. It consists of skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life. It is important to give these principles considerable weight in how the charity plans to work with the community in the future.
- **Financial proficiency:** There are real financial challenges within the local community in Olepolos. This includes a lack of opportunities to earn sufficient income, capability to supporting themselves, as well as immediate and extended family. There is an opportunity to support a culture of entrepreneurship in the community.
- **Careers education:** There is an opportunity for the charity and school to platform the communities' ambitions and help to showcase the range of careers needed for that future. Introducing career education and exposure for both students and community members would allow a broader range of aspirations suited to the individual.
- **Community learning:** This community is interested in education and self-improvement, which extends beyond school-aged people. In the long term, there is an opportunity to create a hub of the community to bring people together and make learning accessible for people who it previously hasn't been. This could take many forms and should be developed with the community for the community.
- **Further research:** This consultation was positively received and engaged a large sample of the community. It is important as the charity moves forward to continue to make decisions with the community and to evaluate the success of those decisions. A valuable step in this would be to look at graduate monitoring for students leaving the school and building in impact assessments for future significant projects.



*Image 12: A female parent gifting the researcher a Maasai bracelet*



### **About the researcher:**

Keir Thomson is a researcher based in Glasgow, Scotland. He gained a first-class honours degree in Applied Psychology from Glasgow Caledonian University. His undergraduate dissertation used qualitative interviews to understand primary school teachers attitudes towards play based learning. He completed his master's degree at the prestigious University College London (UCL) in the Institute of Education and graduated with distinction. He currently works as a senior Government Social Researcher for the Department of Work and Pensions as part of the UK government. He led the department in embedding Theory of Change practice across analysis and policy. He is currently working in housing policy, where he develops official statistics and leads in evidence building for policy decision making.

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