

Chapter 2

The Local Culture

*Mtoto umleavyo, ndivyo akuavyo.
How you bring up a child determines how s/he turns up in
adulthood.*

Swahili proverb (Strathmore University 2007)

2.1 Life Among the Wasambaa

If the purpose of a school is to prepare students to be adult members of their community, and if there are preconceived notions in the culture about people with disabilities, then the success of the Irente Rainbow School will be reflected in changes in the attitudes of the people in Lushoto. In Wasambaa culture and in Tanzania at large, respecting family and others and caring for oneself, including keeping clean, staying fed, and looking good, are supremely important. A parent told me about the positive changes in her children since they had been attending the Irente Rainbow School:

The changes are present because, for example, Solomon likes to iron his clothes, which is good: he hates dirtiness, he likes his bed and room to be clean, he likes to be smart, and he is able to prepare himself to go to church. He knows when it is time to go to school; he wakes up in the morning, brushes his teeth, and goes to school. Vincent is the same way, except that he does not like to get up in the morning.... They like visitors, they like friends, and they know how to prepare the table and wash dishes. They have made big changes really: they are able to wash their clothes and do not like to wear dirty clothes.

Both Vincent and Solomon have been at the school since it opened. After reading an assessment report for one of these boys when he first came to the school and comparing it to his behavior and abilities that I observed, I find it hard to believe that this is the same boy. Vincent was diagnosed with autism initially, but his current outward manifestations of autism are minimal. A typical person might not think he has autism or even a disability. He has excellent self-care and social skills.

As I walked to and from the school, I would see children as young as six years old learning to help with household tasks. In Lushoto and the surrounding villages, the

Wasambaa people rely on agriculture and livestock for their economic stability, as well as the participation of all members of the family in work. If a child with a disability cannot contribute to the family income or sustainability, the family must bear the burden of lost work and continue to use additional time and resources to care for that child. In the morning and after school, children are expected to help at home with cleaning, washing, cooking, and caring for the goats, chickens, and cows. While families understand their responsibility to care for children with disabilities, the situation is not easy, given that many people are working in difficult situations just to survive (Shemweta 2008).

The Wasambaa people live in the towns and villages of the Western Usambara Mountains. Lushoto is the largest town in this area. Most inhabitants are from this area and speak Kiswahili, the lingua franca of Tanzania, and Kisambaa, the local language of the Wasambaa. This group is sometimes called the Shambala. Respect, working together, and caring for one's family are critical values in this culture. Pastor Moses Shemweta, a local church leader and native of the area, explains that having a farm in the family is for practical purposes and for pride:

Every married man should have a house, a portion of land full of long-term crops, and another land for short-term crops. This signifies his ability to feed his family, and also to help others in need, in and out of his family or clan. (2008)

In this community, people work together and care for one another. It is imperative to contribute to the family through work, caring for each other, and preserving the culture. People participate in religious gatherings such as births, weddings, and funerals together and sing together at home for many events. At schools, churches, and organizations, singing and elaborate celebrations with guest speakers frequently celebrate or commemorate anniversaries, important days, and staff changes.

Scarcely any people have cars, so it is common to walk between places, up to six or seven miles (10–12 km) per day. Men, women, and children walk on the side of the road and greet each other as they pass. Starting at four to six years old, children walk to school in groups or stand on corners by themselves or with other slightly older children. In this community, I greeted everyone I saw on the way to and from school or the market. People got to know my husband and me and recognized us in town because we were walking with them. All the *wenyegi* (locals) speak Kiswahili, but if they are greeting or talking to people they know on the road or while working, they usually speak in Kisambaa. Most children know both languages and speak Kisambaa at home. If one parent is from a different area of Tanzania, such as Moshi, and speaks Kichagga, the child may know a little of that language from a parent or grandparent. At the Irene Rainbow School, one family and one teacher are originally from another part of Tanzania and speak two local languages (for Lushoto and for the other area). Many people stay in the same area or region as their family most of their lives. Most commonly, a person only travels from away from his or her family to attend school or find work in a different town if necessary based on their occupation. After being away from the family region, that person may marry a person from a different area. The married family will typically choose one family to settle near one of their extended families.

Fig. 2.1 Two kiosks selling basic supplies in the Lushoto area



Children are often sent to local vendors on corners to get sugar or tomatoes. These vendors are located in little kiosks near road intersections almost every half-mile in the Lushoto area (Fig. 2.1). These kiosks sell staples, such as sugar, vegetables, flour, oil, soap, tea, and cell phone minute cards. An old woman sold us vegetables at a kiosk near our house. She was excited to meet my parents when they visited and asked about their journey and their health after they had returned home.

Care of one's neighbors and family is a fundamental cultural value. In March of 2009, the wife of a staff member at school died of tuberculosis. For three days after her death, family and friends were at the home with the staff member, his young child, and his and her parents. Every Rainbow School staff member took shifts during and after school and through the night, to help with preparations for the funeral and care for the whole family. This was not a choice, but a responsibility. The body of the staff member's wife was prepared and buried on the property, and more than two hundred people from the local village and town came to the funeral. Attending funerals is a social obligation, a sign of care and respect if one is from the village or has any connection to the community. If one cannot attend the funeral, one is expected to pay condolences in person to the family. When a student from the school died and I could not go to the funeral, I went to the student's home to see his mother. It is typical to see large numbers of people at a funeral or a burial. When people are sick or dying, others step into help with the daily chores and farming. This process of care occurs for illness, childbirth, and death.

2.1.1 Religious Life

The Wasambaa believe in Mulungu, their god and creator. Mulungu provides for people, but punishes them for disobedience to him and for wrongdoing. Today, most Wasambaa are Christians or Muslims, but they still have in some traditional religious

beliefs. Commonly, people follow a combination of understandings between traditional religions and Christianity or Islam (Shemweta 2008; Stone-MacDonald and Butera 2012). Shemweta found that most Wasambaa people would take their children with intellectual disabilities to a traditional healer before taking them to a hospital, regardless of their Christian or Muslim faith. School administrators told me that some students from the school had been taken to traditional healers, even though the children and their families were practicing Christians or Muslims. People in the community frequently talked about witchcraft, usually in Kisambaa and using indirect speech. Given my status as a white outsider who did not speak Kisambaa, people did not talk to me about traditional healers or indigenous beliefs, or the content of these conversations. They assumed that Americans and Europeans would not understand or tolerate indigenous beliefs. Teachers said that indigenous beliefs were still widespread in the community, but spoke only in generalities.

At the Irente Rainbow School, students from both major religions attend and participate in school activities. During morning devotions, children learn about the Christian God and all sing and pray during devotions. During parents' meetings and other large gatherings, the program always begins with a prayer and a short devotional service. The people of Muslim faith sit quietly and participate at times. Some Muslim parents know the words to the Christian prayers or songs and sing along. Everyone participates in the prayer. When the children sing religious songs, all the students know the songs, regardless of their religion. During morning meeting on Mondays, children are asked about what happened in church and mosque.

Formally and informally, I questioned parents and teachers about how Muslim parents felt about sending their children to a Lutheran school. All the parents were positive about the school and did not mind that their children attended it. All were happy that a school in the community was willing to educate their children and try to help the family. A father, when asked whether, as a Muslim, he had any concerns about sending his son to a Christian school, said, "We have no problem at all. In our country, we do not look at the religion of a person as the whole person. Religion is together with other things.... We have no problems with Rainbow." A Muslim mother explained, "All religions, we worship the almighty God. All of us pray to the almighty God. [My son] goes to mosque, and there, if he has questions like his peers, he will be able to choose the religion that he prefers." Parents believe there is one God, or one deity, which takes care of all children and adults. Parents primarily want their children to learn that this deity, both religions call God or Allah, loves them. They are getting a good education—and if they learn about Jesus, that is acceptable, because they live in a community with both Christians and Muslims.

It is the custom in Tanzania that children are raised in their father's religion. There were several married couples in Lushoto in which one spouse was Christian and the other was Muslim. For example, two administrators were raised by parents of two different faiths. Bakari and Charles' mother was Christian, and their father was Muslim. Their mother practiced her religion by attending church on Sundays. As children, they were raised as Muslims, but as adults, Charles, Bakari, and their sister converted to Christianity. Frequently, a mother can continue to practice her own religion with her family on holidays, and sometimes her children join her. A student's

mother said, “I go to church and have been rebaptized, but my children can choose if they want to be Muslim or Christian. Right now, they go to church with me.” These arrangements caused few struggles in the community or the families. I never saw or heard about conflicts between the Muslim and Christian populations in Lushoto. It appeared that everyone lived together practicing his or her own religion undisturbed.

2.1.2 Beliefs About Disability in the Lushoto Community

When the school started, an important goal was to address negative beliefs about people with intellectual disabilities and autism. In Wasambaa culture, three Kisambaa proverbs discuss the care of children with disabilities. The first one is an idiom, *Jiho, jiho*. This can be translated to mean ‘better to have a disabled child than no child at all’. The other proverbs command parents and family members to take responsibility for their children and care for them, regardless of the disability. The first one, *Kekuna ntembo yeeng’wa ni uvea wakwe*, means that, regardless of whether a person with disabilities is dependent, no parent or relative ignores responsibilities toward him or her. The second, *Ywako ni ywako*, indicates that although he or she is disabled, he or she is your child or relative, and it is your responsibility to take care of her or him (Shemweta 2008).

In preliminary planning for the school, the diocese committee discussed the fact that people in Lushoto and Irete often hide and may neglect children they think have an intellectual disability or cannot participate in the family. Because of this observation, one of the missions of the school was to change these beliefs and help people understand a concept known as God’s plan. The school and the diocese wanted to find a way to educate the community about people with disabilities and to use the church and its institutions to include them as community members. Church teachings were interpreted by the diocese and the parents to mean that, as servants of God, they were responsible for supporting the children (Stone-MacDonald 2010).

Despite some positive views from parents about disability, the school staff at the Irete Rainbow School believe more work is needed to persuade the general public in Lushoto that supporting individuals with disabilities to participate in the community is the correct path. In the outreach program, the staff works with parents and district villages to educate them about the rights of people with disabilities and how these individuals can be part of the community. One church leader explained:

The role of the school in society is to show that it is completely possible that these children go to school like other children, and the school has helped also in the education [of the community] through words and actions to see that “it is possible, it can be done.”

Through the work of the Rainbow School and the outreach program, the diocese demonstrates that it cares about these children and their future in the community.

Some parents viewed having a child with a disability as an opportunity. One parent said, “[My son] being a disabled person, I would say, is part of a gift which I have been given by God, meaning I don’t feel bad to have [him]; I feel happy because it is God’s plan.” Regardless of a family’s economic situation, the parents

still love their child. His father commented, “In our situation of poverty, we do not have a salary, but we will be given that which we need to continue to care for Richard.” Based on their faith in God, they believe that God will provide for them and their family. For the family, fulfilling God’s plan involves caring for their son and making him part of the community and their family.

2.1.3 Negative Beliefs About Disability

Several people described negative beliefs regarding the cause of disabilities and the shame or burden that children with disabilities bring to a family, but no one could or would name individuals they knew that had these beliefs or who practiced them now. I frequently heard these were *imani za zamani* ‘beliefs of the past’. Community members recalled that beliefs of curses causing disabilities or disabilities resulting from unfulfilled obligations were thoughts from previous times, but participants acknowledged that they had been widespread in the past and still existed in some areas (Stone-MacDonald 2010).

Lushoto residents described medical models and how genetics or difficulty in childbirth and pregnancy can cause disabilities. Some people did, however, explain that the reason the medical situation may have happened was due to witchcraft, a curse, a punishment from God, or because it was part of God’s plan. In the community, people believe both that God’s plan can be viewed as a gift or as a punishment. Shemweta (2008) found in his research that the Wasambaa share five common views about the causes of disability from his research: God, a curse, witchcraft, infringement of customs, and diseases.

A teacher saw how some parents went back to the older beliefs when medicine did not explain everything: “Those beliefs are there: even if everyone is not saying it so openly, I know that people believe it.” This teacher remembered a specific family:

For example, Down syndrome: when you tell them, they may understand that it really has something to do with the genes and the chromosomes.... We don’t know, we don’t know why it happened. I think people here would very much like to go back to witchcraft.

Teachers, district leaders, and church leaders have all heard community members talk about the negative beliefs, but rarely do people admit to having the beliefs themselves. Discussion of curses and punishment is commonest in the villages and heard by the outreach staff. But one has to understand the local language well to pick up on the subtle phrasings, because fewer people find these beliefs acceptable. Most people, because of Christian and Muslim influences, believe that things happen because it is all part of God’s plan. One teacher said, “There are very different beliefs which people create to try not to give those negative ones, so that we should know that it is not a curse nor a mistake, but rather it is God’s plan.” People with negative beliefs, or who do not know how to care for a child with a disability, are likelier to hide their children at home. The purpose of the outreach program is to find and support these families, guide them to services, and show how their children can be a meaningful part of their family and community.

Children with disabilities are taken to both traditional healers and medical doctors. People preferred to go to a local traditional healer as protection or for treatment for a child with a disability. This practice is still common, regardless of religious beliefs, but many found that the traditional healers could do little to help children with disabilities (Shemweta 2008). God is also seen as a healer. The deity's powers to heal are available to both Muslims and Christians, as the deity is locally seen as a single deity, supporting both religions. Children are frequently taken to the church for prayers. Some are taken to Pentecostal or more evangelical churches for the laying on of hands. One teacher described a Muslim family who had taken their daughter to a church for the laying on of hands and prayers: "The [parent] told us that she is planning to take [the child] to [a pastor]. They do a lot of *maombi* or prayers.... And I hear that a lot, even Muslims: they very much believe in that." She was taken for the laying on of hands, but it was seen as unsuccessful because she was not immediately able to get up and walk; no miracle occurred.

In the past, children with disabilities were frequently hidden in their homes to avoid shame and embarrassment. Parents did not know how to handle the children and in the villages had no realistic way to find them services or send them to school. An outreach volunteer explains the impact of Rainbow on communities: "Rainbow has encouraged people to come [to an outreach event] and have the freedom to see that disability is not an illness, but it is something normal; this is new."

One local leader recalled that when, in the 1960s, they were first looking for students to attend the Irente Blind School, which is also run by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania-Northeastern Diocese in Lushoto, it was impossible to find students, because people were ashamed and did not want to send them for an education. Nowadays, parents would like to send their children to a boarding school to learn skills, and to reduce the burden of the child on the family. The principal, as a board member of Rainbow, often sees parents wanting to leave their children at Rainbow because they do not know it is only a day school. Several school staff members from different villages in the Tanga region described children or adults with disabilities who lived in the community but did not have a role in the community or an education because there were no opportunities. They were just idle all day long; nevertheless, they were seen in the community, and people knew that individuals with disabilities lived in their communities. When the outreach program goes to the remotest villages in the district, parents frequently say there are no medical services nearby, and the one or two primary schools, being overcrowded, would not accept their children because of the children's outbursts, slow learning, or self-care needs.

2.1.4 God's Plan

As mentioned above, most Tanzanians believe in a deity that has a plan for everything, and community members in this culture think that having a child with a disability is *mpango wa Mungu* 'God's plan'. While it is not easy to have a child

with a disability, they feel this is part of the role God has designated in the society for the parents of children with disabilities, by giving them the children, and such parents should feel blessed. In this community, most people feel a sense of responsibility to care for people with disabilities because they are God's children, despite the hardships. One father said,

For me personally, I believe that causes of disability are part of God's plan, because children with disabilities are not only our children. We Tanzanians, even those in Europe—at another time, you were surprised that even livestock were born with disabilities, but this is part of God's plan.

A teacher explained that the Bible tells God's people that it is their responsibility to care for children with disabilities, and that God has a plan. "Let us arise, for this matter is your responsibility [sic]", the motto of Irente Rainbow School as they have written it, from the book of Ezra [Chap. 10](#), verse 4, tells people that it is their responsibility to make the world a better place. This passage emphasizes the value of the work of the school and the diocese to support people from marginalized groups.

The parents, teachers, and church leaders in the local Lutheran diocese strongly believe that all children are gifts between God and should be accepted, taught, and welcomed into the community and the church. Community outreach services are provided by the church and its members to support the poorest members of society and those suffering in their communities. Through its community outreach programs, the church is not only supporting them, but providing people with disabilities with rights and an education to become equal members of the society. In this diocese, it serves children and youth, people with HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses, people with disabilities, women, and the elderly.

In this community, many things are part of God's plan, and individuals are called to be a part of that plan. For example, on a teacher payday, when a rumor broke out that the school account had no money for salaries, a staff member gave a sermon during devotions about how work at the school was part of God's plan: they were working there because their work helped children and society. A teacher said, "Money is nice and supports our lives, but the work is to do our part in God's plan." Students were encouraged to work hard in school to play their part in the plan: they helped fulfill the plan by demonstrating their abilities and helping others. Another day, a local pastor gave a sermon during devotions saying that the work of the school was showing God's love in the community: when the teachers did their jobs, it was God showing his love to others and following his plan. In January, a student at the school died of complications from malaria. This student had severe disabilities. He was loved and well cared for by his family. At his funeral service, the pastor talked about how his death and short life was part of God's plan.

Despite their beliefs, teachers and community members sometimes question God's plan. Local children, particularly toddlers and preschoolers, fall into burning fires occasionally because the fires are in open pits and children sometimes play near the fires. A student came to the Irente Blind School who was blind and had a disfigured face from a fall into the fire as a young child. Looking at him was difficult because of his injuries, and he had many health problems. He came to the school

because he desperately wanted an education. One afternoon, after several of the Rainbow teachers had met him, they talked about his condition. One teacher said, “Why? Why does God do that to him? How will it help him in the future?” Another teacher responded that it was part of God’s plan to help us learn about perseverance in the face of extreme tragedy. The teachers were disturbed by the child and that this could happen, but happy that he would have a chance for an education.

2.1.5 Beliefs and the Outreach Program

One of the goals of the outreach program is to find children with disabilities who are hidden or confined to their homes. The outreach staff uses church leaders and community leaders to get the word out about their visits and encourages families to come and learn about the outreach program. Several of the communities visited in the Lushoto district are located deep in the mountains and require driving more than an hour on bumpy dirt roads. I once went to Mtae to see a 12-year-old child with cerebral palsy who was spending much of her time inside her family’s mud house. After driving up and down on winding mountainous roads, we came up into the clouds, it seemed, and arrived in Mtae. On a clear day, people can see Mount Kilimanjaro (about 100 miles away) from the church. After we parked the Land Rover, we got out and walked along meandering dirt paths around houses and livestock. When we came to the right house, a sister and an aunt carried out to us a young girl who looked to be about 5’2” tall, weighing 100 pounds, and placed her on a stool. They could not bring her to the outreach meeting because they could not carry her on the road the two-mile walk to the church and had no wheelchair or stroller to use. Wheelchairs or strollers did not seem practical on these jarring, rocky, steep winding roads. One of the outreach staff, Bethania, talked with the family about ways to help the girl make choices in her daily life about food or simple activities and showed them some basic signs and communication strategies. She encouraged the family to help the girl be more independent and help with cooking or dressing herself, even if they started with basic actions and showed her how to do the steps by putting her sister’s hand over the girl’s hand and helping her stir the porridge (*uji*).

When a neighbor reports a child with a disability that is confined in the home, “we use the pastors and elders of the church or village leaders to talk with the parents and that family. It is good to give that child an opportunity to go to school,” said a church leader. In many cases, parents’ reasons for hiding may have as much to do with beliefs and shame as simply not knowing how an education could help their child. One family at an outreach meeting said that they did not know they could ask to send their child to school, and were embarrassed to take their obviously disabled son to the principal.

In the villages, the outreach program uses Lutheran pastors and parish workers to help find children with disabilities and bring them to the meetings. The parish workers visit Christian and Muslim families. They invite families from church congregations in the area and purposely include families from different denominations, including Muslims, Baptists, and Roman Catholics. In areas that have trained

outreach volunteers, they include Muslims and Christians. Volunteers and outreach workers take a census of the children with disabilities, provide advice and education, and refer them to other services they need and support them in securing those services, such as medical care, education, or a particular device or support for the child. If possible, the outreach staff tries to place the children in an outreach volunteer classroom or in a primary school, based on the child's needs and where the family lives.

During the outreach meeting, the workers and volunteers discuss medical causes and treatments. One worker described what happens at a community outreach meeting: "Parents discuss with us about disability, the symptoms of children with disabilities, their causes, and at this time we advise and educate that children with disabilities are able to learn, to do all the work which we in the community do." They frequently illustrate the differences between a disease and a disability. The outreach staff wants families to understand that diseases sometimes can be cured and will go away, but a disability cannot be cured: it will persist permanently. When making the distinction between an illness and a disability, a worker reminds parents that one cannot simply take pills or drink an herbal tea and make the disability go away. Treatment and education specifically for their needs can help children succeed with a disability. Indirectly in this way, they try to tell parents that spending money on traditional healers will not ultimately help their children, but that is never said directly; instead, outreach workers collaborate with local church and government officials to allow the child to attend school and to encourage the parents to find ways the child can help at home with the daily tasks. At the same time, outreach workers always encourage prayers, regardless of the religion, to give the children and families strength and hope.

2.2 Funds of Knowledge

The information, skills, and dispositions students learn from their families and communities through their lived experiences and their transactional relationships with their own culture are called funds of knowledge (González et al. 1995). González et al. (2005) focusing on Latino families in Arizona, studied how teachers used the funds of knowledge in that community to support literacy in the classroom. Similarly in Lushoto, funds of knowledge were infused in the curriculum at the Irente Rainbow School. Table 2.1 is a list of community funds of knowledge most important for all individuals to know and be able to do to participate culturally, socially, and economically in Lushoto and Irente as active members of the community; this knowledge informed teaching and learning at school, at home, and in the community. This table reflects the critical skills that need to be taught in the school curriculum, as determined by the school staff, administration, parents, and other founding members of the school.

In Lushoto, students need to learn skills and knowledge in four basic domains, represented as household skills, agricultural skills, self-care skills, and social skills. These domains will help students independently participate in the community and be accepted by nondisabled peers. All children need to show respect for their elders

Table 2.1 Community funds of knowledge in Lushoto (Reproduced from Stone-MacDonald 2012a, b)

Household skills	Agriculture skills	Self-care skills	Social skills
Sewing	Feeding a goat	Bathing	Greeting people
Cooking	Cleaning animal areas	Dressing	Receiving guests
Sweeping	Using a machete	Using the toilet	Washing hands for guests
Washing dishes	Using a hoe	Brushing teeth	Helping neighbors
Washing the floor	Planting seeds	Washing hands	Riddles and myths
Setting the table	Preparing a garden	With a pitcher	Singing
Fetching water	Harvesting produce	Hair care	Cell phone use
Caring for children or elderly	Shucking corn	Shining shoes	
Fixing broken utensils/tools	Carrying leaves and produce		
Washing clothes			

and people in the community, demonstrate self-care skills, participate in labor and/or work at home to support the family, and participate in the social and religious life of their families. At the school, these skills are modeled, taught, and practiced in explicit and implicit modes of instruction. Being independent in daily life and participating in the communal work of survival are critical. With these abilities, students can participate as active members of the community, regardless of their disabilities. Self-care and vocational skills are the most important skills to have for daily life. Academic knowledge is also important, but people can survive and work with basic academic skills—functional literacy and functional knowledge of money.

At the school or in the community, I observed children learning and practicing all the skills listed in Table 2.1. For example, I watched children learn to cut grass with a machete for the goats at school, and I saw them perform this task at home. Some activities were taught formally, but others were taught informally, through the course of work to maintain the school, such as washing dishes and mopping the floors.

Since it was clear in the beginning to families and teachers that most of these students would not move on to typical primary schools or attempt the primary school leaving exam after standard seven (students can take it only once for a chance at secondary school), the focus of the curriculum needed to be functional and practical for the students, and it had to provide them with basic academic skills. The curriculum was pieced together from the national curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities, the syllabi for primary schools (particularly grades 1 and 2), and the funds of knowledge in the community that students would need to know and be able to do when they left the school. Typically, students already at least twelve years old will probably attend the Rainbow School for seven to nine years until they learn the necessary skills, and then they will enter the local workforce and/or return to work with their families. Knowledge of farming, household care, basic social skills, and cleaning are essential. For boys, knowledge of a trade like carpentry could support their ability to make money for

their basic needs; for girls, knowledge of cooking and cleaning would help them get work in a restaurant, guesthouse, or private school for young children. The core of the curriculum and the majority of instructional time each day are spent on teaching and learning the community funds of knowledge.

2.2.1 Social Skills

In this community, it is essential that students show respect to their elders and know how to greet the people they meet. Many guests from different places visit the school. The visitors come between inside and outside Tanzania, and it is important to know how to greet them, depending on age, gender, and the language they speak. When visitors came from Germany or the United States, the students practiced songs and greetings in German and English, respectively. When the Tanzanian parliament representative for people with disabilities came to the school, students showed respect and greeted her with handshakes and “Shikamoo,” the respectful greeting for an elder, carried her bag, and offered her a snack and tea.

When students from a private school in Dar es Salaam visited, the teachers exhibited pride in their students’ ability to showcase their talents. All the students participated in singing the school song. The teachers even said their students knew their school song better and showed greater levels of respect for the song and the teachers during these visits than the students from the other school. A teacher explained that in preparation for visitors, they teach a “lesson about greetings, how we greet important people, ways to greet each other and to show each other respect, and ways to talk with people and use good language.” The school is providing lessons, modeling with community members, and furnishing opportunities for guided and independent practice with a variety of visitors. Social skills, particularly greeting behavior, are crucially important. In Lushoto and Irete, many people know each other or know each other’s friends and relatives. According to custom when walking on a road, people greet each other as they pass by. People did not always greet me, however, because they did not know me or recognize me as a long-term resident, but my friends and acquaintances always expected to be greeted and to have a short conversation. Over time, I was recognized and greeted by more and more people on the road. In Lushoto, it would be rude to ignore this social obligation, and I tried to greet everyone.

2.2.2 Self-Care Skills

Self-care skills are necessary for independence. Students need to know how to wash themselves, keep their clothes clean, go to the bathroom, and feed themselves. Irete Rainbow School is unique in Tanzania because it accepts students without self-care skills and takes time to teach these skills to students with a range of disabilities. In Fig. 2.2, a teacher is modeling hand washing using a pitcher and bowl, rather than a sink. In many

Fig. 2.2 Learning hand washing



homes, a child or younger relative would wash the hands of guests and elders using a pitcher and a bowl. The washer pours water over the guest's hands and the guest rubs his or her hands together with a little soap under the water. After the teacher modeled the behavior, a young girl practiced and was praised for washing her hands well.

This activity was part of a communication club, a time in which students with limited verbal ability learn vocabulary and skills to help with meals and guests at home.

Students need to have self-care skills and present themselves well to be accepted. Tanzanians believe that students with disabilities are dirty and unable to care for themselves. Part of the school's mission through educating the students and the community is to dispel these misconceptions. To do this, the school is teaching students various self-care skills and helping them go out into the community in clean clothes, showing that they can care from themselves, when possible.

2.2.3 Work at Home

In this community, families rely on all members to complete daily tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for younger children. People with disabilities have a more difficult time contributing to their families' well-being, making it more difficult for them to be accepted in the community as full members. At the Rainbow School, students learn to clean and garden so that they can help at home with common tasks, but also possibly to gain work outside the home, such as caring for flowers or working in a hostel or restaurant. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show children cleaning in the classroom and working in the garden.

A teacher explained, "In the garden, they'll know how to cultivate their own garden and to grow vegetables and to look for customers like they have done while at school, so that they can get their own income." When gardening, cooking, cleaning, or caring for animals, the students learn and practice the skills using the same tools and techniques as they would at home or in the community. Students at Rainbow can more seamlessly move among school, home, and work settings, because the environments and tools are comparable.

Fig. 2.3 Students mop the classroom



Fig. 2.4 Students learn to hoe a garden



2.2.4 Learning a Trade

At the school, learning a trade is also important, and several of the boys are learning to do carpentry so they might work as assistants to carpenters in their shops. The girls learn cooking and sewing at school and practice at home; they work with Winfrida and Happiness to prepare and cook meals. While men and women

Fig. 2.5 A student practices crocheting



are expected to help with cooking and cleaning at home, many areas of paid work are still gender-specific, and sticking to those gender norms will help students to increase their chances of getting a job in the community doing those tasks (Fig. 2.5).

On Fridays, two older girls work on crocheting wool and braiding sisal, a locally grown material for making rope.

The students come to the carpentry workshop to learn three times a week for about an hour per session. Mostly male students participated, but several of the girls in the oldest class learned to sand and hammer. The students learn to saw, nail, sand, and measure for various projects. In the beginning stages, they work on scrap pieces of wood, but gradually the carpenter allows them to help him on projects he is paid to make for his own business. All the older boys have learned to sand well and help him complete the finishing touches. In Fig. 2.6, he has shown them where to hold, and one boy hammers while the other one observes.

The boys love this work and are always excited to practice a skill that could earn them money. Carpentry lessons are taught through modeling, participating, and feedback, as with the gardening and cleaning lessons. A teacher explained why they taught carpentry: “A child learns and he has those skills. Therefore, when he leaves here, he should be able to make furniture and be able to sell it and earn himself money for his basic needs.”

Finally, students learn and contribute to the school community through work tasks. These contributions not only support the school, but teach the students skills to help out at home and support their neighbors. At the school, students carry wood to stack for the wood-burning stove a few times a year, and they help with husking and shelling corn raised at the school that will be used for *ugali* and *uji* (Fig. 2.7).

Students and teachers work together regularly to prepare meals, clean, and do any maintenance tasks needed for the upkeep of the school.

Tapping into the local culture and values, the content of the curriculum at the Irete Rainbow School employs local funds of knowledge important to family life and work skills. Funds of knowledge illuminate the crucial skills necessary for survival and success as members of the Lushoto community (González et al. 2005).

Fig. 2.6 Two boys learn carpentry from the school carpenter



Fig. 2.7 A young girl is working with a volunteer and a parent to shell corn



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