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Integrating global and local best practices for youth development afterschool: Constructing the Kilimanjaro extracurriculars self-assessment

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Abstract: School extracurricular activities are an important site for positive youth development in low-resource international contexts due to their relative accessibility and community relevance. Such activity programs can simultaneously illuminate local best practices and learn from research in other contexts where positive youth development research is more prevalent. This article draws on action research with secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro Region of northern Tanzania to offer a process for integrating local and global best practices into a self-assessment tool for extracurricular activity program leaders. The collaborative process involved exploratory case study research on local best practices and focus group workshops with local practitioners to adapt existing tools created elsewhere. A main purpose of the research was to create a tool that would be concise and appropriate for use in Kilimanjaro, while also conceptualizing a process that could be used to understand the potential value of extracurricular activities in other low-resource international contexts. The final Kilimanjaro Extracurriculars Self-Assessment (KESA) is offered as an open-access resource, but the main result is an approach for

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This paper describes action research to create an easy-to-use self-assessment tool to help teachers, administrators, and activity leaders improve extracurricular opportunities at secondary schools in low-resource contexts. Our research worked to promote the potential educational value of activities, such as sports, music, debate, scouting, and more by comparing best practices identified through global research with local realities in the Kilimanjaro Region of Tanzania. We undertook case studies of exemplary activity programs in local schools and engaged in focus group work with local educators to identify eight relevant best practices, including enhancing academic experiences, emphasizing positive relationships, and promoting inclusion. Through collaborative engagement with practitioners, the final product of our research is a brief self-assessment tool designed to promote constructive reflection and discussion. The tool is presented as an open-access resource, with encouragement to adapt its content and format through similar collaborative processes in other contexts.
integrating the global and the local to promote constructive reflection for youth development practitioners in low resource settings.

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Keywords: positive youth development; self-assessment; extracurricular activities; Tanzania

Extracurricular activities at schools are a popular venue for the promotion of positive youth development (PYD) all over the world. Sports teams, arts programs, service clubs, and many other related school activities offer a fun way to engage youth, build life skills, and cultivate healthy relationships when well-designed, effectively implemented, and culturally relevant (Vandell et al., 2015). Most of the existing research, theory, and methodology for PYD programs, however, derives from the U.S. and the global North (Koller & Verma, 2017). While there is a growing interest in PYD research from diverse international settings (see, for example, Lauxman et al., 2021; Leman et al., 2017), facilitating international PYD requires considering how local practices and global standards can inform each other in ways that best serve youth.

School extracurricular activities provide rich examples of local best practices because of their broad reach and community integration in low- and middle-income countries, such as Tanzania (Alvarado et al., 2017; Lazaro & Anney, 2016). While targeted activity programming by non-governmental organizations can sometimes offer examples of how to translate global standards into local practice, existing school programs succeed only if they are already appropriate to local contexts. Successful extracurricular programs thus have the potential to illustrate what already works in a given community and, as such, can avoid emphasizing deficits and risks in favor of more asset-based models of development (see, for example, Mathie & Cunningham, 2005; Ssewamala et al., 2010). Despite this potential, however, there is little international research specific to school-based extracurricular programs in global regions with large youth populations such as sub-Saharan Africa.

While sub-Saharan Africa is a diverse region of differing school systems and varying levels of economic development, in relative terms many schools across the region offer activities within a context of significant resource constraints. Low-resource school contexts do create particular challenges to extracurricular offerings, but many activities are popular precisely because they do not require extensive infrastructure, equipment, or fully professional staff. School sports, for example, are popular across many African countries—sometimes as a legacy of colonial education systems that have been adapted to build regional and national prestige (Chepyator-Thomson, 2014). Likewise, many schools across sub-Saharan Africa engage students through student government, academic clubs, scouting, and leadership programs, and other activities that would be familiar in diverse global contexts (see, for example, Janoch et al., 2015; De Wet et al., 2018). Rigorous evaluation research on diverse types of youth development programs in low- and middle-income countries has found that these types of school-based programs can have positive effects related to outcomes such as skill building, the reduction of risk behaviors, and physical health (Catalano et al., 2019). At the same time, many schools in low resource regions have to focus their limited resources on basic academic needs and do not have professional training nor professional staffing for extracurricular activities.

Though some of the same issues face schools and youth development programs everywhere, there is a large and growing literature on best practices for youth programs in countries, such as the U.S. that provides practitioners guidelines and tools for self-improvement (see, for example, Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016; Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). The Search Institute, as an example, offers a variety of research-based tools to assess and promote youth development that can be employed to assess developmental assets, some of which have been validated in diverse cultural settings (see, for example,
Scales et al., 2017). Similarly, many U.S. state-level networks offer “Quality Self-Assessment Tools” for afterschool programming (see, for example, Connecticut After School Network, n.d.; New York State Network for Youth Success, n.d.) which tend to be thorough and extensive in ways that are most realistic for use by professional staff with time to devote to program monitoring and evaluation.

Considering these types of self-assessment tools for use in low-resource international contexts requires confronting at least three broad limitations. First, most existing tools are based on programming in high-income countries such as the United States, raising questions about their applicability in diverse cultural and economic contexts. There are some adaptations of best practice criteria for global use, such as the Measuring Positive Youth Development Toolkit supported by the United States Agency for International Development (Hinson et al., 2016), but these tools tend to rely on an extensive battery of items that make them unwieldy in school contexts where the extracurriculum is less professionalized and therefore less funded. This suggests the second limitation of existing tools: they tend to be long and time consuming in ways that are likely to dissuade non-professional practitioners from their use. Relatedly, and as a third significant limitation, many of the existing self-evaluation tools use language and rating systems that are oriented to researchers or program evaluation professionals rather than to community members who often have limited formal training in research, assessment, or evaluation.

Despite the limitations of existing self-assessment tools in settings without professional staffing, locally appropriate self-assessment tools for educators hold promise for use with school extracurricular programs in low-resource international contexts. Self-assessment tools can be a way of sharing best practices and prompting program improvement without requiring costly training and consultation. When adapted to local contexts, such tools also offer an opportunity to consider relationships between local and global best practices for international positive youth development as the two are likely to inform and enrich each other.

This article attempts to take advantage of the promise of self-assessment tools by describing a process of developing one such tool for practitioners working with extracurricular activities at secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro Region of northern Tanzania. The work involved a collaboration between American and Tanzanian scholars, allowing ongoing consideration of how best practices established through youth development research in the United States do and do not apply in Tanzanian schools. The collaboration drew on exploratory qualitative research, including multiple case studies and focus group interviews, oriented by the broad question of what local practitioners themselves consider best practices for youth development programs in their own school contexts. The goal throughout was to establish a process for developing an efficient program quality self-assessment tool integrating local and global best practices while being realistic for use in low-resource contexts. The intention was thus both to provide a useful tool for local use while also contributing to academic understandings of how a self-assessment process can illuminate the value of extracurricular activities in low-resource global contexts.

1. Context and methods
The process employed here involved action research attentive to educational practices and youth development experiences in the context of Kilimanjaro Region secondary schools. As a general approach, the work was guided by appreciative inquiry—a paradigm that “inquires into, identifies, and further develops the best of what is in organizations in order to create a better future” (Coghan et al., 2003, p. 5). The process also drew on the potential for better understandings of cross-cultural youth development through collaborative research relationships (Lansford et al., 2019). In this case, the research team included an American scholar with experience studying youth development in the U.S. and in a variety of contexts in sub-Saharan Africa, a Tanzanian scholar with an educational background in the U.S. along with an academic position in a Tanzanian college of education, and an emerging Tanzanian scholar with recent experience as a local secondary school teacher and administrator.

As specific methodological strategies, our research collaboratively used a multiple case study approach (see, for example, Stake, 2005; Yin, 2017) that relied on surveys and observations to
learn about local perceptions of best practices for extracurricular activities at Kilimanjaro schools. As a second specific methodology building off the case studies, we more directly addressed issues relevant to assessing extracurricular activity quality through the use of focus groups (see, for example, Krueger & Casey, 2014; Vaughn et al., 1996). The focus groups involved asking local educators to relate perceived best practices to items and categories in existing self-assessment tools from youth development activity programs in other parts of the world. The research activities and consent procedures were approved by both the lead author's University Institutional Review Board and by the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH). Because an understanding of the local context was essential to both the research process and the self-assessment tool that was its final product, this section begins with a brief overview of the educational context in Kilimanjaro before describing the methodological steps and themes in more detail.

1.1. Education and activities in Kilimanjaro

While Tanzanian secondary schools are often busy hubs of community, they also experience significant structural challenges and resource constraints. The 2019 United Nations Human Development index, for example, reports an average of only 8 years of expected schooling in Tanzania and ranks the county 159th out of 189 countries in overall development (UNDP, 2019). Yet, a growing youth population and national priorities for expanding secondary-level education have necessitated building on old traditions with new practices. Extracurricular activities at Tanzanian schools are one site for combining the old and the new, holding a regular place in many Tanzanian schools while also needing more attention if they are to meet the needs of contemporary youth (see, for example, Bilinzi, 2017; Japhet, 2010; Lazaro & Anney, 2016).

Historically, the Tanzanian education system has roots in both British colonial influence and the educational philosophy of the first president of an independent Tanzania Julius Nyerere, a teacher, philosopher, and socialist who saw schools as a key to national integration and communal self-reliance (J. Nyerere, 1985). The legacy of the British influence is evident in the use of English as the official language for secondary-level teaching, despite Kiswahili being the primary lingua franca for most Tanzanians, and in an emphasis on high stakes national exams to determine a school’s status and reputation. The British influence also imbued a version of the “games ethic” where activities such as sports and scouting were used in secondary schools to supplement academic instruction with moral education.

The influence of Nyerere’s educational philosophy is evident in a variety of ways, including in the predominance of boarding secondary schools that bring together students from different ethnic groups and regions. In contemporary Tanzania efforts to expand secondary education access have meant proportionally more day schools and fewer boarding schools, yet it is still quite common for students to attend school away from their home region. Schools have thus become sites for constructing shared national and communal identities, a process that often benefits from extracurricular activities that bring students together around shared interests. Nyerere’s philosophy of “education for self-reliance” (J. Nyerere, 1985) has also left a legacy of youth activities ranging from shared farm work to robust student government associations that promote the active participation of youth in community life.

The Kilimanjaro region in particular has a reputation for quality schools and higher standards of living when compared to some regions, leading many Tanzanians in other parts of the country to send students to boarding schools in Kilimanjaro. While the significant expansion of secondary education in recent years has required a lesser proportion of boarding schools, the tradition of schools hosting a wide range of youth activities has endured and been enhanced by the influence of global youth culture. Thus, while secondary schools are judged primarily based on exam results, schools in Kilimanjaro also take pride in organizing activities that facilitate community building, national integration, and that help students cultivate diverse skills and talents.
1.2. Researching best practices and themes

To understand the social organization of activities at secondary schools in Kilimanjaro, our methodology began with exploratory work to learn about local perceptions of relevant best practices and identify exemplar schools for our multiple case study methodology. This asset-based approach assumed that secondary schools in the region would vary widely in the quality of their extracurricular offerings, but that identifying exemplar schools and programs would allow locally appropriate best practices to emerge organically. As a first step toward this end, we undertook brief open-ended surveys with 40 in-service teachers from schools in the region undergoing further training at a local university. These teachers were asked to identify two secondary schools in Kilimanjaro that they considered to have “high quality” programs in sports and two secondary schools they considered to have “high quality” programs in other activity types (such as music, drama, student government, scouting, debate, or other clubs), and to briefly explain their selections. “High quality” was intentionally left undefined to avoid imposing external criteria.

The most mentioned types of sports activities noted by in-service teachers were soccer and netball, with some also mentioning volleyball and basketball. For non-sports activities, the most commonly mentioned were debate clubs (popular for their ability to reinforce English language skills), scouting, student government, music activities, drama activities, environmental clubs, girls empowerment clubs, and science clubs. While most of these activities were organized locally, some were also organized in collaboration with non-governmental organizations. Examples included Roots and Shoots clubs, which received support from the Roots and Shoots international NGO started by Jane Goodall through her work in Tanzanian wildlife reserves and then expanded globally (Johnson & Johnson-Pynn, 2007). The most commonly mentioned best practices within these types of activities included having appropriate facilities and equipment, having clear places in the school timetable, and having supportive teachers, administrators, and students.

The surveys of in-service teachers also helped the research team identify a group of five secondary schools as exemplars for more intensive case studies. These case study schools were selected based on having been mentioned multiple times in the preliminary surveys and based on being broadly representative of best practices for different school types in the region. They included a mix of rural, urban, government, private, single sex, and co-educational secondary schools. While the details from these specific schools are not the focus of this article, each case study involved a series of observations during activity programming, discussions with school administrators, and focus group interviews with activity program leaders.

The multiple case studies illuminated several general themes in the social organization of activities in Kilimanjaro. First, it was clear that for activities to be viable in secondary schools they had to be subsidiary to the school’s academic mission and test preparation. Because of the high stakes exams taken during Form 2, Form 4, and Form 6 school years (approximately equivalent to grades 8, 10, and 12 in a U.S. school system), in several schools students in those years were largely excluded from ongoing activities, such as sports teams and scouting groups in order to reserve extra time for extra exam preparation. Further, activities that had the potential to enhance academic performance, such as debate clubs oriented to improving English language skills and science clubs supplementing classroom activities, were prioritized in school schedules.

As a second theme from the case studies, extracurricular activities at Kilimanjaro region secondary schools tended to focus on intramural (rather than interscholastic) competition and relied heavily on student leadership within the school community. All schools had a formal student government structure, with student “prefects” or “ministers” given significant responsibility for organizing competitions, such as inter-class sports competitions or “talent shows” where students self-organized short musical productions, dramatic performances, poetry recitations, fashion designs, and other related talents. While teachers and community adults had some oversight responsibilities, students were expected to take active leadership roles and extracurricular
activities provided an important site for social bonding and recognizing talents within the school community.

As a third theme from the case studies, schools tended to emphasize specific social values in activity contexts that fit the broader social history of education in Tanzania. Two values came up with particular regularity: self-reliance and discipline. The first president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, was famous for his philosophy of “education for self-reliance” (J. K. Nyerere, 1967) and this emphasis still filtered into school life through activities, such as school farms. These farms often had separate staff, and were used to generate both food and income for school communities, but students were expected to contribute time and labor with the stated intention of developing skills for “self-reliance.” In addition, one of the focal case study schools had a separate “self-reliance club” where students organized activities to improve the school campus and facilities. These types of activities were also regularly discussed in relation to their ability to promote “discipline,” which was the literal translation of a common Swahili word nidhamu referring to a broad character trait related to self-control and orderliness (Semali & Vumilia, 2016). At one of the focal schools, for example, the sports program had separate awards for the “most disciplined” student that was valued equally for awards for playing ability.

1.3. Tool development

The second step of our methodological process was to consider these perceived best practices and themes in relation to quality indicators from existing self-assessment tools for youth development programs. Initially, this consideration was done within the research team. As a collaborative international group, we discussed tools intended for use internationally and tools designed for use in the U.S. to make initial evaluations of relevance to Kilimanjaro. Once the team had identified particularly relevant tools, we organized a day-long focus group workshop with local educators. For the sake of coherence, the research collaborative focused on three existing assessment tools as relevant examples to discuss during this focus group work.

First, as an effort to integrate positive youth development principles for an international audience, the research team referenced the “Positive Youth Development Illustrative Indicators” provided in the Measuring Positive Youth Development Toolkit (Hinson et al., 2016) published in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). While this toolkit identifies a large number of features illustrating positive youth development across four major domains (assets, agency, contribution, and enabling environment) we collapsed the key features into a group of eight indicators that made sense in the local context: skill building (for jobs and further education); youth engagement and contribution; healthy relationships and bonding; belonging and membership; pro-social norms, expectations, and perceptions; integrated services; and safe spaces (both physical and psychological).

Second, as just one example of a program quality self-assessment tool from among many designed by U.S. state-level after-school program networks, the Connecticut After School Network Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool (Connecticut After School Network, n.d.) proved useful. The research team considered a variety of such publicly available tools, including those from New York and California, but found the Connecticut tool particularly well laid out and easy to understand. While other tools identify 10 or 11 quality indicators, the Connecticut tool “is organized around eight essential elements of an effective after school program: relationships—interactions and engagement; family and community partnerships; environment; activities; safety; staffing/professional development; administration/organization; and sustainability and evaluation.”

Third, to include prospective best practices related to individual developmental experiences, the research team considered categories from the Youth Experiences Survey (YES), which was designed based on research with positive youth development program participants and leaders in the U.S. (Hansen & Larson, 2005). One particular advantage of the YES survey is that it includes
both potential positive experiences and potential negative experiences, recognizing that variations in program quality can have detrimental effects (Dworkin, 2007). The major categories of positive experiences identified by the YES include: identity experiences; initiative experiences; emotional regulation; cognitive and academic skills; physical skills; positive relationships; teamwork and social skills, and adult networks and social capital. The major categories of potential negative experiences identified by the YES include: stress, negative influences from peers, social exclusion, negative group dynamics, and inappropriate adult behavior.

The research team also reviewed several other self-assessment tools, including the U.S. National After-School Association self-assessment tool of “Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals” (National Afterschool Association, 2016). While this type of tool is too detailed for expedient use in many low-resource contexts (involving 5 levels and 20–25 self-ratings at each level), the general format is useful for its orientation to practitioners in offering space both for a basic self-rating and for “evidence and notes.” This combination encourages respondents to briefly reflect on and explain their self-rating.

The research collaboratively judged this rating format, with space for both a simple self-rating or grade and also space for brief explanation, as most appropriate to the local context. The format is in fact similar to other self-assessments required of teachers by local school districts in the Kilimanjaro region. Further, the research team agreed that targeting self-assessments of between eight and ten program quality indicators (that could fit on two sides of one sheet of paper) would not be unduly burdensome to practitioners unfamiliar with positive youth development research while still being in line with existing tools. These discussions produced a basic template for a self-assessment tool comprising eight to ten best practices and short spaces for “evidence and notes” explaining how those best practices do (or do not) manifest at a given school.

This template was then presented during the day-long focus group workshop held collaboratively between the three members of the research team and four local educators. The template served as a prompt for a facilitated discussion of local best practices in extracurricular activities. The focus group educators were first asked to individually write down the first “two or three things that come to mind as best practices for quality extracurricular program for Tanzanian secondary schools,” and then to discuss those lists through a whole group discussion. Finally, educators were shown the three existing tools noted above and asked to discuss which topics in each were most and least relevant to Tanzania.

Much of the initial open-ended discussion in this workshop focused on how activities could facilitate academic performance and doing well on exams—further reinforcing the thematic emphasis on intensive academic attention. Participants mentioned, for example, that best practice activities would promote “physical and mental fitness to help with learning” along with “critical thinking and physical strength to do well on exams.” At the same time, the participants also saw the importance of “providing enjoyment and leisure” along with character development in the form of “leadership and cooperation opportunities” for students, “encouraging emotional control” and “time management” along with generally “developing an awareness of how to behave.” The educators also put an emphasis on administrative best practices, including providing some financial resources, providing awards for participants, offering a variety of activity types, having a “proper timetable” for activities, and ensuring opportunities across gender, age, and disability.

After that initial open-ended discussion, the focus group participants were presented with lists of best practices from the three U.S. tools noted above (the USAID Measuring Positive Youth Development Toolkit, the Connecticut After School Network Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool, and the Youth Experiences Survey). In each case, the educators were asked to identify best practices in those lists that seemed most and least relevant to the local context. Here, the educators most consistently emphasized the importance of activities as sites for skill building and for building healthy relationships with peers and mentors. The importance of skill building was
considered important in several ways, with the educators emphasizing the value of activities in promoting both academic skills and non-cognitive traits, such as initiative and social skills.

The importance of safe spaces and an appropriate physical environment also generated discussion because of the perception that most secondary schools in Kilimanjaro had inadequate facilities. The educators emphasized that the schools with better facilities had significant advantages for offering quality extracurricular activities. The general importance of administrative support and organization was also a priority in the discussions, though longer-term evaluation specific to extracurricular activities was not a point of emphasis—in part because that seemed to the educators like an additional burden that would be unrealistic given other administrative demands.

During the focus group workshop, the researchers took the themes from these discussions and integrated them with the themes from the case study research along with the research-based program quality indicators used in other published tools. This then guided the drafting of a 10-item self-assessment tool that the focus group of educators could trial for their own schools. The initial ten items focused on best practices for activities as: inclusive; enhancing academic experiences; promoting physical fitness; promoting mental fitness and character; promoting positive relationships; involving effective planning and leadership; taking advantage of partnerships; providing a safe environment; having a place in the school timetable; and minimizing negative experiences.

After trialing the tool, the educators gave further feedback including suggestions to clarify the brief instructions, to re-order the best practices for more sense of priority, to make the tool more concise, and to re-phrase several of the best practices to better reflect local priorities. As examples, rather than just emphasizing inclusion as an independent best practice, the educators suggested emphasizing both inclusion and appeal to students—noting that because some schools do not put a priority on having students participate in activities, they will not succeed if students themselves are not motivated and engaged. Additionally, the educators suggested that good planning and leadership would include follow-up to make sure students actually participate in activities when they are offered. We also asked the educators to consider various rating scales (including a numerical scale and a checklist system), but they suggested that a conventional letter-grade scale familiar to educators would be most sensible.

With this feedback, the researcher team revised the checklist tool further and finalized an initial 8-item version of the Kilimanjaro Extracurriculars Self Assessment (KESA), the full text of which is included here as an Appendix. The KESA is presented as an example of a way to integrate local and global best practices based on the action research process described here. It is intended to be an evolving document that can be modified in ways that are most useful for program leaders and school communities. The tool prioritizes generating constructive discussions and improved practices among local practitioners rather than research data. As such, the tool is designed for group use by practitioners and includes prompts for group discussion about strengths, weaknesses, and goals for improvement. While aspects of this version of the KESA may be specific to Kilimanjaro, the process for developing the tool can be used elsewhere to produce variations that should be appropriate in other socio-cultural contexts.

2. Discussion
The development of the KESA tool offers a practical way to promote positive youth development in school extracurricular activities in low-resource contexts, while also contributing to academic understandings of how such tools can reveal intersections between local and global best practices in education and youth development. As a practical endeavor, the KESA tool adapts international program quality indicators to one particular low resource international context. The tool itself is presented here such that it could be freely adapted by others trying to bridge research and practice for international positive youth development. By virtue of the intentional effort to make this tool relevant locally, however, it is not necessarily designed to produce generalizable results.
Instead, guided by principles of action research and appreciative inquiry (Coghlan et al., 2003), the tool is designed to inform local practitioners and improve local practices. As such, for researchers in other local contexts, the broader process for tool development may be more relevant than the tool itself.

A fundamental component of that process was to establish collaborative relationships between scholars with knowledge of research on positive youth development (which to this point has been primarily undertaken in the Global North) and scholars with knowledge of local practices in distinct international contexts (Lansford et al., 2019). In this case, the research team included one U.S.-based scholar along with two Tanzanian scholars. As positive youth development research becomes a more international endeavor, however, the constitution of research collaborations may not by themselves need to be international (see, for example, Lauxman et al., 2021; Leman et al., 2017).

The methodological approach then started with multiple case study research that involved identifying relevant themes and exemplars of local best practices for youth development activities through informal surveys, observations, and interviews with local educators, and through follow-up case studies of exemplar schools with activity programs admired in the local educational community. The specific methods for identifying themes and exemplars of best practices may vary in other contexts, but the important principle here is to start with an asset rather than deficit orientation (Mathie & Cunningham, 2005; Ssewamala et al., 2010). Key themes in Kilimanjaro included an emphasis on extracurricular activities that were clearly subordinate to academics, a reliance on intramural competition along with student leadership, and the integration of relevant local values, such as particular Tanzanian version of self-reliance and discipline.

The second methodological step then involved a focus group working with local educators to adapt self-assessment tools from elsewhere using a general template that made sense in Kilimanjaro. In this particular case, the result was an eight-item self-assessment designed to be familiar to local practitioners and to promote discussion about best practices. Again, however, the specific process for adapting a self-assessment tool may vary according to local contexts. The key principle is to ensure that the final tool is a product of collaborative discussions integrating international research and local practice to ensure both validity and usefulness.

The final practical step for the KESA, and any tool developed using a related process, is use in the field. Immediately after drafting the initial full version of the KESA, the coronavirus pandemic severely disrupted secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro region and extracurricular activity planning was largely put on hold. The research team is, however, making the tool available through local educational networks, and initial feedback suggests that practitioners see the tool as a helpful way for their schools to think intentionally about program improvement by integrating best practices in positive youth development into their extracurricular practices.

At a broader academic level of understanding of how such tools can reveal intersections between local and global best practices, the process described in this paper illustrated ways in which many global best practices for positive youth development activity programs are readily adaptable to low-resource contexts such as the Kilimanjaro Region. As examples, an emphasis on enriching activities that develop social and academic skills is popular in both global positive youth development literature (Catalano et al., 2019) and in Kilimanjaro. In Kilimanjaro, the priority on academic skills was accentuated due to the importance of high stakes national exams, but it shared the underlying idea of activities complementing and supplementing academic work. Likewise, as per international research (Lerner et al., 2018), we found a shared emphasis on positive relationships as a key mechanism through which activities have a positive impact on youth. In Kilimanjaro, this emphasis took on particular local meaning in relation to the importance of schools as a space to build broader social cohesion, and the emphasis on intramural rather than interscholastic activities, but it was founded on similar underlying values. Finally, both
international researchers and Kilimanjaro educators see activities as an important space for developing character traits and non-cognitive skills (Lerner et al., 2021). In Kilimanjaro this included a particularly strong emphasis on traits such as discipline and self-control, but the general idea that quality activity programs should contribute to character development seemed broadly shared.

Ultimately, the general argument here is that thinking about education and positive youth development in diverse international contexts requires establishing ways of integrating local and global best practices. The process of developing the KESA offers one example of such integration in a particular low-resource context. The hope is that the tool itself may prove useful to positive youth development practitioners in contexts beyond the Kilimanjaro region, particularly with encouragement to adapt the tool for local use. But the broader intention is for the process of developing the tool to offer ideas for how accumulated bodies of knowledge from positive youth development research internationally can be put into dialogue with practitioners in distinct international contexts to produce culturally relevant and locally useful tools that serve growing populations of youth.

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Appendix: The Kilimanjaro Extracurriculars Self-Assessment

This self-assessment tool is intended to help schools, teachers, and program leaders to self-evaluate their extracurricular offerings, and to generate discussion about how to improve. When done well, extracurricular activities at schools can promote positive youth development, build school unity, enhance student talents, and help improve school academic performance. Activities are also fun, and help students enjoy going to school!

The tool is best used when done collectively with a group of school administrators, teachers, and program leaders. After completing the tool, the group should discuss ways to build on existing strengths (best practices that are rated highly at your school) and improve on existing weaknesses (best practices that are rated lower at your school).

Provide a “Self-Rating” for your school activity program using A, B, C, D, F grading:

A = Excellent—our school extracurricular activities do this best practice very well.

B = Good—our school extracurricular activities do this best practice well, but could improve.

C = Fine—our school extracurricular activities do this, but not as well as we would like.

D = Poor—our school extracurricular activities sometimes do this, but need to do more.

F = Failing—our school extracurricular activities need to do more in this area.

**Best practice 1**: Our school extracurricular activities enhance the academic experience—they help to build skills and identify talents that could be helpful for future jobs and further education.

**Best practice 2**: Our school extracurricular activities promote physical fitness and character—students improve their health while learning skills such as discipline, emotional control, critical thinking, and time management.

**Best practice 3**: Our school extracurricular activities involve positive relationships—programs allow students to cooperate with each other, to build healthy social relationships, and to find mentors.

**Best practice 4**: Our school extracurricular activities are inclusive and appealing—students are interested to participate in at least one activity inclusive of different genders, abilities, and interests.

**Best practice 5**: Our school extracurricular activities involve effective planning and leadership—the activities are in the school timetable, reward good program leaders, and include follow-up to ensure participation.

**Best practice 6**: Our school extracurricular activities take advantage of partnerships—when appropriate, schools collaborate with parents, community organizations, NGOs, Government Agencies, and Universities.

**Best practice 7**: Our school extracurricular activities provide a safe environment—attention is given to providing safe spaces, both physical and psychological, for activities and first aid is available.
Best practice 8: Our school extracurricular activities avoid or minimize negative experiences—the programs are careful to avoid excess stress on students, negative peer influences, negative group dynamics, etc.

To discuss among activity leaders:

• What are the strongest practices at your school, and what goals can you set to build on those in the future?

• What practices need the most improvement, and what goals could you set to make those improvements in the future?
