

Global Patterns & Local Influence: Deciphering Quality in Pre-Primary

Abbie Raikes

ECD measure



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTERSM
COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH



Questions to Address



Describing Environments:

What's it like to be in pre-primary
in various countries?



Universal vs. Local:

How do children's developmental
trajectories vary or look the same in
various parts of the world?



Measuring Early Learning Quality & Outcomes (MELQO)

Initiated in 2014

by UNESCO, UNICEF, Brookings Institution and World Bank

[\[MELQO background reports\]](#)

Purpose

To develop a set of tools to measure early childhood development and quality of learning environments in low-and middle-income countries

SDG 4.2

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education [\[SDG Goals\]](#)



Why was MELQO needed?

Many tools and many similar items, yet little integration

- Search for smallest, most commonly-used set of items

Focus on children aged four to six years, in pre-primary school

Integrate measurement of quality and child development and learning

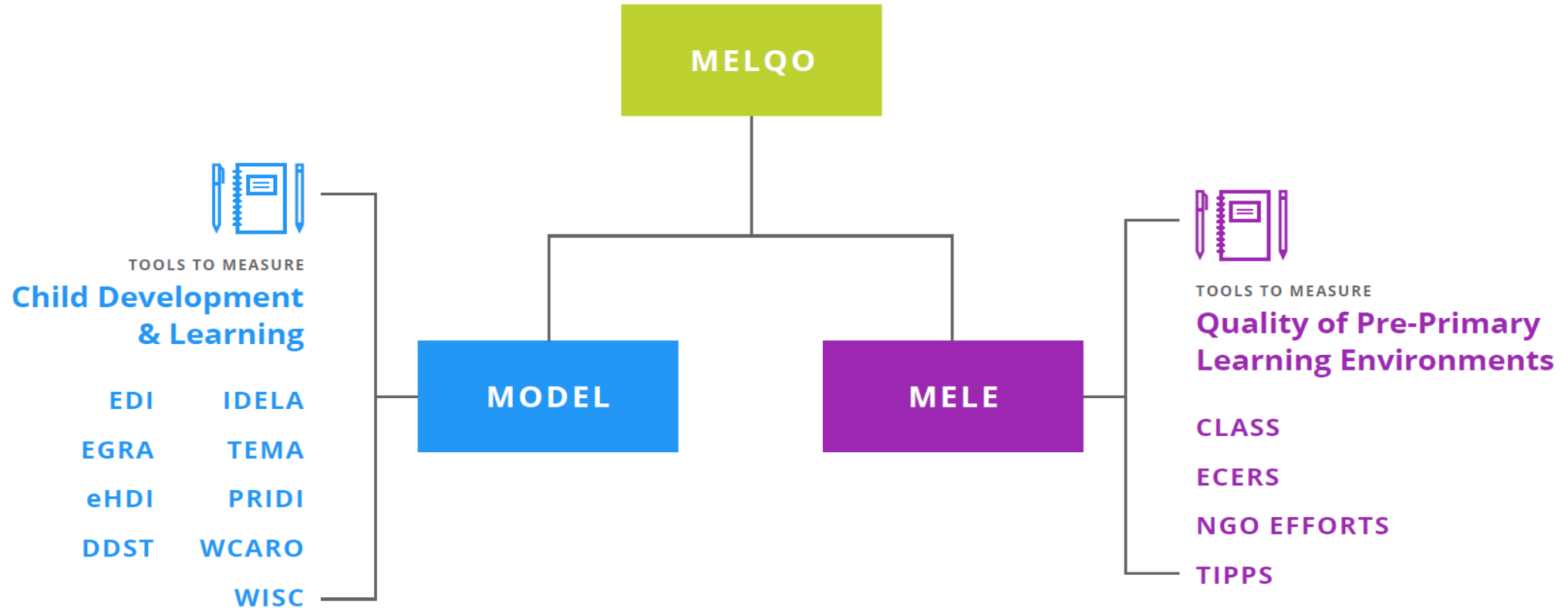


MELQO Goals

- 1 Create two sets of tools – one on **child development and learning outcomes** and one on **quality of settings**– that are conceptually linked
- 2 **Build on existing tools, to create a common set of items** that could be integrated into existing measures and help inform global monitoring, while promoting national-level measurement
- 3 Develop tools and processes for using them that are **feasible, actionable and adaptable** for use at the national level



Tools Used to Inform MELQO Modules



Making Measurement Easier — Options

1

One Measure Used Everywhere: Same items, same administration everywhere, with a small amount of adaptation

3

Common Constructs, with Items that May Vary: May be able to “match” at level of construct, but with different items

2

Common Core of Items: One small set of items, may be part of larger and more culturally-adapted set

4

Item Bank: Lots of items, with little or no commonality from one place to the next

Decision...

For child development and learning, common set with room for national adaptation
(Option 2)

For quality, “compare” at the construct level
(Option 3)

Measuring Early Learning Environments

CONSTRUCTS AND SAMPLE ITEMS FOR MELE

CONSTRUCT	 Play	 Pedagogy	 Interactions	 Environment	 Personnel	 Parent & Community Engagement	 Inclusiveness
DEFINITION	<p>Emphasis of the programme on creating opportunities for all children to explore and engage in free play and group play; the presence of adequate toys and spaces to play.</p>	<p>Approaches that teachers take in teaching children, including individualized and/or group lessons and opportunities for dialogue, and in supporting a successful transition to primary school independent work.</p>	<p>Type and quality of interactions between teachers and children, and between children and their peers.</p>	<p>Physical space and safety of the classroom, including access to clean water and toilets, and adequate space for each child.</p>	<p>Experiences of teachers and directors in training, years of service, compensation, supervision and mentoring.</p>	<p>Extent to which parents and community members are encouraged and able to engage in children's education.</p>	<p>Extent to which the classroom is able to support participation for all children, which may include gender, learning needs, and cultural, ethnic and linguistic accommodations.</p>
SAMPLE ITEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do all children have time for play during the school day? • Do all children get an opportunity to use toys during play? • Do all children have access to sufficient, varied and challenging materials, such as blocks, books and coloured pencils? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an age-appropriate curriculum or set of guidelines been developed outlining competencies and lesson plans? • Do children use objects to learn mathematics; for example, do teachers encourage children to use objects for numerical exploration like sorting, counting and operations? • Do teachers introduce new vocabulary by reading storybooks to children daily? • Are children learning to perform new skills independently? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do teachers discipline and maintain order without being excessively negative? • How often do teachers smile or verbally praise children? • Do teachers patiently coach children who struggle to learn a new concept? • Do teachers encourage children's questions and respond to them with sentences of explanation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there clean drinking water available for the children? Are toilets available for both boys and girls? • Are there safety hazards? • Is indoor and outdoor space sufficient for play? • Is there enough space for all children to sit and room for play? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many years have you been a teacher overall? • Do you receive support from your supervisor, through in-class observations and professional development? • During the last 12 months, how often have you been observed in your classroom teaching as a part of supervision, monitoring or training? • How useful was the feedback you received from supervisors and from peers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do parents have regular meetings with teachers to discuss children's learning and development? • Do community members who are not parents (in the neighbourhood or village) participate in making decisions about the programme? • How often does your pre-primary programme provide group sessions on parenting or home visits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the programme show evidence of encouraging enrolment and participation of all ethnic, linguistic, religious and gender groups? • Are children with disabilities included in the programme? • Does the programme include a focus on mother-tongue instruction?

Globally Relevant or Locally Defined?

Globally Relevant

Storybooks: Essential for later reading

Supportive, positive teacher-child interactions

Opportunities for child engagement

What “positive emotion” looks like

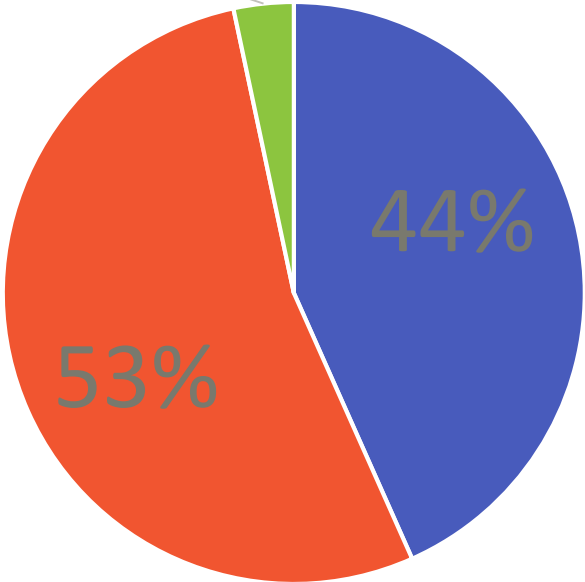
Teachers’ use of classroom groupings

Safety standards

Locally Defined?

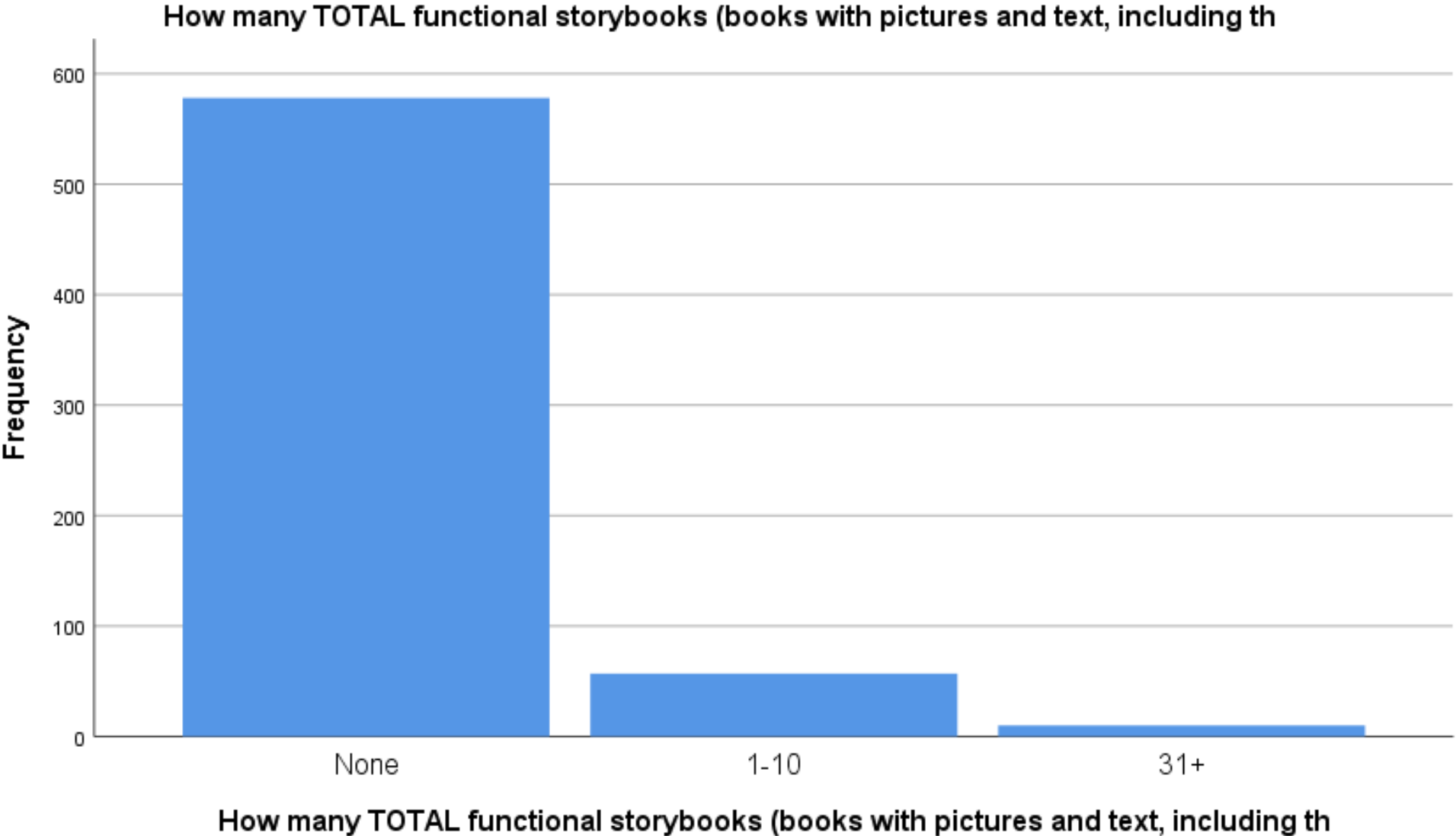
Number of Books Per Classroom

3% Number of Books Per Classroom



- 0
- 1
- 2

Tanzania Storybooks



Reliable Measurement of Child Outcomes

Children's development factored into 5 domains in Tanzania and Zanzibar, but not consistent across countries

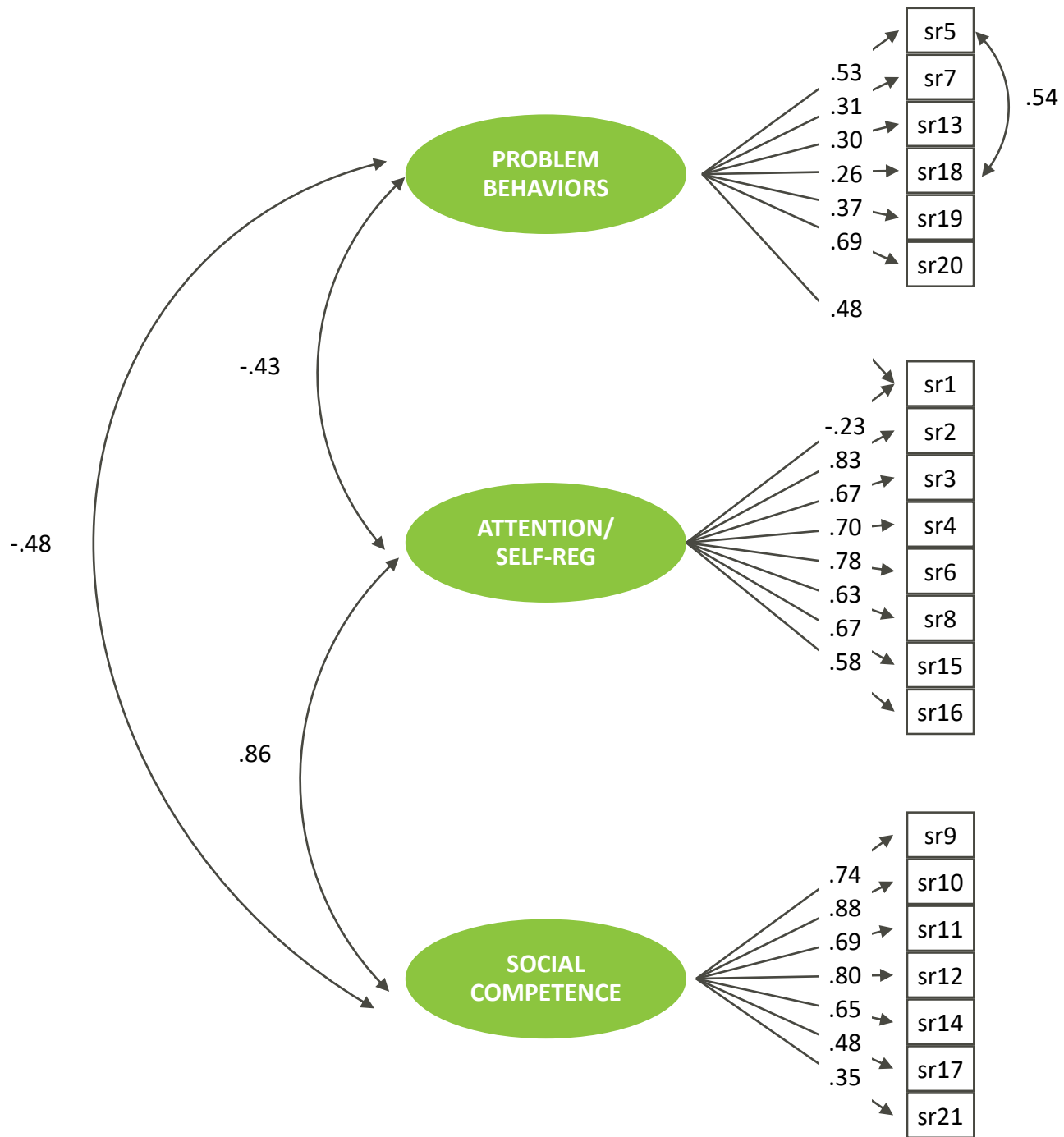
- May depend on level of skill among children and degree of exposure to schooling
- Some evidence that overage children demonstrate distinct learning patterns

Teacher report of children's social/emotional development shows promising results and is related to child outcomes across countries

Table 2

Teacher-Reported Child Social/Emotional and Self-Regulatory Skills Items

Abr	Item
sr1	Is (<i>name</i>) often easily distracted (i.e., how often does his/her concentration wander)?
sr2	When asked to do several things, how often does (<i>name</i>) remember all the instructions?
sr3	How often does (<i>name</i>) plan ahead?
sr4	How often does (<i>name</i>) stop an activity when told to do so?
sr5	How often does (<i>name</i>) rudely intrude on others?
sr6	How often does (<i>name</i>) keep working at something until s/he is finished?
sr7	How often does (<i>name</i>) have difficulties doing things that s/he does not like?
sr8	How often does (<i>name</i>) explore the function of new objects?
sr9	How often does (<i>name</i>) accept responsibility for his/her actions?
sr10	How often does (<i>name</i>) show consideration of other people's feelings?
sr11	Does (<i>name</i>) often get along with other children s/he plays with?
sr12	How often does (<i>name</i>) offer to help someone who seems to need help?
sr13	Does (<i>name</i>) often have difficulty taking turns when playing together with others?
sr14	How often does (<i>name</i>) share with his/her peers?
sr15	Does (<i>name</i>) often adjust easily to transitions? (for example a new teacher or classroom)
sr16	How often does (<i>name</i>) settle down after periods of exciting activity?
sr17	When interacting with others, for example, sharing toys, does (<i>name</i>) show self-control?
sr18	Would you say (<i>name</i>) kicks, bites, or hits other children or adults?
sr19	How often is (<i>name</i>) upset when left by parents/guardians?
sr20	Would you say that (<i>name</i>) is often sad or unhappy?
sr21	How often does (<i>name</i>) describe his or her feelings? For example, "I'm happy..." or "I'm sad..."



Strong Connections Between SED and Learning

Children whose teachers rated them as being more engaged, focused and socially competent also scored higher on direct assessments

Emergence of consistent factor structure across countries

In some countries, teachers' use of punitive and negative strategies in classrooms are associated with less positive SED in children

Conclusions

Some elements likely have developmental significance everywhere:

- Storybook reading is infrequent and may be especially critical for later literacy development

But some aspects are locally defined: Adaptation process is critical

Patterns of development have both common elements (SED) and also vary based on exposure

- Important to consider defining “what is on track” with data before moving too quickly to global measurement

Next Steps

Explore patterns in achievement of basic academic skills across countries

Understand local definitions of quality and focus on identifying what leads to child outcomes in various settings

Build capacity for local adaptation and use of measures

- Links to professional development and monitoring take time and need local nurturing to succeed