

ABSTRACT

Social Competence Development: An Ethnographic Study of How three Primary Schools in Trinidad Contributed to Young Children's Social Competence Development

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This qualitative study investigated how 3 primary schools in a disadvantaged community contributed to social competence development in 5- 7 year old children. It increases knowledge of provisions for children's social development for improving behaviours and academic performance. Conducted over 16 months, this ethnographic case study involved observations, interviews and home visits. Data analysis included coding and theme generation. Two theoretical models developed represent the role of schools and peers in social competence development. Key findings were the classification of children as *Troublemakers*, *Troubled*, *Typical* or *Good* based on social competencies. Both *Troublemakers* and the Socially Competent *Good child* topped the class academically. Boys demonstrated no empathy. Behaviour control strategies were ineffective. Additionally snacks were important in children's friendship exchanges. A Social Competence Checklist and Teachers' Self Assessment Checklist were developed. Implications for changes to educational practices were discussed.

Keywords: Sabeerah Abdul- Majied, Social Competence, Troublemakers, Troubled, Typical and Good Children, Social Competence Checklist, Self Assessment Checklist.