

Federal Government Academy Suleja Digital Academic Project
Nigeria
Reed College
Emmanuel Enemchukwu '16, Nigeria; Zhe Li '16, China

Section I

Prior to the summer implementation, we made revisions and fine-tuned our proposal, aligning with the overarching theme, which is the exploration and application of digital education in Nigeria. Upon completing a thorough investigation, we concluded that in order to improve the school's educational offerings, we not only had to take into account the mindset of the community, but also go beyond implementing a computer laboratory by creating a project that would accommodate familiar and traditional methods of learning. We ultimately designed to construct a Digital Language Laboratory supported by a "Peer-Tutoring Initiative" in Federal Government Academy, Suleja (FGA).

Our decision to embark on the Digital Language Laboratory and the Peer Tutoring Initiative came after a period of dialogue. We take pride in our process of communication, including building an understanding with school personnel, as one of our best practices of the project. This process included talking with FGA staff and students as well as conducting a qualitative survey. We saw a "peer tutoring" program as a critical supportive measure for a school with a relatively large teacher-student ratio.

First we addressed the benefits of peer tutoring followed by recruiting and training the best students in critical academic subjects to become peer tutors. We officially kicked off the program 3 weeks before the end of the school year and changes were made based on feedback. Through this platform, students were able to seek clarification on their schoolwork as well as prepare for their final examinations.

Preparation for the digital language laboratory started on the fifth week of our project. We learned that the need for an audio-visual platform to facilitate language learning had long been identified but budget constraints prohibited improvements. So when we raised the possibility of building a language laboratory for the school, the suggestion received immediate encouragement.

Equipment needed for the lab included computer sets, language software, radio sets, projector and white board, headphones, books, and furniture. Fortunately, we were able to recycle old school computers that were replaced as part of a recent upgrade funded by the government. Computer club students and computer department faculty provided valuable technical support. Eventually, with the help of many, we were able to assemble a laboratory with eleven computer systems alongside other necessary equipment.

During this period, we encountered numerous challenges. The electricity supply went from being erratic to complete outage over issues of payment and backup electric generators failed from excessive use. The school was only able to supply power for no more than four hours everyday and there were competing needs by faculty. A long term solution to the electricity problem came when we procured a fuel efficient generator set and a battery reserve for the computers popularly called Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) for the Digital Language Laboratory.

Collecting language materials was another crucial and challenging component of our project. We started this task early in the process and took two different approaches. We were able to collect a variety of learning materials for French, but for the local languages such as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, there were not many teaching materials available. With no Ethernet the high cost of the wireless Internet also posed financial constraints on the amount of resources we are able to collect.

The final twist came in the form of an unanticipated vacation for the students. Due to the power cut and the paucity of governmental funding needed to run the school, the school administration asked students to vacate one week early. This unexpected change interrupted our schedule and we had to test run the digital language lab with the staff and faculty rather than the students. On the last teachers' assembly of the semester, we presented the language lab to the school faculty and officials. In the presentation, we made use of the projectors and computers in the language lab. We demonstrated the language materials and software, and also improvised a workshop on a more creative way of using technology as a teaching and learning aid. The Principal of the school promised us that with the sustainability apparatus we have put in place they will do their part to see that they Laboratory and the Tutoring Initiative not only continue, but also become ingrained in the school's culture.

We believe that we have been able to reach about 900 people with the FGA Suleja Digital Project. FGA Suleja currently has about 800 students who are benefitting from the project by having access to language resources as well as the opportunity to seek help with their schoolwork. There are also about

Federal Government Academy Suleja Digital Academic Project
Nigeria
Reed College
Emmanuel Enemchukwu '16, Nigeria; Zhe Li '16, China

100 staff and faculty members who have been empowered, either directly through access to better resources to teach their subjects, or indirectly by their renewed consciousness of the efficacy of digital resources in enhancing learning and academics. Looking ahead, the future of our programs is optimistic. In the Peer-Tutoring Initiative, the group of students who worked with us during the project will take charge of the project along with a designated faculty member. As for the Language Lab, a faculty member in the language department is in charge of it. The computer department will also be able to provide maintenance service to the lab. FGA Suleja admits about 150 students annually who will also use these resources, thus we believe that in half a decade, close to 2000 people will stand to benefit from these resources we have put in place.

Section II

We define peace, with regards to the secondary school students, as the existence of social innovation and an infrastructural platform for students to optimize their academic growth potentials in a violence-free environment.

Nigeria has experienced political insurgence of Boko Haram, and more recently, the arrival of the Ebola virus. Either of these instances would prompt one to conclude that Nigeria is a tumultuous land absent of peace. However, when we talked with the students, they expressed not pessimistic resignation but astonishing resilience to the hardship, resolute dedication to address the social and political issues by pursuing higher education. Their optimism confirmed an important belief we always hold: peace is not static; rather, it is a process and environment that enable people to hope and thrive in order to achieve their goals.

Towards this belief, we did the best we can to create a supportive learning environment at Federal Government Academy, Suleja. The Peer-Tutoring Project will foster collaboration among the students and improve their understanding of the academic materials, improving the chances that said students complete their education, and become part of a productive and peaceful workforce. A group of students who worked with us during the project will take charge of the project in the future along with a designated faculty member. For these students, this opportunity will provide them with some invaluable leadership experiences that will make them more prepared to tackle other challenges in their community. As for the Language Lab, we hope it will not only facilitate curiosity, language instruction and learning, but also cultivate cultural awareness and mutual respect, two necessary pillars for peace to thrive.

A shared aspiration of many young people is to affect change in the world around them. However, many are incapacitated by the lack of belief in their own ability or the lack of means to realize this ambition. The Davis Project was a realization of an aspiration of ours, and this opportunity has confirmed our philosophy that with the right vision and the right people to encourage us, the platform to affect the change we want is always realizable.

This project has changed us both. Nigeria, like any other country is built on smaller communities, and peace in the whole is contingent on peace in the parts. We realized that peace becomes more tenable in specific locations, like the school we worked at. However, there is a sensitive balance between the hope and the expectation of the individuals in the communities and the preconceptions of development workers. In the project, we struggled to find the equilibrium between the school's demand and our own resolution. As a result of this experience, we not only gained understanding of the complications of the situations conventionally, and irresponsibly, labeled "poverty" or "corruption," but also the satisfaction found in the field of development.

Personal Statement *"Efforts to promote digital education happened not to be novel in FGA Suleja, there were other programs designed and sanctioned by the government in school across the country. But they rarely took consideration of the nuances and individuality of each school. We became part of the community, and this afforded us some rare insights that made our project more effective."* --Emmanuel Enemchukwu

Federal Government Academy Suleja Digital Academic Project
Nigeria
Reed College
Emmanuel Enemchukwu '16, Nigeria; Zhe Li '16, China

