

BACKGROUND AND VISION

Davis Projects for Peace exists to create a platform for youth who believe in their abilities to be the change they want to see in their worlds. However, imagine if there are groups of youth who do not believe in their ability to bring positive change to themselves and their communities. Imagine if these youth who find they bear the brunt of underdevelopment do not see education as pivotal to their success, so most do not even show up for school regularly and instead get involved in truant activities. This is reality for about a thousand students who attend under-resourced government schools in Ghana. These students have learnt to become helpless pawns rather than agents of positive change. An interview with one of such students revealed the following: "I do not think I have any unique talents and no one is helping me know what I can be."

This was before the implementation of the Butterfly Effect summer program I co-developed in 2014 from a concept I learnt in a social entrepreneurship course at Clark. The program took 36 students who normally engage in truant activities and provided the opportunity for them to discover and explore their talents in journalism, musical theatre, recycled art, and other areas, and apply these talents to collaboratively solve real community problems. At the end of the program they learnt to stop doubting their abilities and found their wings, realizing they did have the power to change their world. One student who told us he did not know he had any ability discovered a passion for inventing and, together with his group, actively decided to solve the problem of poor waste management. He and his group invented interactive dustbins that look like basketball hoops for students to play while learning to be responsible. At the end of the program he had this to say, "What I have learnt about myself since I started Butterfly Effect is that all the ideas in my head are not useless but it can happen when I bring it out...to end with, I want to improve my community and make it clean by creating. This will also encourage people to use their imagination." He had, after the Butterfly Effect program, stopped seeing himself as a helpless pawn and began to enact change. He was now eager to come to school everyday because he had the chance to carry out after school every Friday the initiative he and his group had begun.

This to me is my picture of peace. With the Butterfly Effect program, these students who did not believe in themselves now have the opportunity to explore their interests, find out what apart from academics they are good at, and learn to use these interests to become socially responsible by solving problems they identified themselves. These students learnt to find their identity, not on the streets participating in anti-social activities but in using their talents to transform what to others are obstacles in their communities into creative solutions that improve themselves and their communities. This is my vision for all students who find themselves trapped in the mindset of impossibility and who take to the streets and involve themselves in truant activities.

IMPLEMENTATION

In the summer of 2015, the current Butterfly Effect summer program, which hitherto worked with only 36 students, will be transformed into the Butterfly Effect curriculum and will run throughout the 2015/2016 academic year for the entire Grade 8 class of Anyaa Community School, under the supervision of the Ghana Education Service. This project will serve as a pilot curriculum for the Ghana Education Service of the Ga-South District and will be implemented for the entire Grade 8 class of 200 students. The agreement with the Municipal Director of the Ga-South District of the Ghana Education Service is for me to prove successful results with this class at Anyaa Community School, after which permission would be given to implement the curriculum in Grade 8 classes of at least three other schools in the district in 2016. This would allow the curriculum to impact the lives of over 600 students. Subsequently, a successful result in those three other schools would lead to the curriculum being implemented in all the schools in the district, which would increase the impact to over 2000 students. The curriculum is broken down into three stages:

- **Cocoon stage:** Students go through a series of self-reflection, talent workshops, guest-speaker sessions, and personal reflections to identify which interests or talents they want to pursue at the end of this stage.
- **Wings stage:** After identifying their interests, they set out to develop a sense of social responsibility by going out into their communities to identify problems or opportunities they want to address. They then go through a process of brainstorming how they can use their interests in implementing sustainable initiatives that solve the existing problem or take advantage of the existing opportunity.

- **Flight stage:** The participants go through a process of prototyping their ideas and finally carrying them out to create torrents of change in their communities and in themselves.

Teacher Training

Crucial to the implementation of the curriculum is training teachers to be able to carry out the curriculum. After researching the teaching state in underfunded Ghanaian public schools, it was observed that it is heavily dependent on a rote learning and purely academic approach to teaching. While this may produce good exam results, it does not actively empower students with the sense of self and skills to create their own positive realities. This results in students who are limited mentally and literally by their socio-economic environment. Having the teachers be the ones who implement the curriculum will not only allow them to finally be able to educate and bring out the potential within each student, but also it allows for the sustainability of the curriculum in the school as the school would adopt it as their own.

To train the teachers, we are partnering with a Ghanaian organization named INTED, a partner with Ghana Education Service, which strives to encourage teachers to not just pass on information but to mentor, stimulate, provoke and engage. We will train teachers to understand the nuts and bolts of the curriculum to ensure that they will be able to facilitate it on their own. The training will be the focus of the summer for a couple of reasons:

- The academic year in Ghana has three terms, with the last term running until the third week in July. Hence the Ghana Education Service directed for the implementation of the curriculum to begin in September with students who would just be entering into Grade 8.
- More importantly, it is integral that before the curriculum is implemented we transform the mindsets of the teachers from one in which they insist students just memorize facts to one that focuses on allowing students to discover what they are capable of doing. During last year's summer program, we tested out the teachers' training for just two weeks and found that this was very little time to transform their mindsets—teachers still wanted to tell the students in the program what to do as opposed to providing the platform, through intensive questioning, for them to figure out how to accomplish tasks on their own.

With this in view the **Timeline** would be as follows:

Weeks 1-4: In May, I, along with my partner Primrose Adjepong, a student of St. Andrews University, and the office of the Ghana Education Service, will begin to recruit teachers who want to carry out the curriculum. We will recruit teachers from the Anyaa Community School, as well as other people who have their masters in Education and are willing to dedicate a year to implementing the curriculum in Anyaa Community School.

Weeks 4-8: In June, the partnership with INTED will begin. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, INTED will begin their rigorous training schedule, which sets out to transform the mindsets of the teachers into ones that endeavor to mentor, stimulate, provoke and engage their students. This is a pivotal part of the program because once teachers have transformed their mindsets, they would be just like Ken Robinson says, "Build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, and put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions." Their ability to do this would decrease the number of students who do not show up to school because they feel they do not belong, and increase the number of eager students who are passionate about coming to school to learn how they can utilize the information they are taking in to improve themselves and their communities.

Weeks 9-13: From June 29th- July 17th, we will begin the training in the Butterfly Effect curriculum. Teachers will first participate in this training from the viewpoint of the students they will be coaching. This will enable them to fully understand the impact the curriculum can have by engaging them in discovering their *own* talents and interests and using these to solve smaller-scaled problems, as the students would.

From July 20th-August 14th, the teachers, after placing themselves in the shoes of the students, will then transition into the role of coaches and implement the curriculum with the 36 former students of the Butterfly Effect 2014 summer program. This will allow us to measure whether they have accurately learnt to not "teach at" but instead to stimulate and engage the participants. The former participants who have already gone through the summer program will be able to provide feedback concerning the coaches' teaching style. By the end of these weeks, the teachers will be ready to help students realize their maximum potential when the curriculum is implemented in September.