

The first steps of the EPEP project

Start of project work in Zanzibar 24.11 - 6.12.2024

In November-December 2024, we met with university partners (UOULU, UEF, UDSM and SUZA) on the beautiful island of Zanzibar. We were grateful to see what a wonderful setting the staff of the University of Zanzibar (SUZA), under the leadership of Dean Said Juma, had provided for the project work. During the visit, Thea Swai from the NGO SDA also participated in the work. Miia Hautakangas from the NGO LIKE was also closely involved in the preparations for the visit. Special thanks go to both of them for their expert assistance. The visit had three main objectives: (1.) To build the project stakeholder group and strengthen the trust and common understanding of the actors involved in the project work; (2.) To start designing PE teacher training courses incorporating the SDGs; (3.) To concretely promote SDG 14 (SDG: Life Below Water) through the development of swimming education.

The first objective can be considered to have been achieved well. The trip demonstrated the importance of face-to-face meetings in building trust, rapport and commitment to project work. The EPEP stakeholder group is now together, the project objectives are clearer and we can continue to work towards them with a common understanding.

Regarding the second objective of the visit, the discussions and workshops showed that we share a common understanding of the importance of looking at sustainable development also in the context of sport. While the topic was seen relevant, experiences both in Finland and now in Tanzania show that linking sustainable development to sport and physical activity is not always straightforward. The linking of sustainable development issues to sport should therefore be supported by clear and concrete examples. The first steps of the project also underlined and reinforced the perception that the content of studies designed for Finnish (Western) culture is not suitable as such for the context of the Global South and, more specifically, Tanzania. In the case of content dealing with sexual minorities, for example, the terminology alone needs to be considered in a sensitive way, taking into account the cultural and normative environment.

It is also important to consider relevant documents on the Global South (e.g. Agenda 2063) and relevant studies and publications in Tanzania (the Global South). The themes of the Sustainable Movement course in Finland (e.g. UEF), which was presented in the workshops as an example, were nevertheless seen as relevant in many respects and the treatment of the contents also important in the context of PETE in Tanzania. The starting points for joint project work are fruitful. Regarding the goal (a more sustainable world), the understanding has been shared while the identification and discussion of differences was educational. The open and confidential dialogue provided new insights for the design of the studies. However, in the words of Achille Mbembe, valuing differences and diversity is meaningless unless it also

opens up the big question of our time about sharing and seeking common ground (Mbembe 2013).

For the third objective, we took several concrete dives into the water with students from the University of Zanzibar (SUZA). In addition, we reflected with the students on why swimming skills are relevant regardless of age and gender. Globally, there is a great need for the development of swimming education and thus the promotion of swimming skills. Every year, nearly 400 000 people drown worldwide, more than half of them children and young people. It is therefore encouraging that water safety and swimming have been integrated into the new school curricula in Tanzania, in line with WHO (2014) recommendations. We were able to implement the lessons under ideal conditions in a swimming pool rented from a private school. The joy of learning for the students who participated in the lessons was exhilarating. Apart from the challenge of gaining knowledge in swimming instruction, the conditions in Tanzania are a challenge. The teaching of swimming skills is in danger of being reduced to a theoretical level, as not all schools have suitable beaches or swimming pools.

In the next phase of our project, we intend to start a curriculum process for sustainable development studies (SUZA and UDSM), taking into account the understanding we have generated together. Work will also continue on teacher training in swimming lessons, for example, with an increasing focus on the environmental issue. Another structural fact encouraging further work is that the Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) in Tanzania is changing from a diploma to a bachelor's degree. This is a great opportunity to raise the profile and status of PE and PE teacher education.

Best regards,

Tuoppi and the whole EPEP team.