

Interim report to ASA

Project: "Internet for Township Kids"

Location: Esangweni Senior Secondary School, Kheyelitsha, South Africa

Duration: July 7th – October 5th, 2005

Participants: Tobias Simon, Kadri Aavik

The current report will give an overview of our project status and the activities we have carried out at the Esangweni School since the launch of our project.

Start of the project

During the initial stage of our project, we got acquainted with our working environment. We were introduced to the teachers during a staff meeting and to the students during the weekly school assembly.

Although the plan was to accompany teachers to their classes during the first week of our stay, in order to get more familiar with the teachers and students, we were not able to do so, as we had to attend to more urgent issues right after our arrival at the school. So far, we have not managed to visit many classes, but we are planning to do so during the course of our project.

At the time of our arrival at the school, almost eight months had passed since the stay of the previous ASA participants; therefore, during the course of that time, some changes concerning the computers and activities carried out in the computer lab had occurred. Prior to starting our planned activities at the school, we had to resolve a number of unexpected and urgent issues. On our arrival, we were informed that the school did not have Internet connection, in fact for three months already. Thus, our first task upon our arrival at the school was to restore the Internet connection, which we did. The following are some of the activities we have been engaged in since the start of our project: installing and updating software in the learners' and teachers' computers, setting up the latter; repairing computers; writing tutorials for the learning

groups and uploading them on the school webpage, giving multimedia courses to the students.

We are currently working on setting up a centralized file system so that the students would be able to store their files on the school server. In addition we are installing software which enables to restrict the students installing software in the computers.

Due to our busy schedule at the Esangweni School, there has been no time to meet other organizations in the area yet. However, in terms of intercultural exchange, we have had the opportunity to learn more about the local life in Khayelitsha by communicating with the students and hearing about their lives and experiences. In addition, we have established good relations with some of the staff members, who have invited us to visit their homes and welcomed us to their community. We appreciate these experiences very much and hope to learn more about the local culture and people during our stay.

Multimedia courses for the students

Our main activities in the school are concentrated on giving multimedia courses to the students. Three learning groups were started last year by previous ASA participants: the newsletter group, the webpage group and the photography group. Upon our arrival to the school, we learned that the activities of these groups had been discontinued. Thus, one of our first tasks was to assemble the groups again and schedule weekly meetings with them. In addition to the three existing groups, we formed a new one – the filming group. The students attending the groups are mostly the same who took part last year; however, we have invited new members to the groups and as a result, have managed to increase the size of most groups.

Also, we are engaged in training the teachers of the school and assisting them in the usage of computers.

Due to our numerous activities in the school, we do not manage to meet each group twice a week, but had to reduce our meetings to one per week. Each weekly meeting lasts approximately 2 hours.

A brief overview of the activities of each group is given in the following sections.

Newsletter group

During our first meeting with the group, we learned that the activities of the group continued a few months after the departure of last year's ASA participants. In the course of that time, two issues of the newsletter had been published. Our first task was to reassemble the group and continue their activities, with the aim to continue publishing newsletters.

Filming group

This new group has proved to be quite popular among the learners. During our first meeting we decided upon the topic of the movie we are going to make. The students chose the topic "School life". The group is usually meeting once a week, occasionally more times, in order to shoot video clips. As for the equipment, in addition to the school camcorder, we are also using a personal video camera and tripod. So far, we have taught the students some basic principles of movie making and showed them how to use the camera. We have also managed to film the first clips of the final movie and are continuing to do so. The plan is also to show the students how to capture and edit movies, so that they will be able to continue the activities after our departure.

Webpage group

This group seems to be the most popular this year. The members from last year continued in the group and in addition, we have several new members who did not have any previous experience in creating web pages. Therefore, we split the students into two groups – beginners and advanced. Both groups are meeting once a week. The students are highly motivated in learning new skills and getting more knowledge and therefore we enjoy very much working with them.

Photography group

Due to the fact that the digital camera of the school broke during the first week of our stay, we have not managed to proceed as we expected with the photography group. It seems that so far the students have not received enough theoretical background for taking photos. Therefore, our first task was to teach the learners some basic principles of (digital) photography. Since the school camera is still broken, we are using a personal camera in order to continue our work with the group.

Teacher training

We are meeting with the teachers once a week. So far we have been training them to use a CD aimed at instructing educators about new learning methods. We hope to continue this training and in addition, teach them general computer skills. For teachers who are more advanced in using computers, we are planning to teach using software enabling them to create their own multimedia learning applications.

Summary

As far as the learning groups are concerned, it seems that the students have so far had more practice in the usage of multimedia, lacking the theoretical background. Therefore, besides teaching them practical skills, our aim is also to provide them with some basic theoretical principles which they could then apply in practice.

At the time of writing the current report, our project at the Esangweni School is proceeding well. We feel that the teachers and students have warmly welcomed us to the school. The students in the groups are very motivated to learn new skills. Also, we have found the intercultural exchange very enriching and our experiences so far have been very positive. Currently we are considering extending our project for one more month.

August 16th, 2005

Cape Town