

TPP Playgrounds Curriculum Development Project Summary

by Bethany Wilinski

Given the success and popularity of educational playgrounds constructed in Milola in 2015, the education team decided to capitalize on teachers' and students' enthusiasm for the playgrounds by developing curriculum modules designed to promote the use of playgrounds and sports fields as sites of learning. This project is well-aligned with the Tanzanian government's priorities for education, which includes the use of learner-centered and participatory methods.

From April to June 2016, a team of seven Ph.D. students from Michigan State University's College of Education developed curriculum modules in English, Math, and Science for grades one through four. Students worked in teams, with content area specialists paired with students from the department of kinesiology. Working under the supervision of Dr. Wilinski (MSU) and Dr. Machumu (DUCE), each team developed three modules for their subject area. Each module consists of a sequence of three lessons, focused on a single topic. Together, the students also produced several supplementary materials to support teachers in the implementation of the modules. These include: "Suggestions for Participatory Classroom Strategies," "Suggestions for Managing the Class," "Suggestions for Formative Assessments," and an explanation of motor development in young children.

The group met twice over the course of the curriculum development period, once with Dr. Wilinski and Dr. Mwitwa (DUCE) to learn more about the context of teaching and learning in Tanzania and to discuss expectations for the curriculum development work. The students then reviewed current national syllabi in their subject area as well as photographs and blueprints of the playgrounds. After choosing topics from the syllabus that lent themselves well to learning through play, they developed lesson plans that incorporate the playgrounds. The modules align directly with the Tanzanian national syllabi because teachers are expected to adhere strictly to the syllabus. In addition to a follow-up meeting, students periodically sent drafts of their curriculum modules to Dr. Machumu, who provided feedback on the content and cultural relevance. All nine modules, consisting of a total of 27 lesson plans, were completed by June 30, 2016.

From July to August, Dr. Machumu translated Math and Science curriculum modules into Swahili. In December he will conduct a professional development workshop with teachers to introduce them to the modules and the concept of learning through play using playgrounds and sport. The workshop will be experiential, with a focus on teachers engaging in the activities that they may carry out with their students. The team hopes that teachers will not only utilize the modules, but that they will spark teachers' own creativity and become a jumping off point for teachers' development of their own play-based lesson plans. In addition to the December workshop, we tentatively plan to conduct a follow-up workshop in June that provides teachers with the opportunity to work together to develop their own curriculum modules.

For more information about the curriculum development process, please see:

<http://tppcurric.weebly.com/>