

FROM CLASSROOM TO COMMUNITY: AN INTERN'S EXPERIENCE TEACHING AT KWETO BILINGUAL SCHOOL



Joslyn Knaap (intern) pictured outside Kweto Bilingual School

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reflects on my experience with Remove Obstacles to Social Awareness (ROSA), teaching at the Kweto Bilingual School in Nungwi, Zanzibar throughout August 2026. At Kweto, I mainly taught English and Digital Literacy skills to students aged 11-16, working within a teaching culture that was markedly different to the British schooling that I experienced. I built close relationships with both the students and the teachers and focussed on ensuring that the delivery of all lessons was interactive and engaging, culminating with the students creating a final presentation, using Microsoft PowerPoint, that was delivered by the students themselves on the final day of my placement. Beyond the classroom, I used my free time to explore the island. From local beaches to nature reserves and boat trips, I took every opportunity to explore such a beautiful location, deepening my cultural understanding of Zanzibar outside of the classroom. This report sets out my experiences in detail, along with the challenges I encountered and the lessons I have taken from this placement, both as an educator and a visitor to a country very different from my own.

INTRODUCTION

I recently graduated from the University of Exeter with a First Class degree in International Relations and am now pursuing an MSc in Security and Data Science at the same university. While I am evidently not on a traditional teaching path, I wanted to spend my summer break doing something purposeful, and sharing my passion for technology through teaching felt like a natural fit. When choosing which organisation to work with, and where to go to it was extremely

important to me not to exacerbate existing issues in the communities I hoped to support as throughout my undergraduate degree, I became acutely aware of the "white saviour complex" often associated with "voluntourism". As a result, I was highly selective in choosing an organisation to work with, researching extensively to find one whose values aligned with my own. ROSA stood out as an organisation that shared these concerns, and their team were extremely supportive throughout the entire process, from initial planning through to my placement at Kweto Bilingual School, located on the northern coast of Zanzibar, Tanzania.

Through this placement I hoped to give students an opportunity to develop their digital skills and increase their confidence in handling technology safely, both in educational and personal contexts. I also wanted to instil lasting, positive change within the school by working collaboratively with the teachers to develop their technological knowledge alongside the students. Personally, I also wanted to develop my own confidence in independently teaching a small cohort, while fully immersing myself in Zanzibar culture. I believe my experience fulfilled and surpassed these expectations, offering me invaluable growth as well as a genuine lasting impact on the school community. The reflections that follow explore both the successes and challenges that shaped this journey.

MY EXPERIENCE

This report is structured around the key relationships and experiences that shaped my time in Zanzibar: my host family- who supported my day-to-day life and integration into the community; Kweto Bilingual School- where I explore the role of the teachers, students, and the English and Digital Literacy curriculums I delivered; and my free time, which allowed me to explore and engage with Zanzibar culture more broadly. This structure best reflects the holistic nature of the internship, recognising that meaningful impact and learning came not only from formal teaching, but also from the relationships and cultural immersion surrounding it.

HOST FAMILY

Over the course of my internship, I had the pleasure of living with a host family who welcomed me into their home and supported my integration into both the school and the wider community. This family was made up of Careen-who, alongside being a pupil in Standard 7, is also the Head Girl of Kweto Bilingual School- her mother, Teckla, and their housekeeper (*Dada*), Fatuma. From my arrival in Nungwi, Zanzibar, to my departure for the airport at the end of the placement, the family were extremely hospitable. They provided my accommodation, which included my own bedroom and bathroom that was often cleaned by Fatuma, a kitchen and living space, and a secure garden. Fatuma



Joslyn and Careen on Kendwa beach

also cooked for me three times a day, treating me as though I were a member of the family, something I remain extremely grateful for. This was not only a great convenience but also immersed me further into local culture, introducing me to new seafoods, fruits, and dishes that I would never have known to try had my living arrangement been different. This spirit of inclusion characterised my entire month in Zanzibar, as the family helped organise day trips and excursions around the island (this is discussed further in the 'Free Time' section.)

Throughout my time on the island, I became especially close with Careen, who became one of the highlights of the entire experience. She was immensely supportive of my integration into the school, helping me navigate any cultural differences that were not immediately obvious, introducing me to the teachers, and often stepping in as a translator when her fellow students did not understand my instructions. Every day we walked to school together, ate together, and played together. She showed me all around Nungwi, from local food markets- where we would often buy ingredients to cook in the evenings- to the beautiful surrounding beaches of Nungwi and Kendwa. Overall, my bond with Careen ultimately became one of the most rewarding aspects of the entire placement.

The house itself was situated in the heart of Nungwi, around a fifteen-minute walk to the beach



The sunset on the beaches of Nungwi

and a ten-minute walk to Kweto Bilingual School, making my daily commute simple and helping me quickly familiarise myself with the local area. Set just off a small road connecting to Nungwi's main road, the house is in a prime location for any taxis or motorbikes (*Bodabodas*) for when I ventured further afield. The property itself was extremely secure with a locked gate and a security dog meaning I always felt safe. The one real challenge was the electricity blackouts, which occurred most days, typically in the

evenings. This is an island-wide issue affecting all residences, not specific to the family's home. That said, the impact would have been less noticeable in a hotel, where back-up generators are standard. Even so, the benefits of staying with a host family far outweighed these minor electrical inconveniences, and the blackouts quickly became something I simply adjusted to.

KWETO BILINGUAL SCHOOL

Kweto Bilingual School is a private, primary school situated in Nungwi, Zanzibar. It holds classes from Standard 1 to Standard 7, with approximately 20 students in each class. Due to difficulties in the accessibility of education in Zanzibar, and Tanzania more broadly, the classes are not defined by ages (as is the case in most Western schools) and is instead categorised purely by academic ability. Hence, the classes have varying age groups, with Standard 7 itself having students from age 12-16. All teachers follow the national curriculum closely to prepare the students in Standard 7 for their national examinations, which take place in October, and ultimately prepares them for the continuation of their education at secondary school.

TEACHERS

The teaching structure at Kweto Bilingual School varies by year group: younger students are taught by a single class teacher across all subjects, while older students transition to subject-specific teachers as they progress through the school. This mirrors the shift seen in many education systems and thus was very familiar to me.

I was fortunate to work closely with several members of staff throughout my placement. Haji, in particular, was enormously helpful, both in a professional and personal capacity. Alongside his teaching responsibilities, Haji also ran adult English classes in the evenings at the school, reflecting the wider community role that Kweto plays beyond educating its pupils. I assisted with these classes a couple of times per week, mostly assisting with pronunciation and correcting grammar. Haji created his own syllabus using exercises and information from the British Council, which gave his lessons a different, and more positive, impact to that taught in the main school. Moreover, he was extremely supportive of my role within the school, regularly checking in on my English classes and Digital Literacy classes to ensure everything was running smoothly. Haji also looked after me personally during my placement, helping to organise day trips and fixing my mobile phone when it stopped working.

Jala, the acting Head Teacher, was similarly supportive and generally cooperative when it came to introducing new technology into the classroom, although this occasionally required some negotiation. However, once we overcame issues, such as clarifying that the students' laptops and tablets should remain accessible to them rather than being taken home by teachers and troubleshooting some ongoing issues with the school's projector, Jala was instrumental in his support of the project. Similarly to Haji, Jala was extremely hospitable, making sure I always had food at break times and that I got home safe.

I also worked alongside the English and Maths teachers, with whom I built a good personal rapport, though I found their approach to lesson delivery to be a large departure from Western methods I am used to, often relying heavily on repetition from the textbook rather than more varied or interactive teaching methods. This was reflective of a broader difference I observed in the teaching culture at Kweto compared to schools in England: formal lesson planning appeared to be far less structured, with teachers instead following their textbooks closely, and mobile phone use in lessons was notably more relaxed than would typically be permitted in the UK. However, despite these differences in approach, what struck me most was the strength of the relationships between teachers and students. Teachers were held in extremely high regard by their pupils, and it was clear they were deeply invested in helping their students succeed, particularly in preparing them for their national examinations.

STUDENTS

I primarily taught students aged 11 to 16, a mixed group of girls and boys spread across the older year groups. Because classes were organised by academic ability rather than age, students of different ages regularly mixed and socialised together, and I was struck by how genuinely close-knit the student body was as a result. Friendships crossed age groups

naturally. It was also common for students to have younger siblings elsewhere in the school, which added another layer of connection between year groups and contributed to the strong sense of community across the school.

On Fridays, students took part in sport, and although these sessions were fairly informal and loosely organised, they gave me a great opportunity to mingle and play with students across all year groups, beyond just the classes I taught. The students would play netball and football in their sport sessions; both of which I took part in. Through these interactions, both in and out of the classroom, I developed genuinely strong relationships with many of the students, particularly the girls in Standard 6 and 7.

Some of my favourite moments, however, came from time spent with the youngest children at the school. Despite not sharing a common language, I found other ways to connect with them, whether through dancing together during break times, drawing pictures side by side, or simply playing games that needed no translation at all. These interactions relied on little more than laughter, gestures, and shared enthusiasm, yet they became some of the most joyful and memorable parts of my entire placement. It was a powerful reminder that connection does not always require words, and that some of the most meaningful moments can come from the simplest of shared experiences.

ENGLISH

As a part of my placement I delivered English classes, with a particular focus on grammar. Early on, I noticed that many students' understanding of English fell short of what I initially expected, a gap I came to attribute to both the teaching methods used and the complexity of the curriculum itself. After speaking with Haji, I learned that formal English grammar instruction does not actually begin until secondary school, meaning many of the students I taught had not yet been given the foundational grammatical knowledge the curriculum seemed to assume. This was compounded by the textbooks themselves, which frequently used advanced, complex language that many students struggled to genuinely understand, even if they could recognise or repeat it.

Interestingly, despite these gaps in comprehension, students' pronunciation was consistently strong, likely aided by phonetic similarities between Swahili and English. Lessons also involved a significant amount of oral repetition, which meant that although grammatical understanding was often limited, students' accents and spoken fluency were noticeably good.

Where possible, I tried to move away from the more rigid, repetition-based approach I had observed and make lessons more interactive, incorporating activities such as gap-fill exercises based on maps and other visual materials. To support long-term retention, I also had students copy out grammar tables into the back of their English books, giving them a reference point to return to beyond my time there. Rather than introducing entirely new material, I largely drew on content already present in their textbooks, but revised and restructured it into more engaging lessons, moving away from the simple copying-out exercises that had previously characterised these classes. I also tailored my approach depending on ability, distinguishing clearly between

the requirements of Standard 6 and Standard 7, to ensure lessons remained appropriately pitched for each group.

THE DIGITAL LITERACY CURRICULUM

Alongside my English teaching, I also designed and delivered a digital literacy curriculum centred around Microsoft PowerPoint. I chose this format for several reasons: beyond building genuinely useful digital skills, the course also offered valuable opportunities to reinforce their English language skills in a more applied, practical context. It also introduced an element of creativity that was otherwise largely absent from their standard curriculum, giving students a rare chance to express themselves outside of the more rigid, textbook-based learning they were used to. Microsoft PowerPoint is also a useful tool in personal endeavours and plays a crucial role in any future corporate



The students of Standard 7 during a digital literacy lesson

employment that the students may pursue. Upon speaking to the teachers, I learnt that most students would not be exposed to Microsoft PowerPoint until they reach university level, which most students will not do, and thus it was a crucial opportunity for the students to have access to this software.

Students worked in groups throughout the course, which presented its own learning curve. Although group textbook-sharing was already common practice at the school, genuine collaborative group work was something the students had comparatively little experience with, and building this skill became an unexpected but valuable secondary objective of the course.

To guide the students, I created a sample PowerPoint for them to model their own work on, which they then adapted and personalised for their own presentations. Throughout the process, I supported them with their written and spoken English, while also teaching basic technical skills such as changing fonts, formatting text, and structuring slides. Many of the students had little to no prior exposure to the laptops and tablets that were used in this curriculum, with basic typing taking a couple of lessons to perform fluently. Students then took their own photographs, which they incorporated directly into their presentations, giving them ownership over both the content and visual style of their final projects.

The course culminated in student presentations on the final day of my placement, where each group presented their PowerPoint to their peers. Beyond the digital and English skills developed throughout the course, this final stage also gave students valuable experience in public speaking and presentation skills, building confidence in front of an audience. In hindsight, it would have been valuable to have some of the teachers present for these final presentations, both to showcase the progress students had made and to demonstrate the kinds of interactive, creative teaching methods that had been introduced throughout the course.

FREE TIME

Outside of teaching, my host family, colleagues at the school, and members of ROSA were all invaluable in recommending things to see and do during my time in Zanzibar. As school finished at around 1pm on weekdays, my afternoons typically followed a relaxed rhythm, spent unwinding at Nungwi Beach, just a short walk from the house. These afternoons offered a welcome contrast to the busier pace of the school day, giving me time to reflect and prepare lessons for the following day. Weekends offered the opportunity to venture further afield and explore more of what Zanzibar had to offer, and the following section provides a chronological weekend-by-weekend breakdown of the activities and excursions I undertook throughout my placement.

WEEKEND 1: STONE TOWN AND NUNGWI

My first weekend was spent exploring Stone Town and familiarising myself with the Nungwi



Fish market in Stone Town

area. Careen kindly showed me around, and we travelled using the local buses (*Dala Dala*), giving me an authentic first experience of local transport. We sampled local foods and visited several markets, offering an early introduction to Zanzibari life beyond the school, as well as a different part of the Island to the area I would spend most of my time. Stone town is a beautiful, cultural town that presents a vast departure to more rural regions of the island. It has a rich history, with many walking tours available to

anyone that wished to understand more about the area, however, as I had Careen with me, a tour guide was unnecessary.

That evening, I attended a ‘full moon party’ at Kendwa Beach Club with Teckla, a popular spot with both tourists and locals alike. This was extremely fun as it gave me an insight into the nightlife in the area, as well as immersing me into the culture of Zanzibar, through Afrobeats music and dancing.

WEEKEND 2: COCOBELLO AND SALAAM TURTLE SANCTUARY

I visited Cocobello Club with Teckla and some of her family and friends in the evening; a great way to socialise and further immerse myself in the culture of the island. The next day I went to the south of Zanzibar, to Salaam, which is on the coast and hosts a turtle sanctuary. The sanctuary care for injured turtles and restore them to health, before releasing them back into the ocean again. Visitors are welcome to feed the turtles and can enjoy a dinner at the adjoining restaurant over a beautiful view of the ocean.



Turtle sanctuary in Salaam

WEEKEND 3: MNEMBA ISLAND

I visited Mnemba island; a small, privately-owned atoll off the north-eastern coast, renowned for its crystal-clear waters and vibrant marine life.



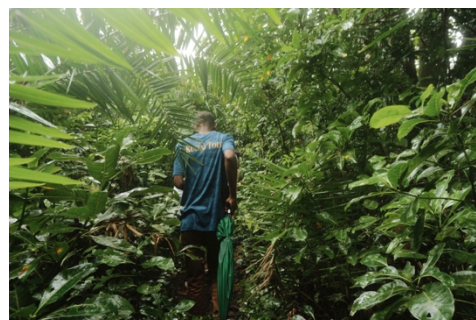
The journey to Mnemba Island

The boat trip was roughly 45 minutes to reach the coast of the island where the boat subsequently anchored and everyone on board enjoyed a delicious fruit platter before going in for a swim. During the excursion, I had the incredible opportunity to snorkel and see the marine life that Zanzibar has to offer, including multi-coloured coral reefs and star fish. The most memorable part of the trip was seeing dolphins swimming freely in their natural habitat—truly a once in a lifetime experience. Surrounded by

turquoise waters, the trip offered a striking contrast to the more everyday rhythms of school and village life and served as a powerful reminder of the natural beauty that Zanzibar has to offer beyond the classroom.

WEEKEND 4: JOZANI FOREST AND NAKUPENDA ISLAND

My final weekend began with a visit to Jozani Forest, Zanzibar's only national park and home to the rare, Red Colobus monkey, found nowhere else in the world. Walking through the forest's vegetation offered a fascinating glimpse into the island's natural biodiversity, with this region of the island providing a striking contrast to the coastal scenery I had grown used to throughout my placement. Me and Careen also visited the spice forest, where local farmers harvest cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon and much more. In the evening, my host family invited me on their boat which sails at sunset off the coast of Nungwi and Kendwa, providing beautiful views of the sunset off the north of the island.



Touring Jozani Forest



Nakupenda Island

The following day, I visited Nakupenda Island (which literally means 'I love you island' in Swahili), a small sandbank surrounded by shallow, turquoise waters, accessible only by boat and fully submerged at high tide. Spending my final Sunday there, relaxing on the sandbank and swimming in the warm waters, felt like a fitting and peaceful way to close out my time in Zanzibar before returning home.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on my time in Zanzibar, I believe this placement not only met but exceeded the expectations. Through my English and Digital Literacy classes at Kweto Bilingual School, I was able to give students genuine, practical skills, from stronger grammatical understanding to their first real exposure to presentation software. Beyond the measurable outcomes of the curriculum, it was the relationships I built with Careen and her family, with staff like Haji and Jala, and with the students themselves that I will carry with me most from this experience.

This placement also taught me a great deal about myself, both as an educator and as an individual navigating an unfamiliar culture. Teaching independently, often adapting lessons on the spot to suit a classroom environment very different from previous experiences, pushed me to develop confidence, patience, and creativity in ways I had not anticipated. Living with my host family and immersing myself fully in daily Zanzibari life, deepened my understanding and appreciation of a culture far removed from my own, in a way that would not have been possible through a more conventional, distanced volunteering experience.

Perhaps most importantly, this placement reinforced the values that led me to choose ROSA in the first place. Rather than arriving with the intention of "fixing" or imposing change, I hope I was able to contribute meaningfully within the existing structures and relationships at Kweto, working alongside teachers and students rather than simply for them. While there is always more that could be done, and challenges remain- from resource limitations to differences in teaching culture- I leave Zanzibar with a genuine sense that this placement made a lasting positive impact, both on the school community and, undoubtedly, on myself.