



Exploring AI Literacy in Tanzanian classrooms: A field study in Dar es Salaam

Before arrival

We first heard about field studies from former students, and quickly decided it was something we wanted to do for our bachelor's thesis. Our supervisor recommended continuing on a previous field study project and so after a successful meeting with the student and organisation, we got started with our own field study application. Via KTH:s Global Development Hub, we also got in contact with two additional supervisors from the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) that agreed to help us with our project. At a KTH Africa event in December, we connected with other (KTH- and exchange-) students, going to and from Tanzania, and decided to create a WhatsApp group together, which later turned out to be very useful. Before departure, we also applied for visas, took necessary vaccinations and booked accommodation for our first two weeks. The general planning for the field study was done during the application process (for the MFS and FS-scholarship) and we waited until arrival for other practical aspects such as contacting schools.

Upon arrival

After landing in Dar es Salaam we got started with practicalities, such as sim-cards, cash withdrawal, and meeting with our supervisor. In the first few days we finalized our questionnaires and reached out to our local supervisors at UDSM. We also visited the municipal office to get permission to visit schools, which turned out to be more difficult than expected. A recommended Bajaji-driver who spoke both English and Swahili helped us significantly during our stay, especially with communication at the Municipality office. In order to get the permit, we also needed to show a signed letter from our supervisors from UDSM, assuring the municipality that we were working with them. Finally, we got our permit and after that, getting in touch and visiting the schools went smoothly.

Financials

Tanzania is generally more affordable than Sweden. However, for areas and activities frequented by tourists, like Zanzibar and safaris, you can expect Swedish-level prices. Our accommodation ended up costing more than planned, likely because we used platforms like AirBnB and HostelWorld. People we met that rented locally paid noticeably less. Due to safety considerations, we primarily used Bolt for transport. A typical 15-minute ride by car cost around 18 SEK. We recommend withdrawing Tanzanian shillings for day-to-day spending and dollars for tourist activities (such as safari). Shillings can easily be withdrawn in Tanzania, but we recommend withdrawing dollars beforehand (e.g. at Forex), since you can't do that once there. Finally, be prepared to carry large amounts of cash - the largest denomination is 10,000 shilling, which is approximately 37 SEK. We financed our field study

through the Minor Field Study (MFS) scholarship and CSN which covered the necessary expenses.

Accommodation

We stayed in several locations during our stay. This was mostly due to uncertainty about where to stay before arrival, which made long-term bookings difficult. While it might have been more convenient to stay in one same place, it was also enjoyable to experience different parts of the city during our trip. We used both hostels and Airbnb, and while standard varied, both options worked well, and we always felt safe.

Project

Our project focused on assessing teachers' AI literacy and evaluating "Twiga", an AI chatbot developed by another KTH student. We met with local teachers and used both surveys, usability testing, and interviews to answer our research questions. The best part of our project meeting the teachers and working on a topic that felt interesting and relevant. Our project was relatively independent and resulted in less interaction with our local supervisors compared to other students.



Country

We had a great time in Tanzania, a country known for its beautiful landscapes and animals, as well as warm, welcoming people. One of the things we especially appreciated was their strong sense of community - people always took the time to talk to, help, and look out for each other, even strangers. Tanzanians take great pride in their country being peaceful and inclusive. We followed local customs as well as recommendations from the Swedish embassy and had few negative experiences.

The country is influenced by several cultures. The Swahili culture, which is mostly found on the coast of East Africa, is a blend of African (Bantu) culture with influences from Arab, Persian, Indian and European elements. We came to appreciate the phrase "Pole Pole", which means to take it easy or slowly which captured the relaxed pace of life compared to Sweden. While it could be frustrating at times, like when waiting for service, it was also refreshing and helped us to stay present and stress less. We interacted with plenty of locals and while English is used in formal settings, Swahili is the main language spoken daily, so we highly recommend learning at least a few Swahili phrases. For example, saying "Habari?" and "Asante!" is a good way to connect and show respect.

We were in Dar es Salaam from the beginning of February until the beginning of April. The climate is hot and very humid, and at the end of our stay the rain period started which caused some floodings in the city. Ramadan also took place during our trip, which we mainly noticed in some restaurants opening hours and by the festivities going on in the city after dark. During Ramadan it is especially important to respect the religious and cultural traditions of covering your shoulders and knees in public, and we were also advised to avoid eating and drinking in public in order to show consideration to the many people fasting.



Leisure and social activities

While working, we visited many local cafes and restaurants. Some favourites include The Ridge, Wildflower Café, Woodberry Café, Addis in Dar and Cape Town Fish Market. Slipway offers great restaurants, cafes and shops next to the water, and is also where the boat to Bongoyo Island and Mbudya island departs. Several hotels also offer pool access for a fee; we visited the Golden Tulip a few times during our stay, which offers a big pool with views over the city skyline.

Every Wednesday there is the Jumatano Groove at Alliance Francais, featuring music from across Africa. The atmosphere was always nice and it is a good place to meet new people. Other events that Alliance Francais offers included fashion shows, language learning courses and dance classes. Some hostels also organize social activities, for example city tours, markets and concerts. We also visited the Swedish Embassy to learn about SIDA's work and attended a KTH Africa event, where we met staff, alumni and partners. During our time in Dar we also hanged out with some KTH-students, UDSM-students and other international students.

We also travelled to Zanzibar and went on a short safari in Mikumi National Park. After the field study, we took a short flight to Nairobi and were there for a few days which also was a great experience.



Sustainability

It is very difficult to get to Tanzania in other ways than by airplane. While inside the country, it's possible to take the train to a few destinations (we took the train to Mikumi) and while it's possible to walk or take the bus to places inside the city, we mainly travelled by car. Waste management infrastructure is limited, which was a stark contrast to what we are used to in Sweden. Our project aligned with several UN Sustainable Development Goals:

4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.

10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.

17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development



Other recommendations and observations

We took several safety precautions, such as avoiding walking outside when it was dark, not displaying valuables, and being cautious with what areas to visit. Traffic was perhaps the biggest concern since many cars didn't have seatbelts and road conditions sometimes were chaotic. Internet access can be unreliable. It's a good idea to download or print important documents.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us through KTH e-mail or social media.