

# Faculty Reflection: Mozambique

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It was a cold February afternoon when we began our African knowledge investment journey to Pemba, a small port city in the northern-most province of Mozambique. We were accompanied by Seneca International project manager Quinn de Vries. Our purpose was to share knowledge with 24 delegates involved in education initiatives across Mozambique. This project was the brainchild of Jos Nolle, Dean of Seneca International.

We finally arrived in Pemba after an 18-hour flight, across three continents and a 7-hour time difference.

## Why Mozambique?

Mozambique has had one of the fastest expanding economies in the world – the most recent driver of growth was the discovery of natural resources. Interest in the natural resources sector has propelled growth in infrastructure, transportation, construction, and financial services.

However, while access to education has improved, overall levels of educational attainment remain low – particularly for girls. Consequently, youth unemployment and general underemployment continues to be a reality for many Mozambicans.

Seneca International was asked to lead the **Skills Training for Employment in Mozambique (STEM)** project to support institutional leaders and managers in Mozambique to develop sound governance structures that increase their management capacity and financial sustainability, with a particular focus on facilitating women's access to education and training. In response to a comprehensive lack of managerial skills, the STEM project approached the training in an integrated fashion (action and reflection). We developed a five-day workshop which included



the following building blocks:

- Effective communication skills
- Management methodologies
- Management tools



The participants were not the only people in the room focusing their energies on improving their education. Nancy conducted the entire workshop in Portuguese, and saw it as an opportunity to perfect her own craft. She spent the week tirelessly seeking out and taking advantage of the learning opportunity. She is a masterful educator.

Feedback from the week-long workshop was well received and the evaluations were positive. This unique experience allowed us to reflect on the connection between our work as Canadian educators and the Mozambican classroom.

Our lives were forever changed as a result of this extraordinary opportunity! No words can possibly be adequate to express the depth at which we have been touched. We hope that we are able to translate the lessons learned in Pemba to our classrooms.

For some highlights of our trip, watch [this video of our time in Mozambique](#) (2:24).



### **Our learning**

We learned that teaching and learning can happen anywhere. Not all teaching has to happen in the classroom with students looking at PowerPoint slides. It is important to take a look around our campus and find a suitable location to deliver a particular lesson – and take your students there. The sights and sounds will stimulate learning.

For example, as we prepared to play the 21 Toys empathy game, we were directed to facilitate the activity in the school gymnasium. From our North American lens, we assumed the gymnasium was an indoor facility, similar to what we



have at Seneca. To our pleasant surprise, we were taken to a beautiful outdoor area overlooking the ocean. The venue was perfect – calm and peaceful. The smell of the sea salt inspired us and created a wonderful atmosphere for learning.



Another important lesson was the value of diversity of thought. Our students come to our classroom with a different perspective, history, and experience. It is important to draw on all student experiences to create an inclusive and rich learning environment. For example, while teaching effective communication skills, we quickly realized that meant understanding how to resolve conflict at all levels, including gender-inclusive communication. Students brought a wealth of examples and experiences related to gender and conflict, and applied a unique approach to the problem. As a result, we tweaked several key topics in order to make it relevant and meaningful to participants.

We also learned the value of teaching and learning through storytelling and role-play. We discovered how much the students enjoyed storytelling and acting. This allowed us to use skits to demonstrate key communication concerns, specifically related to gender. The skits allowed us to discuss sensitive topics in a safe environment. What a wonderful way to bring this to our classroom; we can have students learn from each other's experiences using the safe form of storytelling and role playing to deliver a message.



Over the next several weeks, we will process how our experiences in Mozambique will influence our future actions, but we hope that, at the very least, we will remember to appreciate the opportunities that Seneca, particularly Jos Nolle and Maria Sairoglou (Chair, School of Leadership and Human Resources), has given us.

As we sat in the airport lounge waiting for our final flight home, it was hard to wrap our heads around the events of the past seven days. The sights and sounds are quickly becoming less vivid, but the feelings remain. The experience and events will connect us for years to come: the beautiful untouched beaches, the friendly children roaming the schoolyards, and the wonderful hospitality and zest for learning.

This has been such a wonderful experience. We have grown professionally, personally, culturally, and linguistically. We are thankful and honored, and feel joyous.

*adeus Moçambique*





Images and video courtesy of Azhar Laher

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View the [Spring 2017 issue of the Academic Newsletter](#).

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