

# **Developing Ubuntu, Social Justice and Equal Opportunities**

## **The Story of a Partnership Between Nqabakazulu School and Sarum Academy**

The first opportunity to visit South Africa came with a successful application for a Teachers International Professional Development (T.I.P.D.) study trip with 14 other Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers funded by the British Council.

During this visit to South Africa in February 2000 we visited several Schools in the Durban area and spoke with representatives from the education ministry.

The situation that witnessed during the visit to South Africa made a lasting impression on me. Here was a country looking ahead with great optimism after the ravages of apartheid. The impact of apartheid was still so readily apparent. Moving a few hundred metres down the road took me from a high security fenced off detached residence with pleasant gardens to a high-density shanty town where people lived under cardboard and corrugated iron surrounded by mud. Such living conditions were leading to huge and unfair differences in student experience. The stark inequality left me stunned and motivated me to take action to improve matters for the black urban poor.

### Ubuntu

Ubuntu is a zulu word and it carries with it a message of hope. "*Getting the Ubuntu going.*" means generating a sense of community and togetherness, including all members of the community. In zulu culture this is often fuelled by music and dance. Our intention is to develop a greater sense of community

and togetherness in and between our two schools based on our sense of common humanity and friendship.



Figure 2

This picture of a student from Nqabakazulu High School in Kwamashu township in Durban reminds us of the values that drive us in developing and embedding the partnership between our Schools. When we meet these people, students at Nqabakazulu School, and talk to them about their own lives, about their hopes and dreams for the future they are full of ambition, yet they are also well aware that their ambition will not be realised because of the tragic realities of their lives. They are living in communities that are decimated by AIDS and by poverty. Their time and energy is taken by providing enough food for their families to eat. There was something in this picture and other one's like it and in the stories that we have heard that touched our hearts and urged us to act.

### First Exchange Visit

In the first two years information was exchanged between the schools and we managed to put together a bid for funding from the British Council for an exchange visit of a teacher from each School. Our Head of Business, Bob Ainsworth visited South Africa and Thiris Arumugam visited Salisbury. Bob

took with him some money that we had raised as a gift and Nqabakazulu School bought a computer and new chairs.

### Black Dust

Thiris Arumugam's visit spread knowledge about the lives of the students in Kwamashu and boosted our fundraising activities.



Housing of students and their family

Colleagues at Salisbury High School became involved. Mr Bob Wardzinski, a History teacher, discussed the developing partnership with author friends of his. Graham Joyce, a prize winning fantasy fiction author, wrote a book

of short stories called Black Dust. Other professionals contributed the art work, the printing, the publishing etc... In 2005 the book was published in hard and soft back. The hard back sold out quickly and hundreds of copies of the paperback have been sold and are still being sold. The book was launched at a shop in Salisbury and the event was attended by the Mayor of Salisbury. All the proceeds have gone towards paying for students from Nqabakazulu School to continue their education beyond School at University or College.

### Scholarships

Through the Black Dust fund, we have provided scholarships worth £1000 for each of the past five years. These have paid the fees for the first year at

College or University for students chosen by the educators at Nqabakazulu School. This means that we have supported around 40 students to further their education with the intention that they will use their acquired skills to benefit their community.

In addition, after a visit to South Africa in 2005, Aurore Taltavull, the Head of Modern Foreign Languages at Salisbury High School, was so touched by the plight of one particularly talented Nqabakazulu student, Lunga that she worked with her tutor group to raise sufficient funds to pay for him to go to University. I interviewed Lunga on my visit in 2007 and he said: “If I get the opportunity to complete my degree and to work, it will bring (provide) bread at home. My young sisters and brother who are still at School would be able to get educated, so that initiative (the bursary support) is part of building the community. Without me being in the labour force, there wouldn’t be bread at home.”

### Fundraising

Through Assemblies using video footage and by building the partnership in to the curriculum it has been possible to engage many students and staff in fundraising activities as they recognise the opportunity to live out their values of social justice and equal opportunities more fully. Annually, for the past four years we have had a school sponsored swim and sponsored walk. These events raise a considerable amount of funds. Students, staff and parents touched by the plight



of Nqabakazulu students have organised a series of events to raise funds. These have included a celidh, or barn dance, the “S” factor talent show, raffles and a horse riding event. These events have helped to extend the partnership in to the community. There have also been gifts from parents, Governors and others associated with the School. These fundraising efforts have helped Nqabakazulu School maintain their “Feeding Scheme for Hungry Students” and to help students to come and visit us in Salisbury (we funded 5 students to spend 5 days in our school in July 2007). After our visit to South Africa in 2007, during which we visited the AIDs Hospice and Children’s Home in the community of Kwamashu, one of our School Governors who was in our group motivated the local church and Salisbury Rotary Club to raise funds to buy them a vehicle to take the sick to hospital and to take the children to School.

#### Further Exchange Visits

The partnership has been considerably strengthened by the opportunity for visits to take place in both directions. We successfully bid for funding from the British Council for three consecutive years to support the exchanges, but these have mostly been self-funded. So far around 40 staff, students, parents and Governors have visited South Africa and spent a week each time working in Nqabakazulu School as well as enjoying the wonderful sights of the country. Twelve South African students and educators have visited Salisbury High School.



Our students have witnessed the incredible discrepancies between our

educational system and theirs, and have come back to us completely changed and a lot more motivated than before. They realised how lucky we are in this country, as poverty is limited and not even close in comparison with that faced by the students at Nqabakazulu School.

### Curriculum Projects

There has been a tremendous amount of learning as a result of the partnership. It has been a true cultural exchange. Mr Shezi, the Headteacher of Nqabakazulu School said during our visit in 2007:

*“Nqabakazulu has benefited a lot from this partnership. I marvelled when I observed a cultural cross-pollination right here on our school premises. I marvelled when I saw our learners communicating with our guests.”*

We have won grants from the British Council worth £6500 per year for three years to fund exchange visits between our two Schools. These exchanges have and will continue to enrich the lives of our students. In 2007 we worked together on Art, Music and Citizenship education projects to deepen understanding between the students at both Schools. In 2008 The focus was on two curriculum projects:

- A Science project involving building and using solar ovens to cook food
- A Humanities project based around site and settlement

In 2009 the focus has been on fair trade as we have set up a joint business venture with the learners of Nqabakazulu School and the community of Kwamashu township . They make beadwork jewellery which our students are marketing and selling in the UK. The profits are given back directly to the

producers. This is an excellent way for our students to see the benefits of fair trade for all concerned.

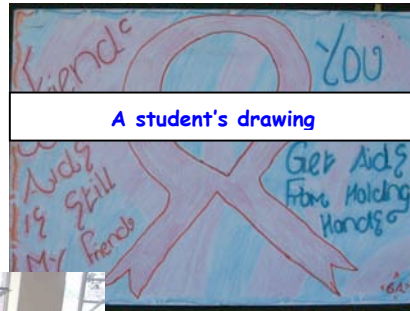
The partnership will have a lasting effect as schemes of work are written in the Schools, which involve students in appreciating other cultures.

Our partnership has led to our School being awarded an International Schools Award and the international dimension is a feature of our School's work as a specialist Arts School. One of our aims as an Arts School is to broaden the cultural base that our students engage with. Our visits to South Africa, together with the South Africans coming over here to work on music, dance and visual arts projects is a fantastic opportunity for developing mutual understanding and enhancing creativity.



A demonstration of Zulu dance

A class working on an Art project



A student's drawing



Bead jewellery making with the mammas

As an example of the enrichment that the exchange visits have brought, here is an extract published in our local newspaper, the Salisbury Journal during the South Africans visit in July 2007:

#### MUSIC, DANCE and DRAMA FROM ACROSS THE WORLD

*It was a night of many artistic styles when the cast of Annie danced with staff, governors, parents and their South African visitors at a cultural evening on 24<sup>th</sup> July. The Black Bear band got things going with some barn dance numbers that got everybody on the floor having a good time. Then it was the South Africans turn to perform. They did so in style. They showed how a*



*traditional zulu couple meet as the girl gets water from the well and then get engaged when the boys father offers 11 cows for the girl. The marriage ceremony is celebrated with much drumming, singing and dancing. This was superbly performed by the talented visitors. The audience sat entranced by the whole spectacle. Next, it was time for some western style tunes with dancing to the High School Musical. Then it was back to the barn dancing with everyone having great fun trying to follow the sequences of steps. Finally there were some songs from Annie, sung with great gusto by the cast. At the end of the evening it was time to say farewell to the South African visitors who had been in Salisbury for the week. It was a fun way to end the visit and almost £70 was raised for the South African School partnership.*

When I spoke with the five South African student visitors before they came they did not know what to expect from Salisbury and they were worried that they would encounter racism and lack of friendliness. I was proud of our students' response during the week. They made the visitors feel welcome, proudly showing them around the School, chatting to them and inviting them in to their lessons.

By the end of the week the visitors were reluctant to leave. Their comments were

*"The children are very friendly and I did not expect that because of our colour."*

*and*

*"The students were friendly towards us. Some went the extra mile and were like brothers and sisters to us."*

It is interesting to hear what the visitors have to say about our School and community as they give a fresh perspective on things. These are some of the things they had to say:

The visitors make these points about our School:

- *Learners are very privileged. They get to do things at School which are really fun like Art and Music. There are lots of opportunities through the subjects that are offered. The facilities are like those of a tertiary college in South Africa with the art rooms and drama studio.*
- *The children are very focussed. They know what they want to do. Some children read books. In my school you don't see children reading books.*
- *There is a lot of talent, runners, musicians...*
- *The things you learn in lessons are at a higher level than we learn.*
- *There are relaxed, very good relationships between the teachers and the children.*
- *Children enjoy their lessons.*
- *The acting and singing of the youngsters was very good.*
- *The School management plan things in great detail.*

This is what they have to say about our community:

- *The UK is much safer than South Africa. You can park your car wherever you want and when you come back it is still there. In our*

*society, when it gets dark you don't walk around. You find guys on corners making crime, smoking drugs and hijacking cars.*

- *It is quiet. There are not as many people as where I come from.*
- *There is a good infrastructure in the UK. All the houses have electricity.*
- *People are better off here. In South Africa many people do not have enough money to feed their families.*
- *The roads are narrow and the drivers are good.*

### Spreading the Partnership

In order to further develop the partnership it has been important to widen participation by involving groups outside the immediate School community, thus the involvement of the local church community and Salisbury Rotary Club in raising funds for the AIDs Hospice and Children's Home. In addition, local Primary Schools have become involved through hosting Assemblies. Two of the Salisbury Primary Schools have linked with Khethamahle Primary School in the township community. Their pupils have been writing letters to each other.

### Final Thoughts

Some facts about our partner school - Nqabakazulu School in Durban

- Over 50% of the children at the School have a parent who has died from HIV/AIDS
- Many of their older students are the main breadwinners for their families and have to earn money for or find ways of feeding their brothers and sisters.

- Some classes had absence rates of 30 - 40%
- At the moment ICT is not taught because there are not enough computers. They have been given some old computers and they are installing Windows software. They plan to teach ICT to the oldest students next year.
- Teenage pregnancy is very common. Pupils who are mothers come in to School on Fridays only and are not allowed to wear School uniform.
- 68 is very old in the community

Having a partnership like this brings many benefits to Sarum Academy. It helps our students to understand the circumstances of young people in a very different culture and social environment to our own. It raises awareness of issues like HIV/AIDS and poverty and the impact they can have on a School and community. It makes our students appreciate the many advantages that Sarum Academy brings them with the fantastic resources and wide range of equipment. A partnership, such as this promotes students social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

All those who have visited South Africa will never forget it. All those who didn't will be constantly reminded of their fortunate position and their responsibilities towards others. I am determined that this partnership goes from strength to strength.