

A DISCUSSION OF A UNIQUE COLLABORATION MODEL  
BETWEEN SCHOOLS

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### **Proverbs 3: 5–6**

**“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.”**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The schools located in many township and rural areas of South Africa struggle to provide a high standard of education because many of the inhabitants of these areas are very poor and there is thus a lack of the funding required for the necessary educational equipment. The Afri Twin project, started by Jayne Martin from the UK, addresses this problem. The project is a collaboration between a British school, a South African town/city school, and a school from a poor township or rural community in South Africa. This article reports on a research project that made use of a qualitative case study approach, to focus on the collaboration between Wellacre Technology College, Ferrum High School, and Siyalungelwa High School as part of the Afri Twin project. The objectives of the research project are to determine the benefits of the Afri Twin project for the schools involved; to investigate the unique interaction between Wellacre, Ferrum, and Siyalungelwa; and to determine the cultural enrichment of learners and the multi-cultural interaction between the three schools. Data was collected through focus group interviews, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires. Data analysis led to the emergence of four major themes with categories and subcategories. The conclusion underlined the cultural tolerance that is established through the Afri Twin project, as well as the importance of financial support for promoting an improved learning environment.

**Keywords:** Afri Twin, township, rural, schools, education.

**Word count:** 215

## **OPSOMMING**

Informele nedersettings- en plattelandse skole in Suid-Afrika sukkel om gehalte onderwys aan leerders te bied, grootliks as gevolg van finansiële probleme. Nodige onderrigtoerusting kan nie aangeskaf word nie, en een van die grootste redes is omrede inwoners in dié gebiede feitlik geen inkomste het nie. Die Afri Twin projek, begin deur Jayne Martin van Groot Brittanje, is 'n samewerkingsooreenkoms tussen 'n Britse skool, 'n Suid-Afrikaanse dorp/stads skool en 'n arm skool in die Suid-Afrikaanse platteland, en spreek hierdie probleem aan. Die navorsingsontwerp is 'n tipiese kwalitatiewe gevallestudie benadering en fokus op die samewerking tussen drie skole, naamlik Ferrum Hoërskool, Siyalungelwa Hoërskool, en Wellacre Technology College as deel van die Afri Twin projek. Hierdie kwalitatiewe navorsingsprojek het drie doelwitte naamlik: om die voordele van die Afri Twin projek vir die Suid-Afrikaanse skole sowel as die Britse skool te bepaal, ondersoek in te stel na die unieke interaksie tussen drie skole, en om die kultuurverryking wat plaasvind tussen die leerders en dan ook die multi-kulturele interaksie tussen die drie skole te bepaal. Data is ingesamel deur fokusgroeponderhoude, in-diepte onderhoude en vraelyste. Data-ontleding het vier hoofemas met subkategorieë na vore gebring. Die resultaat van die studie het die noodsaaklikheid van finansiële hulp benadruk, wat nodig is om 'n goeie akademiese omgewing in skole te skep. Ook is bevind dat die Afri Twin projek kultuur-verdraagsaamheid bevorder.

Sleutel terme: Afri Twin, informele nedersettings, platteland, skole, onderrig.

Woorde: 222



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To whom it may concern,

Permission is hereby granted for the following manuscript:

“A discussion of a unique collaboration model between schools”

to be used by the first author, Werner de Klerk, for purposes of obtaining a Master’s Degree  
in Research Psychology.

Yours faithfully

---

Dr. A. W. Nienaber

Supervisor

## **INTENDED JOURNAL: Africa Education Review**

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**MANUSCRIPT TITLE, AUTHORS, AND ADDRESSES**

**A DISCUSSION OF A UNIQUE COLLABORATION MODEL BETWEEN  
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**KEYWORDS:** Afri Twin, township, rural schools, education.

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## **A DISCUSSION OF A UNIQUE COLLABORATION MODEL BETWEEN SCHOOLS**

Many schools in South Africa, especially those in townships and rural areas, experience problems affecting the academic performance of their learners. Environmental factors, teachers with insufficient skills, a lack of learning material, financial problems, and poor infrastructure all contribute towards underachievement.

According to Masitsa (2004, 213), underachievement is a problem that no educational institution is immune to and that can affect any learner. Potential does not guarantee performance, and a learner with the potential to perform well must still work hard to perform in accordance with that potential. Masitsa (2004, 213) investigated four determinants of underachievement for learners in secondary schools in townships, and found that these determinants have a definite influence on learners' performance. These determinants are the medium of instruction, a lack of textbooks, overcrowded classrooms, and truancy.

Research by Olivier (2006, 53) found that environmental factors have a great influence on a learner's motivation. The following two environmental factors are identified:

- *school set-up*: according to Olivier (2006, 53), learners face challenges, such as disciplinary problems, inappropriate facilities, inadequate security, and a lack of extramural activities; and
- *domestic circumstances*: Patterson (in Olivier 2006, 55) found that unschooled parents, households in poor suburbs, and low income also influence the motivation of learners.

Olivier (2006, 56) also identified that role models play a significant role in a learner's motivation. Learners in Olivier's (2006, 56) study indicated strongly that they copy the behaviour of important figures in their lives, such as teachers, parents, and fellow learners.

Donald, Lazarus, and Lokwana (2002, 205–206) argue that poverty influences all aspects of teaching in schools. Despite the promise of equal learning opportunities for all, many public schools in South African townships still have poor financial support (Ndimande 2006, 143). It is common knowledge that the government is not in a position to finance the South African educational system. Financial contributions towards school funding are certainly the most important source of school financing. Because of social factors, such as unemployed and poor parents, school management now has to find other means to raise funds (Du Plessis Venter 1999, 63–64).

Bush and Hofstede (2003, 133, in Naidoo, 2005, 19), point out that, even though township schools charge small amounts for school fees, they are still able to collect only 50 per cent of their potential school fees because of the high levels of unemployment and the great number of parents who qualify for exemption from school fees. In poor communities, parents cannot afford the cost of sending their children to school (Donald *et al.* 2002, 209). In South Africa, poverty is the single largest reason for children leaving school early (Minnaar 2006, 63). Poverty contributes to limited participation by parents in schools, as well as underachievement of learners (Mbatha 2005, 67). Fund-raising for purchasing academic material and other necessities, such as clothing and food, Ngcobo (2005, 234) finds, can have a positive influence on a school's academic performance.

Msila (2005, 174) reports that, as a result of the decline in the quality of education in township schools, many parents who can afford it send their children to schools in town. Kruger (in Van Deventer & Kruger 2005, 3–4), as quoted by Masitsa (2005b, 205), also emphasises that the most important thing currently is to establish a stable culture of teaching and learning because the majority of schools are characterised by poor teaching and learning conditions.

According to Chisholm and Vally (1996, 13, in Mdletshe 1999, 14), the condition of school buildings and facilities has a significant influence on the climate of learning and teaching at a school. South African rural schools experience many challenges with regard to basic resources, such as water, sanitation, and the safety of buildings (Mbatha 2005, 24). Poor infrastructure is common, with many schools having to cope with damaged school buildings, no bathrooms, no computers, no books, and in some cases no facilities at all, where learners are taught under trees. The realities of life on farms are not likely to change in the near future, and it seems that schools have to play a more important role in supporting learners who live in dire poverty, rather than pushing them out of the school community (Minnaar 2006, 86). A published report on rural education highlights the fact that rural education in South Africa “lags behind educational development in other parts of the country, despite the fact that the vast majority of school-going children in South Africa live in rural areas” (Nelson Mandela Trust 2005, 132, in Ngubane 2005, 4).

Principals of secondary schools in townships increasingly experience managerial problems. Research has shown that a lack of school management skills among school principals may result in managerial problems, which can undermine academic success (Masitsa 2005a, 221).

### **Context**

A project that can possibly alleviate some of these problems, is the Afri Twin project initiated by Jayne Martin in the UK in 2001. A sub-project, the Shongololo Interconnectivity Pilot Project, was started in KwaZulu-Natal in collaboration with the Afri Twin Education Trust (Rosario & Molapo 2005, 158) but never came to be realised. Afri Twin works as follows: schools of comparable type and size in Britain and South Africa are selected, and then 'twinned' with a third school in a rural or township area. At first, the schools become acquainted through the Internet or telephone. Learners and teachers then proceed to study educational topics together. As the relationships between the different schools develop, opportunities will follow, allowing the schools to visit one another, to exchange teaching ideas and experiences, and to gain first-hand experience of the different conditions in which the individual schools are operating.

According to the website of Afri Twin, the goal of the project is to create an understanding of the challenges and achievements that are associated with the education system in less affluent communities (Afri Twin, Sharing Education Together). Afri Twin is recognised as a innovative way through which to develop friendships, to exchange knowledge, to share different cultural aspects and experiences, and to encourage racial tolerance and good citizenship (Afri Twin, Sharing Education Together). There are already seventy-five schools from the UK (primary and secondary schools), seventy-five well-resourced South African schools (primary and secondary schools), and seventy-five developing township and rural schools participating in the Afri Twin project.

The British Afri Twin schools pay 250 pounds per primary school and 350 pounds per secondary school per annum (BBC World Class). The Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire, and

Plymouth Departments of Education are all aware of and supportive of their schools being involved in school linking with South Africa. Furthermore, the British Council (a large charity in the UK that provides finance for teachers to visit their twinned schools each way) has funded a great number of Afri Twin teachers to allow them to visit each other. According to Jayne Martin, the South African Department of Education is aware of Afri Twin, but is not as involved as it should be. The Western Cape Department of Education, however, is most supportive.

Ferrum High School (South Africa; Appendix B, Photo 1), Wellacre Technology College (England), and Siyalungelwa High School (South Africa; Appendix B, Photo 2) are members of a specific group of schools in the Afri Twin project. Ferrum High School is a typical Model C school, with 1004 learners, a staff of twenty-eight permanent teachers, and seventeen governing body positions. Most of the learners come from middle-class homes and double medium instruction takes place (that is Afrikaans and English). Wellacre Technology College is an all-boys technical school with 950 boys between the ages of eleven and sixteen in Manchester. They have a teaching staff of approximately seventy, with an additional fifteen members of support staff. The support staff is mainly made up of teaching assistants, who help individual pupils with specific learning needs. In a 2007 Ofsted inspection by the Department for Education, Wellacre was judged as an outstanding school. The third school, Siyalungelwa High School, is situated in a rural area (Appendix B, Photo 3) and is a very poor school with approximately 366 learners. They have a teaching staff of twelve and an additional two curriculum transformation positions. School fees at Siyalungelwa were always 150 rand per year, but at the beginning of April 2008, a letter from the Department of Education declared them a no-fee school.

Ferrum High School and Wellacre Technology College linked up with each other in 2005. Following a suggestion from Jayne Martin in 2006, a decision was made to establish a three-school link. This was followed by visits to a number of rural schools in the area, and Siyalungelwa High School was identified as the school with the greatest need. Wellacre has the means to raise funds for Siyalungelwa, whilst Ferrum's location enables it to act as intermediary in the allocation of resources from the UK. Through fund-raising they help in the development of Siyalungelwa and improve the school. The next section discusses the way in which fund-raising is done, as well as the advantages of the funds for Siyalungelwa based on the research findings.

The link between Ferrum and Wellacre has now expanded to incorporate the exchange of teaching staff as well. In 2007, a geography teacher exchange took place between Ferrum and Wellacre, whereby both teachers and their wives exchanged places for a five-week period. This included living in each other's houses, driving each other's cars, and doing each other's jobs. The results of this interaction are discussed in the section on the research findings.

The long-term goal for Ferrum High School and Wellacre Technology College is to help make it possible for Siyalungelwa High School to visit Wellacre in the UK. However, funding for this trip is proving to be difficult.

The research question is:

*What influence does this unique collaboration model between schools have on the learners, the schools involved, and the community?*

### **Objective**

This research project has the following objectives:

- 1) to determine the benefits of the Afri Twin project for both the South African schools and the British school;
- 2) to investigate the unique interaction between Ferrum, Siyalungelwa, and Wellacre, and in particular the influence of financial support on these schools; and
- 3) to determine the cultural enrichment of learners and the multi-cultural interaction between the three schools.

### **Research Method**

A qualitative approach was found to be the most appropriate to elicit information from the participants, as it is difficult to investigate attitudes and feelings quantitatively (Walker & Evers 1999, 43). Qualitative researchers collected data in the form of written or spoken language, and analysed the data by identifying and categorising themes, based on the research method followed by Durrheim (2006, 47).

### *Research Design*

The research design for this research project is a case study approach. Merriam (1998, 27) describes the qualitative case study method as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit”. The most important reason for employing case studies, however, is that a case study’s emphasis is on an individual unit, group, or an organisation. A case study is used in order for the researcher to acquire a better understanding of the meanings attached by those within the system. According to Creswell (1998, 61) a case study is an exploration of a “bounded system” or a case (or multiple cases) over time through

detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. In this case, the three schools involved in the Afri Twin project.

### *Participants*

All the participants shared commonality in that they all were, or are involved in the Afri Twin project. In qualitative research, the number of participants is not important (Creswell 2005, 47), but rather their experiences and expected views (Creswell 2005, 43). The following individuals participated in the Afri Twin project:

- *Ferrum High School:* Six girls between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, the principal, the teacher (female) who is the organiser of the project at Ferrum, the deputy principal (male) who went to Wellacre for five weeks in the exchange of teaching staff, and one parent.
- *Wellacre Technology College:* Seven boys between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, two teachers (male and female) who are involved in the organisation of the project at Wellacre, and the teacher and his wife who visited Ferrum and Siyalungelwa for five weeks during 2007.
- *Siyalungelwa High School:* Three boys and five girls between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, the principal (male), the teacher (female) who assists in the library and teaches Geography, and the teacher (female) who assists with the computer centre and reading room for the school and who also teaches Physical Science and Life Science at Siyalungelwa.
- A questionnaire was also sent to Jayne Martin.

*Data collection*

To collect the data, in-depth interviews and focus group interviews were held, and a questionnaire was drawn up.

According to Babbie, Mouton, Voster, and Prozesky (2001, 289), a qualitative interview is an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry. The respondents also contribute in the setting of directions in the process. In interviews, most of the talking is done by the respondent because he or she is the provider of information.

Focus group is a general term given to a research interview conducted with groups. A focus group is typically a group of people who share a similar type of experience (Kelly 2006, 304). The informal group discussion atmosphere of the focus group interview structure is intended to encourage subjects to speak freely and completely about behaviours, attitudes, and opinions they possess (Berg 1995, 68).

In any qualitative research project, a questionnaire forms the means by which a researcher can obtain information, regardless of the technique applied. Questionnaires cannot be seen in isolation (Dlamini 2006, 55). Hague (1994, 11–12, in Dlamini 2006, 55), identifies that the primary role of a questionnaire is to draw accurate information from the respondent. The researcher is trying to obtain information as representative of reality as possible and, therefore, needs to ask the right questions of the right persons.

*Procedure*

- At the end of 2007, the principal of Ferrum High school was contacted about the project and he gave his consent to be interviewed. In 2008, the principals of Wellacre Technology College and Siyalungelwa, as well as Jayne Martin gave their consent.
- In early 2008, during their visit to South Africa, a focus group interview was held with learners from Wellacre (six boys in the focus group and one individual interview with the seventh boy). A questionnaire was given to the visiting principal of the school, which was later completed by two of the staff members involved in the project at Wellacre. A questionnaire was also sent to the Wellacre teacher and his wife who visited Ferrum and Siyalungelwa for five weeks in 2007.
- The Afri Twin project leader at Ferrum was contacted and appointments were made for focus group and individual interviews. Focus groups were held with four Ferrum girls (former Afri Twin participants, Grade 11) and with two new Ferrum girls (Grade 8). Individual in-depth interviews were held with the project organiser at Ferrum, the principal of Ferrum, the teacher who visited Wellacre for five weeks, and one of the local Ferrum parents.
- Whilst at Ferrum, a day visit was arranged with Siyalungelwa, specifically to interview the principal and to investigate the school's functioning. The structural conditions of the classrooms and the experience of the atmosphere amongst the learners were also noted. Another visit was organised later in the year. During this visit, a focus group interview with three boys and five girls, a follow-up interview with the principal, the library teacher, and the teacher who assists with the computer centre was held.
- Ongoing communications were also maintained through e-mail throughout the year with Jayne Martin, Wellacre, and Ferrum.

- The project, as well as what it entails in general, was explained to all the parties present. Voluntary participation was stressed, and assurance was given that a participant could withdraw from the project at any time. They all signed consent forms and the learners' parents signed consent forms on behalf of the learners.

#### *Data analysis*

Data collected in the process of this research project was transcribed into text and is presented in a narrative form. According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Kelly (2006, 322) data analysis involves reading data repeatedly, and engaging in activities of breaking the data down (thematising and categorising), and building it up again in novel ways (elaborating and interpreting). Themes were identified and coded during the theme development process. This entailed marking different sections of the data as being instances of, or relevant to, one or more of the themes (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006, 324).

#### *Issues of trustworthiness*

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is an indication of “methodological soundness and adequacy” (Holloway & Wheeler 2002, 254). Trustworthiness for this research was accomplished by means of prolonged engagement with the participants, comparing the raw data and findings, peer examination, consultation with the participants (member checking), and triangulation (using multiple methods for gathering information). According to De Vos (2002, 341–342), triangulation not only allows the researcher to take multiple measures of the same phenomenon, but also to establish confidence in the research results.

### *Ethical measures*

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus: NWU-0072-08-S1). The essential purpose of research ethics is to protect the welfare of research participants (Wassenaar 2006, 61). Therefore, ethical considerations were taken into account by respecting the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants (Creswell 1994, 162). The different parties were requested to sign consent forms. Informed and voluntary participation was ensured in this way. The participants were informed that their identity would be protected and that they could withdraw from the research project at any time.

### **Research findings**

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of the data collected. Each theme was differentiated in terms of various categories and subcategories. Appropriate verbatim quotations from the transcribed interviews are provided as validation. Some of the participants did not have a very good command of the English language, as is evident in some of the quotations.

### **Theme 1: The collaboration between Wellacre, Ferrum, and Siyalungelwa**

#### **1.1 The link between Wellacre and Ferrum**

Every two years Wellacre and Ferrum select a new group of learners (twelve in a group) to be part of the Afri Twin project. The learners then make contact with their twin through e-mail to build up a friendship. One year, Ferrum will visit Wellacre for three weeks with a teacher, and the next year, Wellacre will come to South Africa to visit Ferrum and Siyalungelwa. The learners selected at Ferrum are usually from Grade 8 and 9, and the learners at Wellacre are

aged between thirteen and sixteen. The learners from both schools have to carry all the costs involved for the trip, themselves. The learners usually do all kinds of fund-raising throughout the year to help with the costs.

## **1.2 The link with Siyalungelwa**

The main objective of Ferrum and Wellacre is to aid Siyalungelwa in developing and improving their school as this teacher comments:

Wellacre has the means to fund-raise for Siyalungelwa, whilst Ferrum's location enables them to act as intermediary in the allocation of resources from the UK. We have raised a significant amount of money to aid in the development of Siyalungelwa and to improve the school.

Each year, needs are determined by the principal and teaching staff of Siyalungelwa High School, and problems at the school are then prioritised and placed on a 'wish list'. The list is handed over to Ferrum High School, who in turn investigates every item on the list. This is partly to determine whether the wishes fall within the South African educational context. If so, they then help Siyalungelwa to meet their needs by using funds raised by Wellacre.

## **1.3 Form of fund-raising to help Siyalungelwa**

A common form of fund-raising at Wellacre is bag-packing at supermarket pay points, where learners pack shoppers' goods and receive tips. Several hours of packing usually raise hundreds of pounds. Another fund-raising method is a 'mufti' day, on which learners pay a small amount of money to wear clothing of their choice for a day, rather than the normal school uniform. At the Summer and Autumn Fairs of the school, funds were boosted from a stall selling goods. Wares sold included some artefacts brought from South Africa by the Afri Twins in 2007. This year (2008), a neighbouring church gave a generous donation to the

school for Siyalungelwa. During the donation ceremony, a presentation took place that informed the congregation about the plight of the learners of Siyalungelwa. A teacher from Ferrum High School with the well-known Northern KwaZulu-Natal Youth Choir, of which he is the conductor, also visited England in 2007 and 2008. During the visit, a number of performances were undertaken to raise money for Afri Twin, with Wellacre providing the venue, and selling the tickets.

#### **1.4 The teacher exchange between Ferrum and Wellacre**

As previously mentioned, both teachers from Ferrum and Wellacre traded places for five weeks during 2007. The Ferrum teacher had four areas which he wanted to investigate: how outcome-based education works in Britain, the use of modern technology in the class environment, the importance of the media centre and research methods in a first-world country, and finally which discipline system is being applied in the school.

During his exchange, the Ferrum teacher was asked to give a non-examination subject at Wellacre and to tell his students about South Africa. Specific reference was made to the Apartheid years, affirmative action, basic way of life in South Africa covering birth to married life, and also the different culture groups residing in South Africa.

The Wellacre teacher, accompanied by his wife, came to teach at Ferrum and his wife became involved at Siyalungelwa, finalising the library and establishing the reading room. At Ferrum, geography lessons were given but no managerial duties were performed. Learners were able to ask questions about the differences between the schools. To quote the Wellacre teacher:

Despite both teachers from Ferrum and I being senior managerial staff at our respective schools, we did not swap any managerial duties. We did, however, both run whole school assemblies during which we were able to describe our home schools. The pupils (learners) were able to ask any question about the differences between the schools. One of the beauties of the exchange was the inevitable interest and questions generated by learners in informal settings of the playground between lessons and at the end of formal lessons.

He also went on to add the following very important comment:

On returning to England, my wife and I have spoken at many events about our exchange. We created several Power Point presentations of the exchange and have used them at school, at church coffee mornings and with colleagues. These have been a valuable tool, enabling people to understand the similarities and the differences between the three schools. In conclusion, I think the exchange was a success in bringing all three schools nearer together. The pupil exchange system of the Afri Twin project is a success and should continue in its present state, to unite the three schools. Further staff exchange should be encouraged, but I would suggest that a timetable commitment should be made in both Ferrum School and Siyalungelwa School for any member of staff going to South Africa in future. My regret was that I was unable to devote more teaching time to Siyalungelwa.

## **Theme 2: Advantages for Wellacre, Ferrum and Siyalungelwa**

With this unique interaction between Wellacre, Ferrum and Siyalungelwa the following advantages were mentioned and identified:

## 2.1 Wellacre Technology College

According to Wellacre, the main advantage of the Afri Twin project is the unique experience it gives to their learners. For the learners to not only have the chance to travel to South Africa (Appendix B, Photo 4), but also to have a truly South African experience by visiting different places, such as Sun City (Appendix B, Photo 5), having a truly wild life experience by visiting the Pilanesberg Game Park, and also going to Cape Town. Some of the favourite parts for the learners are living with their host families, visiting the local townships, and going to a traditional Zulu village, as illustrated in one of the learner's comments:

We experience all kind of like life styles, cultures, such a good experience. None like the English life. Show you a lot more like how the people live.

According to Wellacre, the Afri Twin project also informs their learners, who are not directly involved, of the wider world and issues that exist in another country. This is illustrated in one of the teacher's comments:

There are various assemblies held where information about Ferrum and Siyalungelwa is updated, making all students aware of what we do, particularly relating to raising money for Siyalungelwa and the changes it brings about.

As illustrated by this learner's comments, the learners who visit Ferrum and Siyalungelwa also learn to appreciate what they have:

I think that the people that come here they learn to appreciate what we have; you don't really have ... you take it for granted. You come over here and see that they don't have what we have, like we have free education and free health service and things like that. It just helps you to appreciate and not take everything for granted.

According to all of the interviewees, Afri Twin definitely affects the way they view the world. All of the interviewees say it is a life-changing and a truly wonderful experience, as illustrated by this learner's comment:

I will remember it for the rest of my life as it is a life-changing thing. It is just a really wonderful experience to have and if you ever have the chance, do it.

## **2.2 Ferrum High School**

Ferrum's response corresponds with that of Wellacre, stating that the biggest advantage for the Afri Twin learners was to go overseas with two teachers for three weeks for a third of the normal cost. They also get a chance to experience the English life style by living with their Afri Twin partners, going to school with them, and enjoying the British scenery, as illustrated by this teacher's comment:

An unbelievable cultural enrichment, for a fraction of the cost compared to a private holiday to Britain, the teachers and learners of our school have the opportunity of a lifetime.

Ferrum, however, emphasises that their Afri Twin learners learn to be self-confident, to develop emotional stability, to handle difficult situations, and as a result, become more mature because of their participation in the project. Here is one of the comments from a Ferrum teacher:

One of the parents told me that she had doubts about the possible security risks to her daughter, but sent her on the tour anyway. On their return, she could not believe the difference three weeks had made. A confident, more stable and mature child returned.

According to Ferrum, they also get a chance to learn from each other's cultures and to discover exactly how a Siyalungelwa learner's life really is. Here are some of the comments:

Just to be aware of the different cultures of everyone and to learn about the different cultures.

We all are getting exposure to how one another live and the children learn a lot because of that.

I think it is a great project, you know, it makes the children aware of what's going on in everybody's lives, how one get in touch with the other one, I think it's very good. It makes everybody aware and I appreciate that they have that.

They also appreciate what they have if they look at the life of the underprivileged children at Siyalungelwa. According to the interviewees, it is also a great way to make friends.

### **2.3 Siyalungelwa High School**

Because of financial support, the project has a great influence on Siyalungelwa. With the help from Wellacre and Ferrum, Siyalungelwa built a library room, reading room, computer class, and a science laboratory for Life Sciences and Physical Sciences. Each of these is considered below.

#### *Library room (Appendix B, Photo 6)*

The wife of a British teacher, who exchanged places for five weeks, came to Siyalungelwa and helped them to organise the library room and label all the books. Both Wellacre and Ferrum sponsored books, and Ferrum helped to cover the books. Siyalungelwa is very grateful for the library room as illustrated by the teacher who assists with the library:

You know, two years ago we didn't have library at school at all, we had some books from the Department of Education, but there were no library. Now that we have a library, it is an eye opener for the learners, they get a chance to come in here and do their assignments and everything, even the teachers now have a lot of references for preparing their lessons. So it is a very good thing, learners are taking books and reading and it is helping with their English. So the library is a very good experience for the school.

According to one of the teachers, English levels at the school are very poor, and they hope that the books will help develop their English language skills. The principal and their Afri Twin learners are very grateful for the library room.

#### *Reading room*

In addition to helping paint the inside of the room, Ferrum also sponsored some pillows to sit on, and donated magazine racks. The teacher at Siyalungelwa, who keeps an eye over the reading room, also gave chairs for the reading room. The children may go to the reading room whenever they wish (aside from class hours) to read books and magazines.

#### *Computer room (Appendix B, Photo 7)*

With the financial support of Wellacre, Ferrum could help Siyalungelwa by giving them a computer class with Internet access. Computers have become an integral part of daily life. Schools prepare children for productive lives in society. The 'real world' has embraced computer applications wholeheartedly, therefore, learners need to learn to use those tools in school (Lockard & Abrams 2001, 344). Ferrum installed a new ceiling; fitted new floor tiles; fitted burglar bars to all the windows and the door; undertook restoration work on desks,

decorated the room; donated sixteen computers, computer software, and two printers; and set-up access to the Internet.

The Department of Education provided Siyalungelwa with two curriculum transformation positions, of which one is for Computer Studies (ITC) and Mathematics, and the other is for Physical Science. Learners need “teachers who could show them how to use computers as productivity tools” (Johnson & Bartleson 2001, 41). One of the comments is as follows:

Those who are using the computers, it is a eye opener for them, it is something that they never have seen before, it is something that they just touch a button and gets information so for them it is very good. For us as teachers to, because we are computer illiterate, so we get a chance to do some things on the computer. There is a programme for the teachers attending after school for six weeks to make them computer literate.

There are already two computer literate teachers because of the computer classes, and they now assist learners and other teachers with the computers.

*Science laboratory* (Appendix B, Photos 8, 9 & 10)

This was the latest project, which was completed at the end of September 2008. Ferrum painted the inside of one of the rooms at Siyalungelwa, furnished it, and obtained some chemicals for Physical Science, as well as a cubicle at the back of the class where there is a washbasin and storage cupboards for all the apparatus. The teacher who teaches Life Science and Physical Science comments:

As far as the laboratory goes, I am sure when that gets up and running, I can see the Physics and Life Science people making use of it.

Some of the other advantages for Siyalungelwa are that Ferrum sometimes come with soccer and netball teams and play against Siyalungelwa (Appendix B, Photo 11). When Wellacre visits, the boys also have a game of soccer with Siyalungelwa. Siyalungelwa gets a chance to hear about the English life and interact with learners from overseas. Afri Twin gives the learners of Siyalungelwa more confidence because they feel that they are now getting the same things that schools in town have to offer. When Wellacre comes to visit, they also give Siyalungelwa donations, such as soccer jerseys (Appendix B, Photo 12).

### **Theme 3: Cultural interaction**

The learners and teachers interacting with each other have different life styles and learn much from each other. The absolute difference between city life and a poor rural environment is experienced first-hand. The more affluent learners gain a lot of respect for the learners from Siyalungelwa who walk kilometres to school in all kinds of weather; they have a hunger to learn despite so many obstacles. A Wellacre teacher stresses:

The cultural experience gained in South Africa undoubtedly has an impact on the learners. They are all aware of the different life styles led throughout the country. To enhance this, our Afri Twins visit the townships of Osisweni and Madadeni and later go to a Zulu village where they are given traditional greetings and meet different members of the community.

The language of the learners seems to be an obstacle to communication between Ferrum and Siyalungelwa. The rural Zulu learners are more reserved and take longer to connect, but the Zulu children remain keen to learn from Ferrum and Wellacre learners, and help wherever possible with projects to uplift their school. This is corroborated by this teacher's comments:

There is a very basic interaction, the language barrier is quite a thing (problem), um I think they all are very shy because of the interest since they are poor and I think they don't have context in life you know. I think all of that is a little bit overwhelming for them at the moment. But they do try to assist with the groups that do come; they want to be involved and do try to do things.

For Siyalungelwa, it is an absolute novelty to connect with learners from another country. When Wellacre (Appendix B, Photos 13 & 14) comes to visit, Siyalungelwa asks things, such as what the weather is like and how people in England live. They also like to make comparisons as this teacher from Siyalungelwa comments:

For our kids it is a good thing because they have never been exposed to overseas learners, let alone white learners. So to connect with them and what they have done, and to have them enlighten us about life outside South Africa. We also ask them a lot of questions, they tell us about things like the weather and everything. So it is very good for the school.

#### **Theme 4: Problems**

Both Ferrum and Siyalungelwa wish to establish Siyalungelwa as a Community Centre. This will enable members of the community to have free access to the library and computer room. The library is already available for the community, and the aim is to have adult computer classes. However, this cannot be done, as a tutor is not available after hours. This is emphasised by the headmaster of Siyalungelwa:

The library and computers are not just for the learners, the community also have access. They can come and borrow books and all that. At parent meetings we also show them the importance of Internet and that they can use it; the only shortcoming is

the only time we can have the community is after school hours and then there are no teacher, the teacher has left ... The only time they have is during weekends, so if we have enough money perhaps we could get someone to do that.

The daily schedule does not allow any time for computer lessons. This means special time has to be set aside for learners to attend computer lessons. One way, is to take one class randomly at a time when 'extra mural' activities are scheduled. The added problem of only having sixteen computers and no timetable for computer classes results in some learners not being able to work on the computers at all. As this teacher comments:

There are some concerns about the computers; because there are only sixteen computers and we have a lot of learners. We cannot teach all of the learners and unfortunately some learners leave before they get to experience the computer centre.

However, according to the principal, the teacher that the department provided does try to group all the learners in the school accordingly when it comes to the computers.

Because the computer room only has sixteen computers, whilst the size of classes is on average between twenty-seven and fifty-six learners, the school has to group between three and six learners per computer simultaneously. This is not ideal at all. Each learner works for a few minutes and then has to vacate the seat for the next one in the little group. At the end of the session, each learner is assessed individually.

Some other problems are that the tables for the computers are too low, and there is not enough space on the tables for everything to work comfortably, so it sometimes happens that learners have to work with the keyboards perched on their laps. Despite these obstacles, the

school has a wonderful attitude and is very grateful for the computer room. To quote the principal:

I always tell everyone it is better to have half a loaf of bread than no bread at all.

The long-term goal of Ferrum and Wellacre is to give Siyalungelwa the opportunity to go on an overseas trip as well, for the whole idea of Afri Twin is that all the schools get to be on an equal level. Understandably, finances are currently the largest obstacle to this.

As the learners have to pay for themselves, one of the problems regarding the exchange between Wellacre and Ferrum is the cost of visiting each country. There have also been occasions where the learners are not happy with their twin or did not keep in touch with their twin throughout the year. As this teacher comments:

The main disadvantage of the scheme is the cost of visiting each country as we are so far apart. While we can identify individuals that could benefit a great deal from the scheme, they are unable to take part if they can't afford it, and there is no budget to help them financially in such circumstances. Personality clashes have occurred between Afri Twins whilst on the host visits. Tact and diplomacy had to be used to rematch and re-home Afri Twins with similar personalities to themselves. On one occasion, the situation was remedied by Afri Twins re-matching themselves with other partners before the situation came to a head. The fact the trips can only occur on a biennial basis, though not a major disadvantage is a drawback of the arrangement. In a typical cycle, students are paired with their Afri Twin for up to a year before they first meet. This gives them misconception that the meeting is a distant event, and as a result, the Afri Twins are initially slow in making and maintaining contact. As the

date draws closer, the students panic and make contact frequently, as they should have done from the start.

### **Conclusion**

The objectives of the research project were to determine the benefits of the Afri twin project; to investigate the unique interaction between three schools, namely Ferrum High School, Wellacre Technology College, and Siyalungelwa High School (in particular the influence of financial support); and to determine the cultural enrichment of the learners and the multi-cultural interaction between the three schools.

According to Jayne Martin, the benefits of the Afri Twin project for the schools involved are the learning opportunities to find out more about the UK and South Africa, to discover similarities and differences, and to develop realistic perceptions because of this knowledge. Some other benefits include the forging of friendships; the building of international links; improvement of communication skills; two-way knowledge transfer; the opportunity to learn alternative skills and values; pride, self-esteem and personal growth for all participants; and most of all to acquire racial tolerance (Afri Twin, Sharing Education Together).

The research project found that there is a unique interaction between the three schools, with Wellacre and Ferrum who visit one another (including the teacher exchange), helping to aid Siyalungelwa in developing and improving their school.

The influence of the financial support is evident in all three schools. As benefactor, Wellacre learners involve the rest of their school and community in fund-raising projects. A culture of 'giving' is cultivated. As financial intermediary, Ferrum learners get to see first-hand the

difference between town and rural schools, and the impact finances has on their education. As beneficiary, Siyalungelwa gains a tremendous amount. Literature tends to ignore the fact that good teaching does not just happen; teachers need support (Ngobeni 2005, 33). Siyalungelwa was helped to establish a functional library, a reading room, a computer room, and also a science laboratory. The academic atmosphere at the school is changing, and in turn, this is helping to promote a sense of academic achievement.

The cultural influence is instant, as all learners and teachers stated in their interviews, it changed the way they look at other culture groups dramatically. The learners stated that they enjoy learning from each other's way of life, and that the Afri Twin project is truly a cultural revelation. Children who live in poverty are not surrounded by a stimulating middle-class environment and may have little chance to develop self-esteem and many basic skills considered natural to children of a more advantaged background (Ivey, Ivey & Simek-Morgan 1993, 148–149). With the Afri Twin project, Siyalungelwa learners will develop their self-esteem further because they all feel that they now have opportunities equal to those schools in town because of the library, computers, and laboratory.

The research question: What influence does this unique collaboration model between schools have on learners, the schools involved, and the community?, can be answered as follows: The influence is measurable in monetary terms with the structural and equipment acquisition, but immeasurable on cultural level. Young minds are being changed to view each other and the world differently, to tolerate difference, and to care. On a national level, the Afri Twin project is bringing change to the schools involved. It is slowly but surely raising the academic standard of the disadvantaged in South Africa, and building cultural bridges.

### **Limitation of the research project**

Because this is a case study, the research findings cannot be generalised in their comparison to any other schools also participating in the Afri Twin project.

### **Recommendations**

In order to gain a better understanding of the long-term effects and benefits of the Afri Twin project, especially on the part of the learners, it is recommended that more in-depth research be done on more of the schools involved. Results can then be compared, and the impact measured. On a practical level, the project has shown to be effective, and it is thus recommended that more schools get involved in the Afri Twin project.

### **Important note**

On the 5th of August 2008 an Afri Twin Conference was held in Cape Town. This was the first conference to be held, and it gave participating schools the opportunity to share their experiences and to render advice.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Jayne Martin (Questionnaire)**

- How did you come upon the idea of the Afri Twin Project?
- How did you start (launch) the project?
- How many schools from the UK are involved? (primary and secondary)
- How many Model C schools from South Africa? (primary and secondary)
- How many township and rural schools are involved?
- What are the benefits or advantages of the Afri Twin regarding the schools? (For British schools, SA model C schools, and SA township schools)
- Are there any disadvantages?
- Does the Department of Education of South Africa know about the Afri Twin Project and if so, what role do they play?
- Is the British Government involved at all, do they know about your project?
- And any further information you deem necessary for me to be aware of regarding the Afri Twin project?

### **Wellacre (Questionnaire)**

- Tell me about your school?
- How did your school get involved in the Afri Twin Project?
- Is the whole school involved, or just a certain age group?
- Are the parents involved as well, or is it just the children?
- What is the role of your school in the Afri Twin Project?

- Name and describe projects you have done to raise money.
- What are the benefits and disadvantages for your school?
- What is your general experience of Ferrum in comparison with Wellacre?
- Name a few of the benefits experienced by Siyalungelwa through your schools involvement with them.
- What is your general experience of Siyalungelwa in comparison with Wellacre?
- Do you have any difficulty getting learners involved in the Afri Twin?
- Please specify exactly how the selection process works to select pupils who become part of the project at your school.
- Do the participating pupils of your school experience any cultural growth with the project and does multi-cultural interaction take place?
- How involved is the community of Manchester with Afri Twin and does the project have any meaning for them at all?

**Wellacre exchange teacher and wife (Questionnaire)**

- What was the duration of your exchange?
- Describe in detail your experience at Siyalungelwa as well as Ferrum, what you did there and what the goal of your involvement was.
- Do you feel you contributed positively to the Afri Twin Project?
- Did you do any specific presentations in the classroom or the school?

**Ferrum interview questions (Principal and teachers)**

- Tell me about Ferrum High School. (Asked of the principal)

- How did Ferrum get involved in the project?
- What is the function and role of Ferrum in the Afri Twin Project?
- What is your role as teacher in the project?
- What are the advantages for Ferrum being involved?
- Does the project contribute to cultural interaction and how?
- Tell me about the teacher exchange. (Asked of the Ferrum teacher who was involved)
- How does the link with Siyalungelwa work?
- What have you done at Siyalungelwa?
- Are the schools positive about the project?
- Is this project a good way to meet new friends?
- What is your opinion of the Afri Twin project?
- How do the teachers of the school feel about the project?
- How do you experience Wellacre?
- Is the community aware of the project?
- Is the whole school involved in the project, or just a certain age group?
- How does the selection process work for your Afri Twin learners?
- Are the parents involved?

**Siyalungelwa interview questions (Principal and teachers)**

- Can you please tell me a little bit more about your school, how many children and teachers?
- What is the finance situation like at your school, do you get support from the government, or do you charge school fees?
- What does the Afri Twin Project mean to you as school?

- You have a library?
- Does the community make use of the library?
- Do you find there is cultural interaction between the learners and teachers?
- Do the Education Department support you with the Afri Twin, are they aware of the Afri Twin Project?
- Do you have a selection process to select the learners?
- How does your staff feel about the Afri Twin Project?
- Do you benefit a lot by the Afri Twin Project?
- And in the long term do you think this project will be beneficial to the community and Siyalungelwa and to future learners?
- And since the library has been established, do you see a difference in the learners marks? (Asked of teacher who assists with the library)
- And the computer room, what does it mean to as school?
- Is the community aware of the project?
- The computers, library, and laboratory will help?

### **Siyalungelwa learners**

- How old are each of you?
- How do you feel about your school?
- How do you feel about the library room and the reading room?
- How do you feel about the computers and Internet at your school now?
- Do the teachers teach you how to make use of the computers?
- Do you think the library, computers, and laboratory will help you for the future after school?

- You have met with learners from Wellacre and Ferrum, do you think the project helps with cultural interaction?
- Is the community aware of the project?
- What does the project mean to your parents and community?
- How do you feel about the future of the project?
- And what is the hope for you personally for the project?

### **Wellacre and Ferrum learners interview questions**

- How did you get involved in the Afri Twin Project?
- Is the whole school involved or just a certain age group?
- How big is the group that is taken overseas?
- How long do learners visit one another?
- What is your experience of visiting one another, how do you experience the different schools?
- What do you do when you go overseas?
- How does the project work between the three schools?
- Do you have interaction with the Siyalungelwa children and do you go there?
- What is your opinion of the project?
- How is the cultural interaction between the schools?
- What is your role as Afri Twin learners in the project?
- Do the rest of the school and the community know about the project?
- What are the advantages for you as person?
- What are the advantages for your school?
- What are the advantages for Siyalungelwa?

- What do you do when you go visit Siyalungelwa?
- Is there good interaction between Ferrum and Wellacre?
- Are your parents also involved?
- What is the role of your school?
- In your fund-raising, what exactly do you do? (Wellacre)

APPENDIX B



Photo 1: Ferrum High School



Photo 2: Siyalungelwa High School



Photo 3: Cattle in Siyalungelwa school yard



Photo 4: Wellacre and Ferrum twins after a mud bath



Photo 5: Wellacre and Ferrum twins at Sun City

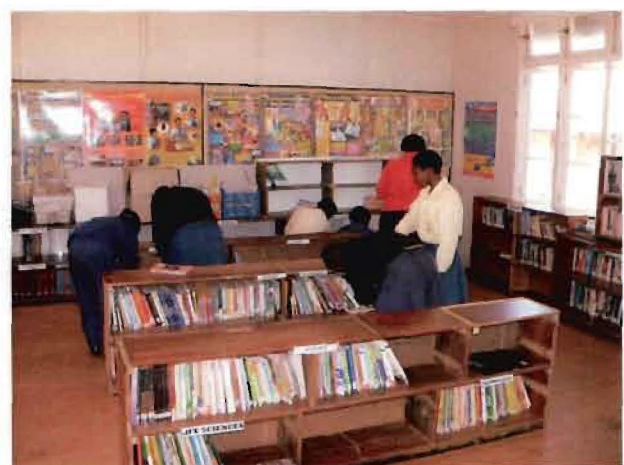


Photo 6: Siyalungelwa library room

The Afri Twin Project



Photo 7: Siyalungelwa computer room



Photo 8: Siyalungelwa Life Science and Physical Science laboratory room before it was fixed



Photo 9: Siyalungelwa new Life Science and Physical Science laboratory room

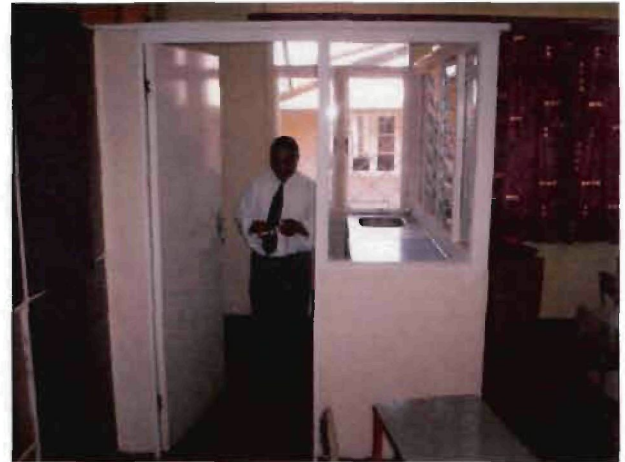


Photo 10: Laboratory cubicle with washbasin and cupboards for chemicals



Photo 11: Soccer match between Siyalungelwa and Ferrum



Photo 12: Wellacre handing Siyalungelwa new jerseys and shirts

The Afri Twin Project



Photo 13: Wellacre and Siyalungelwa twins meeting each other



Photo 14: Wellacre twins visits a Siyalungelwa class