

A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

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I HAVE always believed that as a teacher one has to be aware of the trends in education on a worldwide level.

In 1996 I became aware of the Global Classroom Partnership (GCP). It was started by two icons in global education, Stewart Hay (a deputy principal of Anderson High in Lerwick, Shetland Islands, Scotland – a school known for its high academic standards and interest in education globally) and Lionel Adriaan (former principal of Harold Cressy – also a school that is highly regarded, in Cape Town) in 1996. These two farsighted teachers began to set up the GCP around the world in 1996.

By 1999, a partnership of schools covering five continents was established, from Japan, Australia, Shetland Islands, South Africa, Czech Republic, US and Denmark.

Students and teachers took part in exchange visits within the partnership, shared learning and teaching across a variety of subjects using video conferencing before Skype and Zoom evolved.

An annual gathering of senior students and staff hosted by one of the nine partner schools for 10 days has taken place since 1997.

The process by which students absorb the information shared in class and its subsequent development into knowledge, some of which becomes wisdom, is in turn the deep learning that is firmly embedded and is sustained for life.

It transcends much formal testing and assessment and is often at the core of positive memories of school learning.

As knowledge has no boundaries and wisdom no borders, opportunities to share, develop, extend and deepen that learning are central to the Global Classroom Partnership. Students from Europe studying South African history thanks to the GCP shared learning by video conferencing pioneered by South Peninsula High School and Old Mutual in Cape Town and UCT.

There were opportunities to meet on screen, with key activists involved in the Struggle against apartheid invited to address students. Having their perspectives challenged and gaining direct insight to the nature of the use and abuse of power were all central to this work.

Sharing learning extended to many subject areas and across subjects. Maths with European, South African and Japanese schools.

Adriaan has been the co-ordinator for GCP in Cape Town and has introduced schools like South Peninsula High, Wittebome High, Langa High and Cape Academy for maths, science and technology to the GCP.

The GCP also has an African leg, started in 2015. Teachers and students have visited Zimbabwe and Zambia. The Zimbabwean teachers and students from Heritage High in Harare visited SP and Cape Town in 2017.

I enjoy working in GCP. It has taught me that students all over the world are the same. They have dreams which can be fulfilled if they apply their minds. I hope the GCP will be expanded to many more schools around the world.