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**Apartheid Transition: Assessing a Black Township Education
in South Africa's Disparate Social System**

Adrienne Gerard

Introduction

While studying abroad in the spring of 2010, I had the opportunity to volunteer as a teacher's assistant in the schools of the Kayamandi township outside of Stellenbosch in South Africa. I worked in both a pre-primary school with approximately 210 students and in a seventh grade after-school program that included approximately 60 students. My observations of the classrooms, including the conduct and interests of the students and the role of the teachers led to a collection of data on the workings of a township school. At the conclusion of my time there, I had compiled an ethnography that was composed of both observations and interactions with the students and teachers, as well as information on teachers' skills, student conduct, student skill levels, the struggles students face, the way they play, and their interactions with the teacher and assistants.

The observations I made regarding the students' abilities and the teachers' methods of teaching in the classroom led me to formulate a hypothesis as to why students were performing so poorly in school. One key experience I had in the grade R (reception year) classroom sparked my interest in the issue of poor outcomes in black township schools. In the Kayamandi pre-primary classroom, much of what the learners were being taught revolved around the writing of letters and numbers. The goal was to have the learners be able to write their names, count the number of objects they saw, and connect the verbal number to the written number. When my fellow teachers' assistant and I designed lessons, we focused on these two goals and had the students practice writing letters and numbers by first connecting the dots that composed certain letters that formed small words, or that reflected the number of objects they would count on the page. We would then ask the students to copy the letter and or number they had previously traced on an adjacent line. The teacher would first demonstrate to the students by filling out a worksheet herself and then tack it to the wall. The students struggled with connecting the dots in the correct manner and had even more difficulties drawing the letters and numbers without the

assistance of the guiding dots. They would easily become frustrated when we would go around to assist them and hold their hands with a crayon to go through the motions of writing. It took the majority of them a good amount of time to complete a worksheet of five or six words or numbers. Most of the time the learners would be in a hurry to complete the activity, hand it in to the teacher who would put their name on it, and go out for recess play. The other assistant and I would check to see that the students had completed their worksheet to the best of their ability before they could go out and play. This often led to quick sloppy work and sometimes tears. Students would frequently hand us their papers to be checked, only to be disappointed that they had to sit down and work more on their writing.

Observing the teacher's activities, the ways in which she conducted the class, and the papers she handed back to the learners gave me an understanding as to why the students had such a nonchalant work ethic. Generally, the teacher would collect the papers her students handed her without examining the work or reviewing it with the student and let the student out to recess. She also assigned them a large number of coloring worksheets that required little to no technical practice or thought. When they did not spend the day coloring, the teacher would sing with the students, read to them, have short lectures, and allot time to play. Using observations such as these, I will compare what occurred in the classroom with lesson plans and standards devised by the local board of education. I will also attempt to explain why the teachers I encountered were more like babysitters than educational instructors, and why daily lessons were so weak pedagogically.

My evaluation of the influences on primarily black, public school outcomes is based on both archival research as well as personal observations made while working in the school system of the Kayamandi township. I also consulted statistical reports comparing the outcomes of public/private and previously black/white schools, the funding provided for public post-apartheid

schools, and the effects of the new educational policies set forth by the government. Existing research on the effects of poor government policy, inefficient resource allocation, and teaching credentials will also be considered in the process of uncovering the deeper cultural influences of poor outcomes in the township education system.

The country of South Africa suffered nearly five decades of apartheid rule. During this time, the black¹ population felt a tremendous amount of oppression in all aspects of their lives as the white minority, specifically the ruling Afrikaans² population, sought to subjugate the natives³ and marginalize them in society. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 established a system of education for the natives that can be credited with the lack of an educational mindset among black South Africans. Under the direction of the white elite, the goal of native education was to impart a white supremacist ideology.

The submissive education that was laid out for the natives of the country established an irrepressible trajectory that has been difficult to shake even after apartheid has ended. African parents and teachers were educated under white supremacy and know little more than what they were taught and what they experienced. As a result, the method of teaching Africans that was constructed during apartheid remains in public schools today.⁴

As apartheid has been over for more than fifteen years now, a transition is underway to accommodate the previously disadvantaged peoples in South African society. The new government, the African National Congress (ANC), came into power in 1994 and immediately set on a mission to paint over the segregated system that the apartheid rulers had so thickly

¹ In South Africa it is standard to categorize someone by the color of their skin, thus black, white, and colored, (a mix of races including black, white, and Asian ancestry), will be used to appropriately talk about each group of people.

² Afrikaans refers to the Afrikaans-speaking segment of the population who are descendents of the Dutch settlers and who are the primary architects of apartheid.

³ "Native" is an early term used for the black Bantu population. The Bantu tribes spread across South Africa before the whites came to colonize the country.

⁴ Low, "Education for the Bantu: A South African Dilemma," 21-27.

applied in South Africa. One area identified as needing improvement was the post-Bantu education system in the public and still primarily black schools⁵ in the prominent township communities. These schools have notoriously produced poor passing rates, high dropout rates, low assessment scores, unprepared students, and overall dismal outcomes.⁶

Overall, the ANC was focused from the start on improving the country's economic standing and status in the international realm and saw education as a way to foster the economy and a promising future from the roots. The British system of education became the model for the post-apartheid curriculum - the lifeline that would rescue South Africa (along with primarily black schools) from her history and her troubles. In an effort to dissolve the once discriminatory system, the ANC has poured excessive funding into the development of previously black schools and has implemented numerous policies to correct the dismal assessment results being generated there. Despite these efforts, outcomes from previously black schools⁷ in terms of assessment, competency, and overall matriculation rates have been relatively static.⁸

Current Theoretical Perspectives on South Africa's Black Schools

South Africa's schools are overflowing with 12.3 million students of all ages. Though this is an impressive suggestion of the importance of education, the numbers are deceiving. The truth of the matter is, repetition rates are high and development is slow, with 44.7% of students still attending secondary school⁹ at the age of 20 and 10.1% attending at the age of 24. Of the 23.3 million South Africans who are 20 years or older, 2.9 million have not attended any form of

⁵ The phrase, "primarily black," and "primarily white" will be used frequently when discussing types of schools in the country. Though apartheid ended and desegregation occurred across the country, there is still a division between the races when it comes to schools. Whites typically attend private schools or public schools in generally white areas, while public schools in townships consist primarily of all black students.

⁶ Van Heerden, "Black University Students in South Africa: The Influence of Sociocultural Factors on Study and Performance," 51.

⁷ During apartheid, segregation of school resulted in strictly black schools. After the end of apartheid these schools, though still primarily black, are now considered previously black schools due to the abolition of segregation.

⁸ Johnson, "Education: Keystone of Apartheid," 214-237.

⁹ Grades 8-12

schooling and 1.6 million have only completed primary education.¹⁰ 4.3 million have received only some primary education, and only 1.9 million have some form of tertiary degree or certificate.¹¹

Overall, South Africa's population is only 10.5% white, which suggests that much of the issue with education lies within the previously disadvantaged sector of the population, the blacks, who compose 77.8% of the country's people. The issue is further projected on blacks by statistics revealing that 26.6% of the rural black women 20 years and older and 19.8% of rural black men in the same age category are illiterate.¹²

The problem with the quality of education in public, historically black schools and their poor outcomes can be seen in the empirical data in Figure 1, gathered from numerous international education studies, government reports, and South Africa's Department of National Education. The statistics pertain to the results of a grade 6 evaluation test conducted by the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality in 2000, which gathered information from 14 other participating countries. The numbers show that overall, South Africa falls in the bottom half of the group in both mathematics and in reading (Fig. 1), and that the difference in scores between socio-economic classes (SES) differ greatly by nearly 100 points in both categories.

*Fig 1: Mean Scores and Scores of Poor (Low Socio-Economic Status/ SES) and Rich (High SES) Pupils on SACMEQ II Grade 6 Reading and Mathematics Tests by Country (Arranged by Mean Scores in Each Test)*¹³

¹⁰ Grades 1 -7

¹¹ Van Zyl, "South Africa: The Country and the Development of Education," 5.

¹² Van Zyl, 5.

¹³ Van der Berg, "Apartheid's Enduring Legacy: Inequalities in Education," 855.

READING (countries arranged by mean score)				MATHEMATICS (countries arranged by mean score)			
	Low SES	High SES	MEAN		Low SES	High SES	MEAN
SEYCHELLES	561.8	594.4	582.0	MAURITIUS	550.0	607.7	584.6
KENYA	525.3	577.5	546.5	KENYA	546.9	587.1	563.3
TANZANIA	528.8	575.2	545.9	SEYCHELLES	532.4	567.8	554.3
MAURITIUS	508.3	555.1	536.4	MOZAMBIQUE	527.5	532.6	530.0
SWAZILAND	519.1	541.0	529.6	TANZANIA	509.0	545.5	522.4
BOTSWANA	502.5	543.6	521.1	SWAZILAND	511.3	522.2	516.5
MOZAMBIQUE	510.5	523.0	516.7	BOTSWANA	498.9	529.8	512.9
SOUTH AFRICA	440.2	543.6	493.3	UGANDA	496.3	519.2	506.3
UGANDA	472.3	495.5	482.4	SOUTH AFRICA	446.8	524.3	486.3
ZANZIBAR	468.1	492.2	478.2	ZANZIBAR	474.0	483.9	478.1
LESOTHO	449.2	454.5	451.2	LESOTHO	448.6	444.9	447.2
NAMIBIA	421.5	486.1	448.8	ZAMBIA	425.5	444.8	435.2
ZAMBIA	423.6	456.5	440.1	MALAWI	428.2	442.2	432.9
MALAWI	422.9	440.7	428.9	NAMIBIA	408.7	461.3	430.9
SACMEQ average			500.0	SACMEQ average			500.0

South Africa's grade 4 learners had an average numeracy score of 30%, and performed better than only 3 out of 12 other African countries in literacy.¹⁴ One of the most blatant disparities in scores can be seen between black and white schools. In 1993, a household survey conducted for Statistics on Living Standards and Development, showed that even though blacks had achieved 78-86% of the years of education that whites had, their scores in literacy were only 50-63% of white levels, while their numeracy scores were a scanty 36-47%.¹⁵

Overall, white students in 2003 coming from previously white schools scored just below the international average; black students attained scores half that of white students (Fig 2). In addition, the average number of years of schooling completed by blacks is 9 years compared to 12 years for whites. This number is affected by the low average pass rate among blacks, which is 43% compared to 97% pass rate for whites.

*Fig 2: Mathematics and Science Scores in TIMSS Grade 8 Tests in Comparative Perspective, 1999 and 2003*¹⁶

¹⁴ Van der Berg and Moses, "The Limits to Budgetary Redistribution in South Africa," 18.

¹⁵ Van der Berg, 854.

¹⁶ Van der Berg, 855.

	<u>Mathematics</u>		<u>Science</u>	
	1999	2003	1999	2003
International average	487	467	488	474
South Africa				
Country average	275	264	243	244
Former white schools	----	456	----	468
Former black schools	----	227	----	200

Source: Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) 2005

These numbers reflect a clear issue with public education and the black South African population. Why are the dropout rates so high and matriculation percentages so low in previously black schools, especially 15 years after the abolition of apartheid? Part of the problem is the way in which people have been looking at the issue of poor education in previously disadvantaged schools. One popular idea is that these schools lack the resources and facilities that white schools have - a result of the decades spent under the apartheid government.

In South Africa, money is being poured into the development of the country's education system, especially the improvement of public school education for the previously disadvantaged. Innovative policies and a fresh curricula are also being developed by policy makers from around the world to move black schools beyond the apartheid Bantu system and to spark a new interest in education and improve outcomes as a result. Many analysts believe that a lack of funding and resources has inhibited these schools from prospering, while others surmise that educational policies are too radical and dysfunctional and thus negatively affect the system.

Data gathered by an economics team from Stellenbosch University in Stellenbosch, South Africa, shows little to support the connection between funding and resource allocation and an increase in positive results. After the shift to democracy was made at the end of apartheid, a

significant turn-around in spending was initiated by the government in an effort to cater to the needs of the poor and the majority of the population who were previously disadvantaged. The largest fiscal shift to the poor was in school education at 6% of the country's GDP, which was, and continues to be, the largest of the government's budget line items. The following concentration index indicates the increase in the level of government expenditure directed towards social services accessible by the poor between 1995 (the year after apartheid ended) and 2000. In concentration indexes, a negative number reflects good targeting to the poor, where they receive more than what their income allows them to return to the government and the country's economy.¹⁷ School funding increased over a five-year period by -.088. In this restructuring, the richest two deciles experienced reduced spending per capita, and blacks gained the most, while all other population groups saw some reduction in government support as well, specifically in terms of the teacher-pupil ration.¹⁸

*Fig 3: Concentration indexes by program: 1995 and 2000*¹⁹

	1995	2000	Changes 1995 - 2000
School education	-0.016	-0.104	-0.088
Tertiary education	0.484	0.497	0.013
Health (net)	-0.045	-0.082	-0.037
Hospitals	-0.014	-0.057	-0.043
Clinics	-0.103	-0,132	-0.029
Fees	0.656	0.647	-0.009
Social grants	-0.434	-0.431	0.003
Housing	-0.018	0.007	0.025
Total	-0.057	-0.120	-0.063

¹⁷ The range is between -1 and 1 where 0 is equality among expenditure, and negative numbers indicate favoritism to the poorest 20% of the population. Van der Berg, Louw and du Toit, "Poverty Trends Since the Transition: What We Know," 32.

¹⁸ Van der Berg, Louw and du Toit, 33.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Overall a shift took place in both teacher salary and in teacher allocation. During apartheid, it was typical for a large, public black school to have an average of 24 teachers on staff; whereas, now the number of teachers per 1,000 students declined from 59 teachers to 43 in white schools and increased from 24 teachers to 31 in black schools.²⁰ Along with the leveling of the number of educators in these schools, the government also increased the salaries of teachers working in historically black schools. Thus, even though funding was allocated specifically for the improvement of previously disadvantaged schools, much of the expenditure was directed to salary increases to eliminate apartheid discrimination, while the amount directed towards the purchase of physical resources and the improvement of school facilities was reduced.²¹

Despite the increase in financial support, matriculation numbers have only minimally changed. Even the improvement in teacher-to-pupil ratio in previously disadvantaged schools had little impact on outcomes, and the change in matriculation pass rates only increased by 4% over the course of a year.²² Figure 4 shows that matriculation has only slightly increased at a slow and steady pace after apartheid. Thus, it seems that even though funding is provided, there is no guarantee that the appropriate resources will be attained, that the funding will be used effectively, or that more qualified teachers will be attracted to public schools.²³

*Fig 4: Matriculation candidates and passes: 1979 to 2006*²⁴

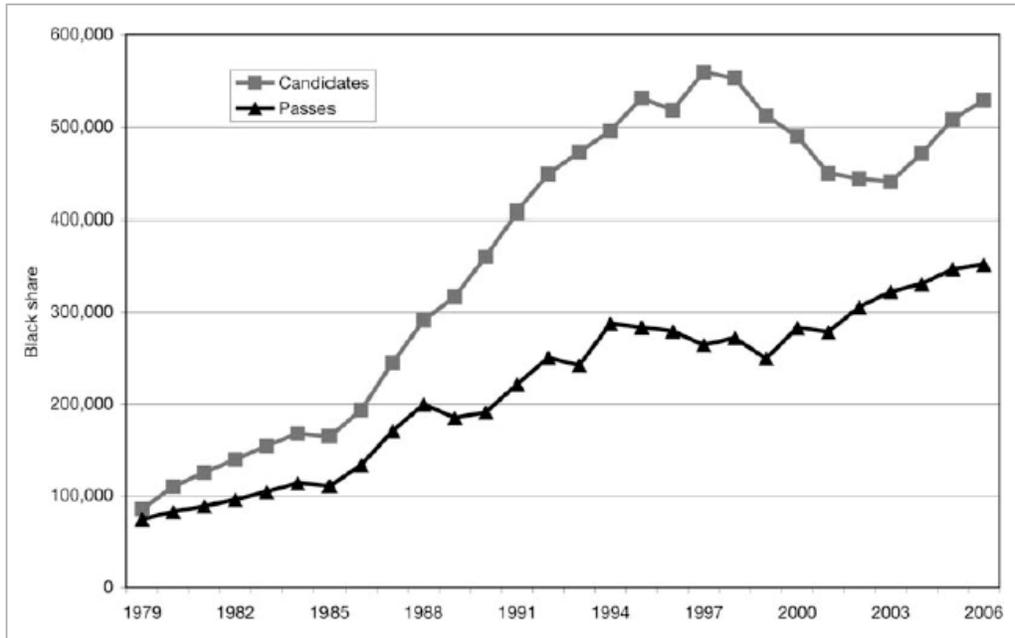
²⁰ Van der Berg, Louw and du Toit, 36.

²¹ Van der Berg, 872.

²² Van der Berg, 868.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Van der Berg, Louw and du Toit, 37.



One of the things I observed while teaching at Kayamandi pre-primary school was how funding was used throughout the school. Kayamandi township is located five minutes outside of Stellenbosch on a bare hill that receives little protection from the brutal sun. It was established in the 1940s as a village for black laborers who worked in the surrounding vineyards. It has since become the home of around 30,000 black South Africans.²⁵ The classrooms where I worked were small, not larger than 80 to 100 square feet, with a carpet in the center of the tiled floor, and plastic tables and chairs stacked against a wall. There were several books displayed on a table against one of the walls; however, for a pre-primary classroom where literacy and writing are beginning to be fostered, the amount of reading material was insufficient. Furthermore, there were no storybooks in isiXhosa, the mother tongue of the learners. In one corner of the room there was a pile of dilapidated toys, ragged from overuse. These toys consisted of several toy cars, a box of blocks, a baby stroller, and many small knick knacks. During recess times, the

²⁵ The Greater Stellenbosch Development Trust, *Khayamndi*, <http://www.ikhayatrust.org.za.html>.

students would outside play with tires, sticks, and one or two jump ropes and would also play in a small, backyard-sized sandbox.

While I was teaching at the school, I was able to witness part of the governmental funding being put to use. One day when I arrived, the teacher was opening a large box that the school had received the previous day. They had been waiting for their classroom order for weeks now and it had finally arrived. Out of the box came several hula-hoops and beanbag catapult launchers, as well as a couple of new books and interactive diagrams for one of the class lessons.

These purchases surprised me. A week later the hula-hoops were bent into unusable shapes, and the beanbags were on the verge of explosion. Not only were there over 150 students using these new and exciting toys twice a day, everyday, at school, but also these toys were not durable choices to begin with. What I would have expected to see from the spending of governmental funding would be classroom resources aimed at stimulating the students' minds, catching their attention, assisting in their understanding of the material, and other educational uses. Such resources would include more English and isiXhosa books, writing and counting workbooks, interactive games, and instructional posters.

After four weeks, there would be no more hula-hoops or beanbags, and the classroom would still be lacking isiXhosa reading books and picture posters for the walls. At first I wondered whether these township schools were being allotted sufficient funds to supply these classrooms with the materials needed and at an equivalent level to white and private primary schools; however, after seeing the ineffective spending first hand and discovering through research that these schools were receiving strong financial attention from the government, I formulated a new question as to who had control over spending and whether these people were at all knowledgeable about the appropriate resources for the schools.

Believing that reforms in education policy would elevate primarily black schools to be on par with white public schools, South Africa's government (with the assistance of a team of education policy makers from across the globe) established and implemented several policies rather quickly after the end of apartheid. The Ministry of Education developed three reforms to the country's curriculum at the end of apartheid. The first of these reforms called for the removal of 'racially offensive and outdated content,'²⁶ and the second initiated continuous assessments throughout the public school system. The Ministry then designed the third program, deemed outcomes-based education (OBE), in the hopes of equalizing standards and outcomes across the country. Despite the efforts to change the system, these policies were more an effort to improve appearances and to prove to the citizens and to other countries that the new government was fully dedicated to responding to past apartheid schooling, than they were to reform the functioning of these schools and improve student outcomes.²⁷

What policy makers failed to do was to design these programs in accordance with the systems already in existence on the township level. By involving teachers of these schools in debates over policies such as OBE, the government would have been able to devise a much more stable program that would be easily adopted by schools. Instead, the Ministry quickly established these highly ambitious and glorified policies that teachers in previously black schools did not have the motivation or the ability to enforce.

One of the issues pertaining to the ineffectiveness of OBE and other programs is the complex language in which they are written. Teachers working in township schools do not have the tertiary education themselves to comprehend the detailed policy, which is composed of 50 different concepts and labels, including unit standards and assessment criteria among other

²⁶ Jansen, "Curriculum Reform in South Africa: A Critical Analysis of Outcomes-based Education," 321.

²⁷ Pretorius, "Changing the curriculum: Outcomes Based Education and Training," 94.

competencies. Moreover, the lexicon of these policies is continuously being altered, and teachers are required to understand how each concept relates to different agencies in the government.²⁸

Furthermore, one of the lofty goals of OBE is to place teachers in a particular role where they “facilitate and mediate the educational experience...The teacher, now a facilitator of learning, will create relations between learners and facilitator which engender values based on cooperative learning.”²⁹ The current status of teachers in public, primarily black schools is far from authoritative and influential (discussed further in Section 4), however, and these demands do not consider the dramatic change the teaching system would need to undergo in order to achieve such goals. The team of administrators developing the objectives of these programs consists of mainly white, elite and experienced teachers, who frankly have little understanding of the circumstances of teachers in primarily black public schools. What they are unaware of is the limited access these teachers may have to information on OBE and other governmental policies that will help them to comprehend and apply concepts into their lesson plans and in their teaching methods. Public school teachers also lack official support and the support of a management system to assist them in their roles as ‘implementers.’³⁰

Overall, the Ministry of Education is placing a lot of responsibility on the country’s public school teachers to assist in the transformation of the apartheid curriculum and school-system. Education agendas are an act of political symbolism, rather than comprehensive and practical programs, and require that teachers fulfill the requirements for implementation. These duties include: reorganizing the curriculum, increasing the time devoted to one-on-one relationships with the students and monitoring the student’s progress and comprehension,

²⁸ Jansen, 323.

²⁹ Jansen, 325.

³⁰ Jansen, 336-327.

administering assessments, and maintaining records.³¹ However, when the Minister of Education requested that a review committee examine the structure of the new policies, the results showed that a combination of different understandings of the policies and difficulties implementing the policies appropriately, led to “little transfer of learning into the classroom.”³² Much of the issue with implementation was due to the lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy, inadequate training and orientation of the teachers, and a lack of quality learning support both in terms of materials for the classroom and trained personnel to assist teachers.³³

Throughout the process of post-apartheid transformation, lack of funding and ineffective policies have traditionally been blamed for the lack of success and improvement among previously black schools. Nevertheless, statistics show that after a significant increase in funding and the restructuring of faculty distribution to previously disadvantaged schools, matriculation has barely increased. Moreover, these new policies, though ineffective, are too complex for teachers of public schools to comprehend let alone implement and, therefore, have little adverse effect on the operation of the schools or the success of the students. What then is holding back previously disadvantaged schools from improving outcomes after apartheid when the goal of the Ministry of Education and the country’s government is to resurrect these schools to the standing of white schools?

South Africa is not the only country where poor outcomes are being produced in the public schools of disadvantaged communities. In the United States inner city schools are delivering similar results with analogous statistical evidence. Students who show behavioral and educational problems have been found to be living in “low social status, large family sizes and

³¹ Jansen, 328.

³² Pretorius, 95.

³³ Pretorius, 94-95.

overcrowded conditions,”³⁴ which consequently leads to poor attainment and delinquency. The insufficient conditions of public schools in inner city United States, like in South Africa, hinders the delivery of education for students. For example, the inner city schools, located in places such as East St. Louis, Illinois, North Lawndale near Chicago, the Bronx, and Camden, New Jersey, have been described as “overcrowded, in horrendous physical condition, and with few of the basic supplies needed to carry on even the most rudimentary of instructional programs.”³⁵

Teachers are also not always prepared to teach in such ill-equipped situations or with a culturally diverse class. As will be shown later, it is typical for teachers to model how they teach according to their own experience as students, referring also to the strategies and approaches of their past teachers. What they fail to do, however, is to amend these techniques and lessons to accommodate different circumstances and types of students who all come from varying backgrounds and learning abilities.

The dropout rate of inner city U.S. schools with a national percentile between 65 and 75 percent is hauntingly similar to that of South African township schools (only 21% of South African students are believed to complete their secondary school careers)³⁶. In addition to this extremely high dropout rate, in inner city U.S. schools it is three times as likely for African American students to be placed in special education classes than it is for white students. Similar to South Africa, illiteracy in the disadvantaged sectors of the U.S population is a big issue, with one million urban teenagers unable to surpass a third-grade reading level and one-fourth of these teenagers unable to read at all.³⁷

³⁴ Quinton, “Family Life in the Inner City: Myth and Reality,” 45.

³⁵ Singiser, “Classroom Management in the Urban Environment,” 167.

³⁶ Terhoeven, “The Role of the Teacher Support Team in Preventing Early School Dropout in a High School,” 12.

³⁷ Yeo, *Inner City Schools, Multiculturalism, and Teacher Education: A Professional Journey*, 30-31.

The correlation between poor outcomes in inner city U.S. schools and in the township schools of South Africa highlights the fact that this problem is not solely pertinent to developing countries, or countries like South Africa that are reforming education after decades of political and social inequality, but it is found in countries with established and strong educational systems as well. Like in South Africa, research into the plausible factors in poor U.S. educational institutions points to a lack of resources and the large size of schools and classrooms as being myths that cannot be blamed for shortcomings:

It is often supposed that the lack of resources in inner-city areas constitutes the main problem and that increasing resources would provide an effective solution. The research evidence indicates that both suppositions are wrong... Another popular solution lies in an elimination of the very large comprehensive schools and in a reduction of average class sizes. Both remedies are likely to be ineffective. The evidence from several studies indicates no consistent association between school size and pupil success, however measured.³⁸

The agent of poor outcomes may not be readily uncovered in the United States, as in South Africa; however, it is the standard assumption that funding, policy, class size, and other traditional culprits are, in fact, not legitimate answers to the problems faced by both inner city and township schools.

The Development and Impact of the Apartheid Curriculum

Taking a step back into apartheid, a lot of the responsibility for the lack of an educational mindset and a culture of learning³⁹ (This concept is discussed further in Section 5.) among the black community today can be attributed to the Bantu education. Under the direction of the white elite, the goal of native education in South Africa was to impart a white supremacist ideology. At the onset of apartheid, missionary schools, which previously had sought to educate blacks in

³⁸ Rutter, "Secondary-school Practice and Pupil Success," 135-136.

³⁹ A Culture of Learning is embedded within a society and its corresponding culture and reflects the importance of education within the larger culture. Cultures that value education place high importance on having a sturdy education system and are considered to have strong cultures of learning. Societies with strong cultures of learning involve education in many different realms of society, not just in the school system.

light of the European model, were shut down and replaced with second-rate public schools, which would serve to educate blacks along their “native” lines. Bantu education was justified by the Dutch governmental spokesperson at the time, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, who claimed that “There is no place for him [the African] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor”.⁴⁰ Thus, it was the Department of Native Affairs’s responsibility to design an educational trajectory for the blacks that would prepare them for the menial jobs they would assume in the future. According to repressionist advocates, industrial education would be an appropriate subject in the education of a native, just so long as the native did not procure knowledge surpassing that of manual labor. Any skill unable to be defined as menial would place them undesirably in competition with the white man.⁴¹

The curriculum as designed by the apartheid government had a highly influential hand in the production of unenthusiastic and apathetic students. To begin with, the Bantu curriculum was not designed to provide students in the first years of primary education with a foundation of knowledge that aimed at preparing them for further schooling. Instead, what the apartheid government devised was a curriculum that would mold the black population into future laborers of the white country. Before Bantu education was instituted as a mechanism of oppression, students attending missionary schools received a general education that was not specifically tied to their traditions or Bantu heritage.⁴² However, with the formation of the Commission on Native Education (better known as the Eiselen Commission), between 1949 and 1951, any opportunity for blacks to receive a European education was suffocated.⁴³

⁴⁰ Van Zyl, 12.

⁴¹ Loram, *The Education of the South African Native*, 19.

⁴² Hunt Davis Jr, “Bantu Education and the Education of Africans in South Africa,” 11.

⁴³ Hunt Davis Jr., 8.

The Eiselen Commission was responsible for developing the guidelines for the creation of native schools, designing the appropriate curriculum, and ultimately, limiting black potential. Overall, the curriculum was devised to “prepare Natives more effectively for their future occupations”⁴⁴ and was sufficiently limited and simplified to coincide with the capacity that whites believed blacks held and with the few opportunities blacks were given in their future. The first term of reference established by the commission and which reflected the intent of the government stated that:

The formulation of the principles and aims of the education for Natives as an independent race, in which their past and present, their inherent racial qualities, their distinctive characteristics and aptitude, and their needs under the ever-changing social conditions are taken into consideration.⁴⁵

Thus, the curriculum for blacks must entail their present circumstances and prepare them for their future experiences as subordinates in South African society. As stated in the 1954 Senate Debates:

1. Education must prepare people [Natives] for their “opportunities in life”, which for Africans was to be in the rural areas and as migrant workers;
2. Education must instill within Africans that they are not to have equal rights and that their development is to be confined within their own sphere.⁴⁶

Overall, the commission would design an education curriculum that would allow blacks enough knowledge of English and Afrikaans to suit the needs of their white employers (but never enough to be a threat) and would train them in manual skills for their futures in such appropriate fields.⁴⁷

The Bantu curriculum, though argued by its originators to be a benefit for the Bantu, was solely designed to cater to the interests of the white population. History in Bantu schools for example, was not taught as a general discipline but focused only on South Africa and the history

⁴⁴ Hunt Davis Jr., 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Hunt Davis Jr., 14.

⁴⁷ Loram, 97.

of the Natives in the country. "If we [South Africans] are to develop a pride of race in the Natives, not only as preventative for miscegenation with the Whites, but as a basis for the responsibilities of self-government, we cannot afford to omit from our courses of study an account of the history and institutions of the races of South Africa."⁴⁸

Similarly, courses in citizenship and good conduct were introduced to the Bantu children during their primary years to ensure their understanding of their position in South African society before they dropped out of school. Such social science courses were aimed at teaching black students about their duties, responsibilities, and privileges in the domestic space and in society at large, the authorities who had control over the daily lives of the natives, the laws of the government pertinent to blacks, and, ultimately, how to be a subservient citizen and accept the natural domination of the white population.⁴⁹

While devising the Bantu curriculum, the whites in charge of the commission analyzed the syllabi used by the mission schools in educating the natives and determined that the literary and bookish education they were receiving did more harm than good, for it was ill fit for their futures in either industrial or agricultural fields.⁵⁰ As a result manual labor was included into Bantu curricula. In the primary schools, native children were trained in making a product that was useful and ultimately marketable. Courses such as cardboard modeling, gardening, carpentry, rudimentary agriculture, basket making, mat weaving, and brick making were standard training for boys, while girls underwent courses in sewing, needlework, and domestic work. Older students had the opportunity to further their education not in traditional universities but in training schools, where they would be introduced to more industrial training in preparation for their future occupations. For girls this meant training primarily in cooking, laundry work, and

⁴⁸ Loram, 99.

⁴⁹ Hunt Davis Jr., 44.

⁵⁰ Loram, 127.

sewing, while boys were taught tree-planting, heavier agriculture, road-making, leading water, and carpentry.⁵¹

While the whites were educating the blacks to be manual laborers who would undertake the menial jobs that whites did not desire, an air of fear grew amongst the white industrial class. If there were to be an influx of black, highly skilled laborers, white industrial employment would ultimately be threatened, for blacks were much less expensive to employ than any white European laborer. Thus, training schools were encouraged to convince their apprentices to return to the Bantu people at the end of their training. Overall, there was a general consensus among whites that although a handful of black artisans would be able to amount to the skills of the white man, this was a rare occasion, and, ultimately, the race could not accomplish this feat, for “their mental and physical limitations, their heredity and tradition, stand in their way, and the Natives do not believe in themselves as the white man does.”⁵²

Still the white man’s underlying fear of subordination by an educated black mass resulted in careful restriction on subjects taught in Bantu schools and the depth of information relayed to students. For example, algebra and geometry were seen as unnecessary subjects and were omitted from the curriculum, while geography was retained, but it was taught in such a way that left most black students with only a knowledge of the countries and oceans immediately surrounding them. Geography courses in South Africa began at Standard III with the teaching of the province the students lived in. The syllabus only advanced to the country of South Africa by Standard IV, the continent by Standard V, and the world by Standard VI. Because only a small

⁵¹ Loram, 154.

⁵² Loram, 157.

number of black students matriculated to Standard VI, large numbers of students exiting Bantu schools were left with a very limited understanding of the world around them.⁵³

Problems in Bantu schools revolving around the vernacular and the use of the mother tongue and official languages were pertinent to apartheid education as well. At the time of apartheid there were many languages spoken throughout the black community, and each area spoke one of now eleven official languages. By teaching black students through their primary years in their mother tongue, linguistic tribalism would be promoted, which would serve to divide the black community into separate and distinct subsets as opposed to one unified and threatening mass.⁵⁴

The debate over the appropriate time to fully immerse Bantu students into the official languages of English and Afrikaans was long and significant. Ultimately, what the commission understood about using primarily mother tongue instruction was that it would “reduce the horizons of Africans, cramping them intellectually in the narrow bounds of tribal society, and diminishing the opportunity of intercommunication between the African groups themselves and also with the wider world in general of which they formed a part.”⁵⁵ Instead of teaching students in Bantu schools about scientific theories and terminology using the English language, for example, the Commission of Native Education established a committee to create words in the native languages (“Bantuize” Western words) to describe such phenomenon and to replace the technical jargon. Many blacks in the country understood, however, that they could not escape the modern world and its vernacular, which the Bantu languages simply were not equipped to cope

⁵³ Hunt Davis Jr., 44.

⁵⁴ Horrell, 55.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

with, and that they would need a strong understanding of one of the official languages in order to improve their appearances in the work place.⁵⁶

Ultimately, it was decided by 1959 that Bantu primary schools would instruct in the mother tongue from Standards II through Standards IV, and by the late 1960s, this instruction was being pushed into the first half of high school as well. Throughout a child's primary education, English and Afrikaans were two language courses in the curriculum, until the final two years of high school when they became the languages of full instruction.⁵⁷ The change over to the official languages was drastic and choppy, however, where "either the subject concerned could be taught partly in the mother-tongue and partly in the new medium, or a lesson could be taken first in the mother-tongue and then repeated in the new language."⁵⁸ Neither of these methods provided students with a strong grasp of either English or Afrikaans, the two languages that enabled them a sliver of a chance at becoming more successful as future laborers.

What also harmed Bantu students were the teachers and their own poor understanding of English. Prior to 1954, teacher training schools were almost entirely staffed by native English speakers who were responsible for creating strong teachers to be employed in the Bantu schools. After the qualifications for teaching certificates were lowered, the staff in teacher training schools quickly changed and consisted mostly of blacks speaking primarily Bantu languages with a lackluster knowledge of English. Secondary schools were soon staffed with either Bantu-speaking teachers, or Afrikaans-speaking Europeans. Thus in this situation, students were not being fluidly immersed in the English language: "A vicious cycle has been set up... student's opportunities of learning to use English correctly and fluently as a medium of communication are

⁵⁶ Horrell, 54-55.

⁵⁷ Hunt Davis Jr., 42.

⁵⁸ Horrell, 57.

very much fewer than they were years ago.”⁵⁹ All in all, students came out of Bantu schools with little working knowledge of either of the official languages, making it extremely difficult for them to be able to communicate with people and employers outside of their language group.

The Bantu education system diminished the desire to learn in the black community. In the end, what black students were going to school for was to get less than satisfactory instruction on how to be future manual laborers. Though the argument in favor of Bantu education stressed the intent to promote “the needs of the [black] community and the cultural heritage of the people,”⁶⁰ critics of the system questioned the need for separate development and pointed out that much of the black population had accepted Westernization as the new ideal way of life and that those blacks living in urban areas were quickly “detrribalized.”⁶¹ Blacks who had been educated through mission schools prior to 1953 were strong critics of the new system of Bantu education. They understood the benefits of a sound education like they had received through the British system. To them, it was a vital, if not the only way of advancement and integration: “To them one of the most effective ways of achieving this [integration] is by education—an education essentially in no way different from, or inferior to, that of other sections of the community.”⁶² Upon the arrival of a separate, specialized Bantu curriculum, the desire of blacks to learn and expand their opportunities was trampled. They lost interest in education and could no longer see its purpose or potential.

Apartheid Education and the Bantu Schools

The repercussions of the Bantu education system extended further than just the educational attitude of black students. The act had a serious effect on the management system of

⁵⁹ Horrell, 59.

⁶⁰ Hunt Davis Jr., 21.

⁶¹ Hunt Davis Jr., 23.

⁶² Hunt Davis Jr., 25.

Bantu schools not only when it was initiated but also years later in present township schools. Outcome results are showing that, “the inefficiency in converting inputs into outputs in many former black schools can be seen as a form of managerial inefficiency that dates back to the apartheid era and that educational reforms since the transition may not yet have overcome.”⁶³

In order to understand the weak operation of previously disadvantaged schools, one must understand the effect of the Bantu Education Act on school management as well. Education has long been identified as a means of control and power. Values, morals, ideologies and culture are all essentially passed down through the educational realm. Understanding this, the repressionists as well as the segregationists in the apartheid government took advantage of this tool and placed the educational affairs of blacks in the hands of the Minister of Development, while whites and coloreds dealt with their own educational expenditure, employment, standards, and qualifications.⁶⁴

Thus, educators in previously disadvantaged schools have little experience in administration and governance to guide them through such tasks. First, the management of black education was in the control of the Department of Bantu Education where a curriculum was designed that instilled a white supremacist ideology in the minds of students.⁶⁵ Due to the Bantu Education Act, white apartheid officials had the ability through education to create learners who were subservient, apathetic bystanders in society. In 1981, the Tricameral Parliament was established, which allowed white, colored, and Asian peoples to finance the costs of their education and to control salaries and conditions of employees in the system, the registration of teachers, examination of qualifications, and the standards of curriculum.⁶⁶ While their general

⁶³ Van der Berg, 869.

⁶⁴ Van Zyl, 15.

⁶⁵ Van Zyl, 12.

⁶⁶ Van Zyl, 15.

affairs were under the control of the Minister of National Education, all affairs for Black South Africans were managed by the Minister of Development and Training's Department of Education and Training.⁶⁷ Thus, black educators continued to have no understanding of how to run or control a system of education, let alone a school.

When South Africa established a democratic perspective on education after the end of apartheid, a decentralization of power ensued, resulting in transition of management from a central authority to a local level, where authoritative decisions would be made not solely by the state, but by those with closer interests in the schools. In addition, the new government would place policy implementation in the hands of school teachers and administration during the transition, looking for exemplary results that would bolster the country's appearance. These results would be based on the success of the teachers and the guidance and efficiency of the administration.⁶⁸ However, due to the lack of experience in managing their own educational affairs prior to and throughout apartheid, the "administrators, teachers, and parents... who best understand the contexts and cultures of the school environment"⁶⁹ would not have the skills or the ability to fulfill such duties as requested by the post-apartheid government.

Apartheid Education and Public School Teachers

My experience with the teachers in Kayamandi highlights the inefficiency of the teacher training system within the public school system. My observations of the teachers acting more like baby sitters than teachers and practicing rote teaching caused me to investigate the qualifications needed to teach in public schools and to uncover the history of teachers in the Bantu schools who would have been the role models for teachers currently employed. In 1954, it

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Van Wyk, "School Governance in South Africa," 123.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

was announced by Dr. Verwoerd that “it is Departmental policy to do away entirely with European teachers in primary schools” and to replace them with women who “are generally better than men at handling small children,” in an effort to save money in both teacher training and in salaries.⁷⁰ At the time there were approximately 2,000 black teachers employed in Bantu schools, where over 1,000 more were needed. As a way to employ more teachers, girls with at least a Standard VI qualification (age 15) were recruited as teachers of primary schools, after only one more year of general schooling and two years in a basic teacher-training program that would provide them with a Primary Lower Teachers’ Certificate.⁷¹ This quick effort to replace white teachers in township and rural schools with low-qualified young black women resulted in a drop in matriculation in these schools from 20.5% to 11.3%.⁷²

In 1951, 45% of teachers in secondary schools were university graduates, but by 1969, this percentage had dropped to 22%.⁷³ In 1961, 57.2% of teachers employed in Bantu schools had achieved only Standard VI qualifications and had a Lower Primary Certificate. The Lower Primary Certificate was the easiest certificate to attain and the most common as well. Other common teaching certificates included the Higher Primary Certificate (51% enrollment of future teachers in this program), a two year course preparing teachers for teaching in Higher Primary school, and the South African Teachers’ Diploma, or Bantu Education Diploma (3% enrollment of future teachers), which was a two year program including training and an additional five courses in arts or four courses in science.⁷⁴

The Lower Primary Teaching Certificate (LPTC) was highly detrimental to the Bantu school system. The education commission of the province of Transkei believed that “the general

⁷⁰ Horrell, 51.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Horrell, 85.

⁷³ Hunt Davis Jr., 46.

⁷⁴ Horrell, 91.

quality of the teaching is not high enough and that education in the Transkei cannot absorb immature and inadequately qualified teachers,” and it was their strong opinion that the LPTC course be terminated.⁷⁵ The commission saw the faults and inadequacies of the training course in preparing teachers both academically and professionally for their future positions, and fears mounted that “these immature young women [would] generally be unable to cope successfully with the responsible and challenging tasks awaiting them.”⁷⁶ Despite these concerns, the LPTC was too far underway and was quickly producing much-needed teachers so abolishing it was nearly impossible.

Not only were the teachers in public Bantu schools severely ill-prepared for the task of teaching, but also their teaching effectiveness suffered greatly from oversized classes. Due to enrollment increases in combination with understaffed schools, the ratio rose from 41 students per teacher in 1953 to 60 students in 1969.⁷⁷ Young and inexperienced teachers in the primary schools were responsible for grasping the attention of a large group of young children, keeping that attention, and teaching. With a large group of children, this task may be close to impossible, and this was the reason for both rote learning and passive teachers like the ones whom I encountered.

When teachers are ill-prepared for the task of teaching, instructing even a small class of students will not produce knowledgeable students and positive outcomes. It is true that the attention of the student would be easier to hold without the distraction of seventy other students in the class, and holding lessons rather than handing out busy work would be more feasible with a smaller class. Nevertheless, the teacher training programs that produced Bantu teachers were so ineffective that teachers could only practice rote education and were unable to improvise or trust

⁷⁵ Horrell, 94.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Hunt Davis Jr., 46.

their own judgments in the classroom. Teacher training institutions focused on a formal and scant education that stressed not the mastery of technique and the practice of teaching but the examination at the end of the course when certification was determined. Therefore, just as students in the Bantu schools learned through rote learning, so did their teachers when going through training school.

Rote learning would not be a large issue for teachers if they were to receive practice in the art of teaching, comparable to student teaching practiced in the United States. However, due to the time constraint for the production of teachers, such practice was not considerable. The two-year program also cut down on subject matter within the curriculum. In several provinces within the country subjects such as algebra, geometry, writing, translation, and nature studies were eliminated from the course of study. Instructors taught to prepare all examinees for the range of questions expected on the exam, with the intention that they pass. The result was new teachers fresh out of training school who relied on the use of textbooks and tedious book work to carry the lesson, for they themselves found the syllabi placed in front of them meaningless and were unsure of how to actually teach the material. Without the knowledge of teaching techniques and the ability to put these techniques into practice in training situations, teachers were thrown into the classroom without the ability to judge the workings of the classroom and the students' understanding of the topics and to make adjustments accordingly. Teachers did not know how to trust their judgments about changes to make in lessons, activities, and the presentation of the material. Thus, teachers stuck to a straight path and rote learning, moving forward with blinders covering their peripheral vision, unable to see students and situations falling outside of that standard practice.

At the end of their examination and training, teachers were inspected on their actual class teaching, their reading, recitation, and board work among other things. The teacher was typically passed without regard for mastery of skill or effectiveness. Overall, teachers produced by Bantu training institutions were not teaching via principles or methods, but through patterned lessons and the guidance of textbooks. If teachers are not skilled and gifted at teaching, at effectively imparting knowledge, and at making a student interested and eager to learn, then passive students are likely the result. "Many Native children, who at first come eagerly to school, are disheartened by the meaningless tasks to which they are set, and have no great difficulty in inducing their parents to allow them to withdraw."⁷⁸ Busy work (such as the surplus of coloring I witnessed in grade R) given to a large class is a simple solution for teachers but is a detriment to the student in terms of educational skills, eagerness, and effort.

One of the biggest issues surrounding the inadequate teaching staff of Bantu schools was the lack of supervision in place to monitor and support the young and in-experienced teachers. Management of previous Bantu schools should have consisted of regular assessment of teachers in practice, where supervisors attend classes and observe the teacher's conduct of lessons, relationship with the students, and overall understanding and performance of the students. Ideally, teachers should have had a supervisor who could guide them in the most productive direction with regards to their individual classes. They should have received constructive criticism and an explanation as to why their teaching methods may not have been working effectively within the classroom. Ideally teachers would have undergone frequent discussions with these experienced advisors and would have been given the opportunity to get advice on issues and assistance with achieving their goals. Despite the immense benefits this would have provided to the cast of weak and unsuccessful teachers, the Department of Native Affairs did not

⁷⁸ Loram, 109.

have the desire or the money to provide Bantu schools with such skilled advisors as were available in white schools. Thus, teachers were left to command their overcrowded classes as they wished, resulting in busy work that is easy to correct in mass numbers and a surplus of playtime.

Implications of Township Culture on Education

Significant research has not been conducted in the townships of South Africa on the cultures within the domestic space and the community; however, my research thus far has directed my hypothesis to this area: the townships and the domestic places that surround the poorly functioning public schools. Theory often used to explain lackluster educational systems points to the culture that encompasses it. The establishment and importance of a culture of learning has its cultural ties. Patterns have arisen that point to rote learning, poor teaching skills, low morale, and the learning conditions in schools as leading causes for high percentages of dropouts and failures in South Africa. The relationships between those who impart knowledge (teachers and parents) and the learners must also be considered. Overall, relationships and the sharing of educational practices and beliefs are what construct much of an individual's culture and a community's culture of learning.

Culture, when defined as “consisting of shared ideas, which are learned and affected by experience and which constitute a system of knowledge expressed in social interaction and in patterned behavior,”⁷⁹ is easily applicable to the individual as opposed to a society at large. Jack R. Rollwagen, a cultural anthropologist who specializes in world poverty and economic underdevelopment as well as world system analysis, and the founder of the academic journal, “Urban Anthropology,” has developed a relative and unique theory on what constitutes culture.

⁷⁹ Van Heerden, 52.

According to him, there is no truth to the idea of a “society” where members share a culture, follow similar trajectories, and interpret the everyday using the same thought patterns. Instead, his theoretical approach to explaining the individual’s position in a larger social body is based around the concept of personal relationships. He understands individuals as creating their own unique culture based on their individual relationships, the sharing of ideas in these relationships, and the application of these ideas in their lives.

Analyzing cultural pluralism (the notion that minority groups hold on to their independent cultural traditions) in a complex society helps to explain Rollwagen’s theory of human relationships and individualistic definitions of culture. Cultural traditions are thought by many anthropologists to be implanted in different “fields of activity” in the social world.⁸⁰ Individuals take up certain positions and hold distinct relationships in each field; however, these “fields of activity” are all interlaced. They are also all “fields of social interaction,” where individuals form bonds with others in that particular field and share ideas and form beliefs revolving around the network’s activities. The ideas thriving in these small units of correspondence thus form a cultural facet, which subsequently fits among the other pieces of one’s culture that is defined by alternative “fields of activity and social interaction” that the individual is involved in. In the end, each individual’s idea of culture is composed of different sets of shared beliefs that have been determined by their specific sub-groups of society.⁸¹

Education is not high on the list of values in the black community. The African community of South Africa is a complex social structure with a culture composed of many interconnected fields of activity, each defined by both Western ideas and by indigenous traditions. To begin to understand the position of education in the structure of black society, the

⁸⁰ Loram, 109.

⁸¹ Ibid.

valued fields of social interaction must first be defined. Current research on these fields have highlighted the following as being most pertinent to the lives of the black community: the fields of domesticity, the community, kin, politics, occupation, religion, ancestral practices, and tradition.⁸² In these valued fields of activity, education does not appear.

The low value of education in black culture is evident in the poor culture of learning both in the home and at school. Such features include: poor attendance, high dropout rate, unenthusiastic teachers, low moral and an absence of inspiration, and extremely dismal assessment results, matriculation results and outcomes overall.⁸³ Looking at this long list of visible evidence occurring in primarily black schools, I ask what has the biggest influence over these unattractive features and poor outcomes? As mentioned previously, governmental and social policy has some effect on the workings of these schools, but when these two factors are being adapted and amended and outcomes are not changing accordingly, then there must be another influence at play.

Based on the definition of culture adopted from Rollwagen, blame for students' poor performance, lack of interest, and low matriculation rates must be placed on those responsible for imparting and promoting a culture of learning among the youth. Thus, in the field of education, where the values of effort, diligence, and curiosity are typically stressed, the teachers and parents of the black education system are falling short and are doing little to foster these qualities in their students and children. Overall, it is my argument that the persistent poor outcomes of primarily black schools in South Africa are the responsibility of school administration, teachers, and parents - those responsible for imparting knowledge and building a culture of learning.

⁸² Van Heerden, 54.

⁸³ Steyn, "School Management in South Africa," 100.

Though Rollwagen's theory identifies culture as unique to each individual, people are involved in similar social groupings; thus, it is typical that a community will share similar beliefs. During apartheid, the black population of South Africa banded together to foster black consciousness and to fight for black empowerment. During this time, a strong system of beliefs and ideas, including black empowerment, civil rights, and equal opportunities resonated throughout most of the black fields of activity, creating a powerful new culture for the black community. Education was hit hard during the apartheid struggle. The black culture of learning, already weak because of indigenous values⁸⁴, was broken down even further as learners resisted both authority and the Afrikaans apartheid education system.⁸⁵

Hostility to white authority served as a guiding device for blacks as they began to redefine their culture, for themselves, by themselves, and unique to themselves. This ideology was central in each field of black life, and it was consistently passed from relationship to relationship and became ingrained in the culture of each individual. It is also worth mentioning that during this period of heightened "black consciousness", the community and the family became even more important in black society; thus the sharing of belief systems, frustrations, and ideas (among many other things) was constantly being transferred from one member to the next. At the end of apartheid, the values established by the family and the community would have a drastic impact on an individual's perspectives and actions. Consequently, because parents and learners had challenged education and the authorities in the school system for some time, a passive attitude towards education became culturally defined, and a cycle of uninterested and apathetic students was initiated.

⁸⁴These values do not coincide with traditional Western ideas of education but rather familial relationships, domestic responsibilities, and skills of labor and craft.

⁸⁵ Van Zyl, 14.

Political and social history throughout apartheid was not the only factor that produced apathetic students, however. The culture of the domestic space, the attention parents place on education outside of the classroom, and what is valued (over education) within the black community must also be looked at. Little research has been conducted on this potential factor, and a detailed ethnography of the culture within the home and the values of township communities will have to be obtained in order to fully flesh out this hypothesis. In the meantime, recorded personal accounts from township inhabitants for various other studies have been examined in the search for general values within the domestic space that could point to the casual neglect of education in the black community.

Through these accounts it is revealed that mainly women run the domestic and community fields of the township. This system is linked with past and present migrant labor systems where men were and still are separated from their families in order to pursue a low-paying job in, for example, either a factory, a mine, or at a farm.⁸⁶ The Bantu linked womanhood to caring for and sustaining the family, not to earning a wage, and while men were gone, women were responsible for building the community and fulfilling community needs. While manhood was once linked to being a provider, it is now linked to the number of sexual partners one man has: “manhood connected to a man as a head of household is disappearing and being replaced by other values, where the man as lover with many girlfriends, *isoka*, has become confirmation of manhood.”⁸⁷ In general, Bantu men found work hard to come by and would neglect unpaid work and care of the family for fear of further losing their manhood.

Still today, women in the township lack the steady and reliable assistance of men and are often stuck maintaining the household and caring for many children (including many times foster

⁸⁶ Bak, “Townships in Transition: Women’s Caring Keeps the Township Together,” 258.

⁸⁷ Bak, 259.

children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews) by themselves. Motherhood is highly valued within the township community; however, the domestic space in which women are so dedicated does not cater well to the needs of a primary or secondary school student. One of the biggest issues students face at home is the lack of a quiet place to study and to complete their assignments. The small shack is most often always crowded, and sources of light are insufficient. In addition to the unfavorable setting, when students get home from school their primary responsibility is not to their studies but to their domestic duties, and they are called upon by their mothers to assist with chores and the care of younger children.

Furthermore, women in the townships are of little help when it comes to assisting their children with schoolwork. Women who were educated during apartheid (up until 1994) underwent a very domestically-centered education where curriculum focused on sewing, cooking, and other household duties. Thus, the schoolwork and subjects their children are bringing home are beyond their mothers' academic level. Women in the townships also have little faith in the benefits of having a sound education. The economy in South Africa is not conducive to employment at the present time, let alone to blacks with a secondary education under their belts; therefore, women would rather have their children help them at home and with the younger children than support an endeavor that seemingly does not produce significant results.

This unsupportive environment has notably affected township children as students. Under their mother's guidance, children are taught to be quiet and respectful of their elders. They are expected to fulfill the duties asked of them, and any questioning is frowned upon. This translates negatively in the classroom: "Pupils were not encouraged to ask probing questions or to query issues. When pupils asked questions, they were sometimes told, 'Don't be clever from the

bush.’’⁸⁸ Children learn primarily from observation and imitation rather than query and use participation in daily activities and tasks of the black community as the basis for their education. Questioning is not encouraged, and children often fear the reprimand they would receive for disrespecting their parents. Similarly, parents refrain from questioning their children as well, and they do not see the point of testing their children on comprehension of lessons, or mastery of the material they are learning. Parents instead base their child’s growth on real-life experiences within the fields of activity prominent in the community. Unfortunately, there are few events that children are exposed to that fall outside of typical duties and daily activities and that provoke them and stimulate their interest.⁸⁹ All in all, students receive little support and motivation outside of the classroom, resulting in a flat education where they accept the facts they are given and the experiences they have at face value; their education is based on the values instilled by a cycle of poorly-educated and apathetic parents who were raised in the same manner.

In U.S. inner city schools a poor culture of learning is also established in the home and is reflected in student work ethic and intellectual understanding. Severe behavioral problems and high dropout rates can be traced back to students’ parents and the lack of parental participation in fostering a culture of learning beyond the classroom. Misbehavior in inner city schools is frequently linked to the loss of family structure, poverty surrounding the family and community, violence, and low expectations, encouragement, and desire. Students are growing up in neighborhoods ridden with gangs, drugs, violence, and with parents who “have little hope of obtaining employment that will provide more than the barest of necessities and minimal, if any, health-care.”⁹⁰ Children in these circumstances have other things to worry about besides their

⁸⁸ Van Heerden, 64.

⁸⁹ Van Heerden, 60.

⁹⁰ Singiser, 171.

schoolwork. They are ultimately being burdened with the larger problems of their parents and the welfare of their family.

Setting a cycle of hostility towards education, parents who are unemployed and unable to provide for their children lose faith in the benefits of education. Inner city adolescents, "live in communities in which the rhetoric that stresses education as the route to mobility is subverted by daily evidence to the contrary," where parents, relatives, and neighbors are jobless and in poverty, and are demonstrating that education is not a guarantee for a good job and a secure future.⁹¹ Thus students surrounded by these conditions know that going to school will not ensure a future free of struggle, and they avoid the insecurity of the situation by dropping out of school early, confirming joblessness. They then choose to follow paths they are more familiar and comfortable with, on the streets and with gangs where affirmation and acceptance offers them a sense of worth.⁹²

Reminiscent of South African black males, men in inner cities of the United States who are unemployed may feel deprived of their manhood because of their inability to provide financially for their families. Acting as a caregiver to their children would not serve to enhance their shrunken feelings of masculinity; therefore, they are not dedicated or reliable father figures. As in the townships, men are not stable characters within the household, and mothers are left to be the main caregivers with a different male partner frequently flowing in and out of the home.⁹³ Mothers are often times young dropouts as well, who have children as a way to feel worth, and they are unable to provide a suitable culture of learning for their children when the time comes.

Parents in these circumstances may lack expertise or knowledge as to how to help their children, but there is little evidence that they do not care. However, both their lack of expertise and their lack of suitable circumstances for promoting the children's

⁹¹ Yeo, 57.

⁹² Yeo, 31.

⁹³ Johnson, *Failing School Failing City: The Reality of Inner City Education*, 46

educational development, means that the expectations which schools should have about the possibility of home support must be realistically based.⁹⁴

Opposition to education is also fostered by African American parents who believe that education strips their children of their customs and culture, and replaces the black in them with white: “He or she must learn to think and act white... a minority person must give up his own group attitudes, ways of thinking and behaving, and, of course, identity... a subtractive process.”⁹⁵ African American inner city parents often believe that schools are biased in the curriculum and that teachers and administration fail to understand black children and what their educational needs are. With this fear lurking among parents, children often oppose the efforts of teachers, the rules, and school in general in order to hold on to their roots and avoid a disconnection with their community. All in all, “These ambivalent attitudes toward education have made it difficult to adapt and succeed in educational settings.”⁹⁶

A culture of learning outside of the school is just as vital to a student’s educational growth as is the experience within the classroom. Parents of students in both South Africa’s townships and in inner city U.S. schools may want nothing more than for their children to have a strong education that will help them hold a decent job and will provide for them in their futures. Upward mobility within society through the means of a solid education is not just a myth, and parents know that this credential is mandatory if they desire a better life for their children. What parents do not understand, however, is that a sound education must continue outside the classroom as well, and that schools are not the only agents of change. In order to improve student outcomes in township and inner city schools, a culture of learning must be cultivated, beginning inside the home and with the family.

⁹⁴ Quinton, 65.

⁹⁵ Yeo, 56.

⁹⁶ Yeo, 57-58.

Conclusion

South Africa's township schools have been suffering from poor outcomes for decades, beginning during the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and persisting after the end of apartheid to the present. When examining why these schools produce such dismal outcomes, it is evident that a lack of funding, ineffective policies, and lack of attention are not the cause. Despite receiving ample attention from the government, these previously disadvantaged schools fall short in assessment scores, matriculation rates, and overall success of the students.

Examining the lives of students outside of school, it is clear that educational stimulation and continuous learning are not occurring within the home. While it is commonly understood that a student's dedication to his or her work, their diligence, and their success are a reflection of the learning and the encouragement that occurs beyond the classroom, the parents within townships are unable to fulfill this role of the at-home teacher. According to the values of the township community, education is not an important matter and is shadowed by elements such as domestic life, family relations, and community interaction. Simultaneously, single mothers are the norm in township communities where fathers either abandon their families or are too busy earning a wage to devote time to the care and attention of children. Thus, when students come home from school, it is their first and foremost duty to cater to the needs of their mothers, which most likely includes domestic chores and caring for younger children. Schoolwork gets pushed aside without a second thought and without any consideration by parents.

My research suggests that a culture of learning established outside of the school and in the home is key to producing desirable outcomes in schools. This hypothesis is applicable not only in South Africa but also to inner-city schools of the United States as well, where family

structure is just as fragmented and unstable. Similarly, such U.S. students grow up in circumstances where they must carry the burdens of their parents and families and do not have the focus, the support, or the attention to dedicate themselves to their studies.

A cycle of apathetic students and parents has formed in both inner city United States and the townships of South Africa. A culture of learning must be fostered in the home first before educational outcomes will improve. Suggestions of how to begin to grow a culture of learning can be made; however, further research is needed. Research should first be conducted within the realm of the domestic space both in South African townships and in inner cities of the U.S. in order to further validate my hypothesis. To further examine this issue, ethnographers must go into these communities and record the lives of the families, their daily duties, their values and morals, and the relationships of members of the family, especially that between the parent(s) and children.

First and foremost, the growth of a culture of learning must begin with the parents. When the parents understand and see education as an investment in their children's future, and when they are convinced that learning must not only occur inside of school but must also continue in the home via stimulation by parents, then a culture of learning will be more welcomed and the environment for its growth more hospitable. The way in which the parents may be able to grasp the concept of at-home extension of learning is through personal experience. Thus, adult courses should begin in the community, including various training courses, business courses, ESL courses, etc., which would prompt them to work on the material outside of the course and allow them to see the greater results and success they receive by reviewing and practicing the material on their own outside of the classroom. Only by having this firsthand experience will parents

know to assist their children with their schoolwork at home, ensuring the child's understanding of and comfort with the material they are learning.

By developing a culture of learning within one generation of students, a new educational trajectory can begin to grow. Students whose parents are involved in their children's education and who place high importance on success and matriculation are more likely to succeed and to see the value of education. These students later become both parents and teachers and will transfer the same attention towards their own children's schooling, which will only serve to build upon a population of eager and active students in generations to come. All it takes is one generation of students raised in a culture of learning to abolish the cycle of apathetic students being produced by township and inner city schools and to set following generations on a promising course in both education and professional success.

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