

2010

Road to Equality in South African Education: a Qualitative Study

<https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2010.edu.04>

Kevin O'Brien

Dominican University of California

Survey: Let us know how this paper benefits you.

Recommended Citation

O'Brien, Kevin, "Road to Equality in South African Education: a Qualitative Study" (2010). *Graduate Master's Theses, Capstones, and Culminating Projects*. 115.

<https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2010.edu.04>

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at Dominican Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Master's Theses, Capstones, and Culminating Projects by an authorized administrator of Dominican Scholar. For more information, please contact michael.pujals@dominican.edu.

Road to Equality in South African Education: a Qualitative Study

Kevin O'Brien

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

School of Education and Counseling and Psychology
Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

May 2010

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank Dr. Madalienne Peters who has been in my corner throughout this entire process and who was instrumental in my nomination for the summer 2010 fellowship to the LEAP school of Science and Maths in Cape Town South Africa. I would like to thank Professor Sarah Zykanov for her gift of editing and critical analysis, which transformed my paper into an actual working project. Dr. Rande Webster and Dr. Edward Kujawa provided me with a wealth of information on the LEAP school and South Africa. Last but definitely not least, thank you to my friends and family who have supported me and provided me with encouragement throughout the research project.

Table of Contents

Title Page	1
Acknowledgements.....	2
Table of Contents	3
Abstract.....	5
Chapter 1 Introduction	6
Statement of Problem.....	7
Purpose.....	8
Research Question	8
Theoretical Rationale	9
Dominate Culture and Education.....	9
Assumptions.....	10
Background and Need.....	11
Chapter 2 Review of the Literature.....	12
Historical Review of Education in South Africa	12
Administrative Records	14
The LEAP School of Science and Maths.....	16
Academic	20
Whole Person Development	20
Social Responsibility Node.....	20
National Educational Framework Contributor.....	20
Teach with Africa and Dominican University Partnership.....	21
Chapter 3 Methodology	23
Sample and Site.....	23
Access and Permissions	23
Data Gathering Strategies	23
Data Analysis Approach	24
Ethical Standards	24
Chapter 4 Analysis.....	25
Chapter 5 Discussion	28
Summary of Major Findings.....	28
Comparison of Finding/Results with Existing Studies	28

Limitations of Study	28
Implications for future Research.....	29
Conclusions.....	29
References.....	31

Abstract

South Africa is currently experiencing a crisis in its educational systems that if not addressed, could threaten the stability of the newly established democracy. A lack of access to quality education and severe shortage of skilled trained educators is perpetuating vestiges of the old apartheid state in the nation. Approximately 6,000 students graduate from South Africa's teacher training programs each year to meet the demand of over 12.1 million learners (Evoh, 2007).

This study examines the current crisis facing the educational system of post-apartheid South Africa and more specifically how the LEAP (Langa Educational Assistance Program) school of Science and Maths could be used as a possible model for institutional educational change that may be applied on a national scale. Interviews were conducted during four independent sessions with Dominican University faculty and Dominican Fellows to discuss their involvement and experiences with the LEAP School of Science and Maths in South Africa.

Results indicated that since 2005, the LEAP School of Science and Maths has been producing consistent results, with an upward trend of students achieving passing scores on the annual matriculation examination. Moreover, 90% of LEAP school graduates are moving on to tertiary levels of education in a country where only 5% of black Africans are eligible for such education.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Transformation of a society entails a complete change in both form and substance, a metamorphosis, as in the life of insects such as butterflies. The transition from an invisible egg, to a larva, then a pupa and finally a flying insect with all its beautiful colors take the butterfly through significant changes in form and substance.

~Mamhela Ramphela (South African Activist and Academic) 2008

Growing up in the United States as a middle class, white, male, it was easy for me to take for granted all of life's amenities, particularly education. White privilege afforded me with the opportunity to assume that everyone had the chance to go to school and was given an education that would carry them to college and later serve them in "real life." Like many middle and upper class Americans I had a sense of entitlement, which I never actually addressed or was aware of until I began to study history and American studies as an undergraduate at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

My entire worldview seemed to have changed after my first *Race and Racism* class with Dr. David Stannard. In this class we studied social and political institution from around the world that worked to oppress and subjugate people, particularly people of color. I quickly realized both how fortunate I have been to have grown up the way I did, and also how I have unintentionally benefited from institutional racism. From that point on, I have been dedicated to educating myself on issues of inequity and cultural pluralism. The first step in transforming society is recognizing one's own role within it and how one's actions have an effect on others.

I became specifically interested in the social and political movements of South Africa after attending a seminar at Dominican University of California in which

educators involved in a teacher exchange program known as Teach With Africa (TWA) discussed their two-month experiences working with children from black Township communities at the LEAP school of Science and Maths. These educators spoke of the legacies of apartheid inherited by the youth of South Africa and how they struggle to overcome insurmountable odds in nearly every aspect of their lives. Chronic poverty, substance abuse and community violence is the social reality for many of the students.

Many LEAP students are orphans living in child-headed households after losing their parents to HIV/AIDS or violence related deaths (leapschool.org.za). Unemployment in the nation, even among the well-educated population has hit 25% (Ramphela, 2008) making many South Africans forgo educational endeavors. However, even against these seemingly insurmountable hardships, these students still pushed forward to make positive changes in their lives.

Returning educators spoke of the persistence, perseverance and hope these students embodied even when faced with these challenges. The LEAP school is a beacon of light for many of these students and provides them with an opportunity to grow academically and as individuals.

Statement of Problem

South Africa is currently experiencing a crisis in its educational systems that if not addressed could threaten the stability of the newly established democracy. A lack of access to quality education and severe shortage of skilled trained educators is perpetuating vestiges of the old apartheid state the nation is striving to rid itself of. Approximately, 6,000 students graduate from South African teacher training programs each year to meet the demand of over 12.1 million learners (Evoh, 2007).

To compound the teacher shortage problem many of these trained teachers either do not enter the profession or leave to teach in other countries. To alleviate the shortage of teachers many schools in traditionally *impoverished* areas have resorted to hiring unqualified and untrained teachers.

The issues of teacher and resources shortage is exasperated when looked at in context, with low matriculation examination results among black Africans particularly in the content areas of mathematics and sciences. The matriculation examination is seen as the single most important factor for South African seniors wanting to gain employment or move on to higher education after secondary grade school (Lubisis & Murphy, 2002).

Furthermore the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the country has contributed to the lack of teacher in South Africa. Evoh (2007) cites nearly 12.7 percent of all educators in South Africa are HIV positive. The ramifications of this health crisis contribute to the education crisis because educators have to leave their jobs to treat their illness leaving vacancies that may or may not be filled.

Purpose

This study examines the current crisis facing the educational system of post-apartheid South Africa. This study examines the LEAP School of Science and Maths as a possible model for institutional educational change that may be applied on a national scale.

Research Question

How is the LEAP school of Science and Maths addressing the current crisis in South African education? How could the LEAP school be used as a model for educational change throughout the country?

Theoretical Rationale

Vestiges of the apartheid state have left South Africa with many challenges. As in the United States, institutionalized racism continues to create barriers for marginalized and disenfranchised peoples of South Africa. What derived from this kind of white supremacist mentality is a system that works to benefit and perpetuate the dominant culture. It is important when discussing institutional racism to understand that it functions as a system of power and privilege that manifest itself in both peoples' attitudes and social structure (Anderson & Collins, 2009) meaning, people may not be overtly racist but they operate in and benefit from the system thus perpetuating it.

Dominate Culture and Education

French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, is a leading theorist on how the dominate culture of a society structures its educational system (Fruchter, 2007). Bourdieu theorized that each dominant culture had "habitus" or "cultural capital" which are values, beliefs, expectations and rituals shared by all in the dominant class. Children of the dominant class learn this culture through their parents, speech, family traditions and media. Bourdieu argued that each nation's educational system is a reflection of the dominant culture's "habitus." Built into the curriculum and pedagogical approaches of these educational systems are assumptions about intellect, achievement and overall student ability, which often determine overall student success as an adult. Bourdieu argued that children of the dominant culture are better prepared and more adapted to navigating through the educational system (Fruchter, 2007).

Educational theorist, Paulo Freire, argues that education plays a unique role in systems of power and social dominance because it can be used as a source of liberation

and self-emancipation or to create a “culture of silence.” For Freire (1988) education highlights the intersection of power and politics because schools are the place where values and ideologies are transmitted. Freire argues that dominant cultures and systems of oppression are maintained and perpetuated through the educational concept known as “banking.” The “banking” system refers to the practice of educators seeing students as empty containers that need to be filled up with information about the world around them and eventually memorize and replicate it. The concept approaches students as “adaptable and manageable beings” (Freire, 1988) in which information is only received, making the learning an unreciprocated process. The central problem with the “banking” process is that it never truly allows students to evaluate and critically analyze the world around them for themselves, making it impossible for the student to question and transform their reality.

Assumptions

There are inherent biases and assumptions that may not be readily apparent to me because I am a white educator researching a racially and culturally diverse population. Whites have the unintended luxury of being oblivious to some of the racist constructs of our society. The viewpoint may be expressed by the belief “If I don’t experience it, if I don’t see it, then it doesn’t exist.”

Eurocentric thinking dominates our daily lives without anyone acknowledging it. This unconscious mentality leads to important questions that are never asked and the creation of power structures that give rise to social inequities. Race, for example is a category that in most cases describes “non-white” peoples. From this perspective, white

people are left out of the conversation and assumed as the “norm” while everyone else is the “other” race (Kincheloe, 1998).

Background and Need

South Africa is currently in a state of transition moving farther away from its history of apartheid and closer to achieving democracy. However, this transition is a challenging one because it involves the uprooting of an entire national infrastructure based on racism and inequity. Nearly every national institution had been racialized under the old apartheid state and now, in an effort to achieve the goal of democracy, South Africans have to take on the challenge of creating sustainable and equitable national institutions.

Nowhere is this need more important than in the South African educational system. Education in the country had been used as a powerful tool to maintain the socio-economic structure of apartheid. Black Africans were denied access to quality education and certain subject areas, particularly mathematics and sciences to prepare them for a life of servitude. Since the passage of the South Africa’s new democratic constitution in 1996, the nation has been seeking ways to make their countries educational system more equitable and more accessible.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Historical Review of Education in South Africa

The rise of apartheid, which literally means “apartness”, was a result of Afrikaners, white Africans or Boers, wanting to secure economic, political and social dominance in South Africa after World War Two. This took place with the creation of the National Party, a white supremacist political organization made of Afrikaners and English speaking whites. In 1948, the National Party won majority power in Parliament and immediately began to implement its racist agenda.

Thompson (1990) describes three major ideals of the apartheid system. First, South Africa consisted of four racial categories: White, Colored, Indian, and African. Second, whites are the genetically superior and civilized race that is entitled to absolute power over the nation. Third, the dominant white race has no obligation to support or provide equal facilities for any other race in South Africa. The result of such ideas manifested themselves in a sophisticated system of segregation and classification of all non-whites living in South Africa which inevitable led to extreme inequalities in every facet of life (Thompson, 1990).

In compliance with the apartheid agenda of South Africa, education was formally differentiated based on individuals’ ethnicity and color. It is important to note that even before apartheid was official adopted by the South Africa in 1948, efforts to systematically marginalize and disenfranchise black Africans had been in place since European countries first colonized the country (Thompson). Entire school governing bodies and infrastructures were established for people of different ethnicities and colors to receive their education. The racist ideologies of apartheid which main function was to

politically oppress and economically exploit black Africans manifested itself in education through the type of schooling one would receive. In their assessment of South African schools, Lubisi and Murphy, (2002) illustrate the differentiated education that students received stating, “Black, particularly African, pupils were largely to be given an education that prepared them for servitude, while white pupils were trained for overlordship” (p. 256). The ramifications of this kind of educational training helped to sustain and perpetuate the status quo in South African society.

An example of how the infrastructure of South African education was compartmentalized under apartheid can be seen with an examination of the 1983 constitution. Under the constitution White education functioned under a nationally governing body known as the Department of Education and Culture in the House of Assembly (HOA). The House of Delegates (HOD) oversaw Indian education and the House of Representatives (HOR) controlled Colored education. Black African education operated under the Department of Education and Training (DET). All four of these departments functioned on a national level and operated under the Department of National Education (DNE), which was controlled by the central apartheid government. All of the schools operating under their respective departments were segregated by color and ethnicity including the staff and teachers (Lubisi & Murphy, 2002).

A centerpiece to South African education has been the annual senior matriculation examination, also known as the Senior Certificate Examination. The examination was first introduced in 1916 as an entrance examination to prestigious universities in South Africa but has since been adopted nationally in each province as a secondary schooling exit exam. Since the national adoption of the matriculation exam in 1923, great

importance has been placed on this test because of its dual function as an exit examination from grade school an entrance qualification for higher education institutions. Many South Africans view the passage of the matriculation examination as a great achievement and the only way ensure employment and access to higher education.

Because of the importance of this test the apartheid government used the matriculation test to control and manipulate the social, economic and political development of its citizens. For example black African provinces or townships with little to no resources for education would consistently under achieve on the matriculation examination resulting in closed opportunities to employment and access to higher education (Lubisis & Murphy, 2002).

Administrative Records

Similar to the shadows of pre-civil rights legislation hanging over the United States educational system, South Africans struggle with the remnants of apartheid. The newly established democratic government created a constitution that emphasized human rights and socioeconomic equality. If one is familiar with the inhuman history of the apartheid system it is easy to understand why these themes are so explicit in the new South African constitution. The South African government understood the intrinsic connection between socioeconomic disparities and poor education, so in an effort to reverse over one hundred years of inequality in education the government specifically included the right to basic education to every South African in its constitution (Berger, 2003).

The framework for contemporary South African education was derived from the nation's Constitution that grants power to the national Department of Education to

develop policy, assessment norms and serve as a monitor for all levels of education in the country. In compliance with the constitution the South African passed the South African School Act (SASA), which set further national standards for schools and learners.

According to the SASA, it is mandatory for all South African citizens to attend school beginning at the age of seven until they reach the age of 15 or 12th grade, whichever comes first (Shindler, 2007).

Guided by the national framework, each of the nine South African Province's local legislatures and governments run all educational affairs and prioritize the implementation of programs as they see fit. The national department of education is comprised of eight branches: Administrative, Auxiliary and Associated Services, Systems Planning and Monitoring, Social and School Enrichment, Quality Promotion and Development, General Education and Training, Further Education and Training and Higher Education. Each department works with local provincial governments to ensure national standards are being achieved

(<http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/education.htm#Nationalandprovincialdepartments>).

The dissemination of responsibility is further broken down within each provincial region by democratically electing School-Governing Bodies (SBs) comprised of parents, educators, non-educator community members and secondary school students. One of the most pressing issues in contemporary South Africa is the allocation of funds and integration of formally segregated schools. Yusuf Sayed (2005), of the department of international development, points to the infrastructure of the new education system as defined by the SASA and the creation decentralized government as defined by the new constitution as the source of the problem. While the central government of South Africa

is responsible for creating national standards and basic education funds, the SASA puts a large responsibility on individual schools within the provinces to manage all other issues. According to the SASA, each school must create a SGB who oversees issues such as, the hiring and firing of teachers, official language spoken at school (there are eleven official languages of South Africa), price setting for school fees and creating school standards. (Sayed, 2005).

In theory the idea of placing the responsibility of school management into the hands of parents seemed to be beneficial, but two very important problems exist with this model. First, many high performing schools under the apartheid system have now created exclusionary standards in an effort to preserve high performance. Second, many parents of South Africa's poorest children cannot afford to play such an active role in their local school as defined by SGB's because they need to work to provide for their family (Sayed, 2005).

The LEAP School of Science and Maths

Since the official end of apartheid in 1994 and the creation of a new democratic constitution that made access to basic education an inalienable right, the South African government as well as non-government organizations have invested large amounts of money into township communities. However, past annual matriculation results have shown that these financial investments have not made significant improvement in areas of math and science. In 2003, only 28% of Black Africans graduated from high school and only 5% went onto institutions of higher education. In that same year 69% of white students graduated from high schools with 36% of them going on to schools of higher education (LEAP Science and Maths School, n.d.).

John Gilmour's journey as a transformational figure began in 1989 when he underwent a personal transformation in which he looked at his role as a white male in apartheid South Africa. Gilmour had reached a crossroads in which he could have continued to reap the benefits of an unjust system or make a positive change toward equality in his country. He decided to take his life's passion of being an educator and use it as a tool for transformation.

Gilmour founded the LEAP school of Science and Maths in 2004 in an effort to address inequalities in the educational system of South Africa. Initially, the main purpose of the LEAP school was to provide a community centered school for black South Africans who had not met the math or science requirements for the annual matriculation examinations. At the LEAP school, students would receive a higher caliber of education in the area of math and science than their public school option where the highest level of science was often completed through a home economics class. This basic level math and science provided to black South Africans provided to them in public school set them up for failure on the matriculation examination which in turn severely limits opportunities to attend college or university. This lack of training in the areas of math and science is a legacy of the days of apartheid in which all education for black South Africans was for them to fill a role of servitude. The LEAP school serves as an intervention to the vicious cycle of failure of the matriculation examination, which then block access to higher education that in turn denies these students any opportunity for decent paying jobs.

Gilmour's mission was to create a system of schools that would support students from South Africa's township communities that have historically been marginalized and disenfranchised under apartheid. Gilmour's vision of breaking down the oppressive and

destructive nature of apartheid began in 1989, when as principle of the all white Pineland high school in Cape Town he initiated a program called “Africa Week”. The goal of “Africa Week” was to bus black African students from neighboring townships to spend a week with white students at Pineland high in an effort to break down stigmas and myths about each race.

The success of this initial program allowed Gilmour in 1990 with the opportunity to create the LEAP program (Langa Educational Assistance Program). The LEAP program, which lasted from 1990-1995, bused 100 students from the impoverished township of Langa, to Pineland High School three times a week for instruction in math and science. While Gilmour was pleased with the initial success of the LEAP program he wanted to reach more students from the Township.

In 1996, the LEAP program changed the way it operated. Instead of busing a large number of students to Pinelands, he recruited 30 teachers from Pineland and other surrounding suburban schools to be bused to Langa to give instruction in math and science three times a week for the entire year. Between 2001 and 2003, the Langa community began to express concern around the idea of white educators coming in to “save” black students. Teachers from the Township believed they could provide the same quality of education as their white counterparts but were burdened by low-pay and time constraints. Responding to this concern, Gilmour decided to change the format of the LEAP program yet again. Instead of busing teachers in, Gilmour used funds raised for the program to train and pay Langa Township teachers to give extra instruction in content areas of math and science. These were only the first steps in John Gilmour’s vision for transforming education in South Africa.

In 2003, Gilmour began to find investors to fund an independent school that would take a more holistic approach to education than the more traditional system currently in place. After securing financial backing from various organizations the LEAP school opened in the suburbs of Langa, Cape Town. The students that the LEAP school serves are from communities that are economically and educationally disadvantaged. Chronic poverty, substance abuse and community violence is the social reality for many of the students at the LEAP school. Furthermore, many LEAP school students are orphans living in child-headed households after losing their parents to AIDS or violence related deaths (LEAP Science and Maths School, n.d.)

A holistic approach is built into the LEAP schools infrastructure to address the behavioral challenges and values systems of learners from disadvantaged areas to support their academic endeavors. Students are taught to view education as a vehicle of change both personally and socially. The educational philosophy of the LEAP school is to create learners that will not only be successful as students but as overall citizens as well. To achieve this goal, the LEAP school has integrated a Life Orientation class that focuses on issues of family, community and leadership. The theory behind Life Orientation is that it provides an opportunity for students to have a voice and discuss issues they struggle with such as living in poverty, racism and inequality. Faculty at the LEAP school believe the process to be therapeutic by providing an opportunity for students to come to terms or voice their opinions about personal issues.

Each student is required to take on a community outreach initiative. This works to improve the communities from which these students live as well as develop a sense of self-empowerment. Life Orientation helps learners develop skills and confidence they

will need to be successful in both their academic and social lives. The overall LEAP school objectives as published on the school homepage are as follows:

Academic

Each LEAP learner should graduate from LEAP with a pass, which enables access to universities (including technology universities), with Science, Math and English on the highest grade. This will enable each learner to gain access to a broad spectrum of tertiary study opportunities, including, significantly, maths and science related opportunities.

Whole Person Development

LEAP is set up with the stated intention of intervening in the lives of adolescents. It is assumed that when learners enter LEAP that the patterns of their lives need to be changed significantly. The academic goals of LEAP will only be achieved if the other changes occur as part of the process of learning at LEAP. The Life Orientation classroom is the space in which the interventions are most often triggered, managed and monitored. Life Orientation strives to provide the learners with a sense of internal structure, so that as the academic pressures begin to build through high school and into tertiary studies, the learners have the capacity to manage and overcome these pressures. An environment in which positive role models are created in this way and where successes are shared and celebrated, helps break down old models associated with disadvantage.

Social Responsibility Node

LEAP acts as centre for a wide range of opportunities and activities created to enable people from all South African communities, as well as other countries, to meet and actively engage with one another. Each LEAP learner actively engages in at least one on-going community outreach initiative and strong emphasis is placed on giving back to the communities in which they live. LEAP is committed to providing teacher mentoring programs and sharing of resources with township teachers from partnering schools. By acting as a node, LEAP's long-term goal is to play an active part in the transformation of disadvantaged communities and those that are more privileged.

National Educational Framework Contributor

Through a desire to bring about the greatest degree of positive change in the shortest timeframe, LEAP actively seeks to share its innovation and entrepreneurial approach within the national public schooling framework. (LEAP Science and Maths School , n.d.)

The LEAP schools currently operate in three locations throughout South Africa with LEAP One and Two are located in Pinelands, and LEAP Three in Johannesburg.

The physical structure of LEAP school One and Two was created from a converted insurance company training facility. A Dominican University student who taught at the LEAP school in the summer of 2009 through the non-profit organization Teach with Africa describes her initial reaction to the school stating:

At first the building didn't feel like a school, because it wasn't. It was a company at one time. But, it didn't seem to matter to the students. Some schools you can tell are schools because they look like a school. They have a library, school office, fields, and buildings marked for grades or school subjects, but the LEAP school is different. You know it's a school when it's filled with its students buzzing, bustling around with excited faces, the faces of future South Africa.

Teach with Africa and Dominican University Partnership

Teach with Africa is a non-profit organization based out of San Francisco that sends multidisciplinary teams made of up teachers, counselors, technology educators and MBA students to Cape Town South Africa each summer to work in the 3 LEAP schools. The genesis of the TWA program emerged out of a multiple visits to Cape Town by founder Margie Schlenoff and husband and co-founder Larry Schlenoff. While in South Africa the Schlenoffs witnessed the incredible discrepancies in the South African educational system left in the wake of apartheid. Upon one of these visits Margie Schlenoff met founder of the LEAP school John Gilmour and toured the schools. So impressed with the LEAP school model and Gilmour's passion for educational transformation in the school, Schlenoff began to think of ways she could get involved to help the crisis. When Schlenoff returned to San Francisco, she began to look at various resources she could pull together to help the LEAP school. Because South Africa is home to 12.1 million learners and 75% teacher shortage in the country, one of the most immediate needs for the LEAP school was trained teachers specifically in the areas of math, science and technologies.

Dominican University of California's involvement with the LEAP schools of Science and Mathematics began in the fall of 2007 when Teach with Africa founder Margie Schienoff approached Rande Webster head of the special education department about selecting teachers who have completed or are about to complete the Dominican teacher credential program for summer fellowships at the LEAP schools in South Africa. Webster replied with an enthusiastic "yes." After conferencing with the Dean of Education Edward Kujawa, Rande Webster created a Teach with Africa steering committee to breakdown the logistics of the sending educators for the following summer to the LEAP school. While Webster worked on finding educators who were willing and qualified to become a fellow at the LEAP school, Margie Schienoff began to find the resources to actually send them. Margie knew a neighbor of hers had fundraising experience and approached her about the possibility of organizing an event to raise money to send these teachers to South Africa.

In February of 2008, the first TWA fundraising event occurred in San Francisco and raised an unprecedented \$80,000. Beginning in 2008, two multidisciplinary teams were sent to the LEAP schools with funds raised by TWA. The educators contributed to the schools and communities by providing important instruction and teaching techniques to instructors at the LEAP school to help raise achievement passage rates of the nationwide matriculation examination.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The researcher decided to take a qualitative approach when examining the stories from interviews regarding South Africa, the LEAP School of Science and Math and Teach with Africa participants. The stories gathered from participants in this study contain content of a social and emotional nature that would make a quantitative approach inappropriate. In an effort to achieve the maximum impact of these stories the researcher has contextualized the information in a narrative design based on interviews.

Sample and Site

A convenience sample of Dominican University faculty members, Teach with Africa fellows and LEAP school educators participated in this study. These participants were selected because they provide beneficial and accurate depictions of their own experiences with South African education.

Access and Permissions

All subjects that participated in this study were given consent forms approved by Dominican University of California's institutional review board that clearly stated the goals and purpose of this study. Furthermore, all subjects were assured that their participation in this study was voluntary and that all information remains confidential. Names or other identifying factors were not be used in the summary report.

Data Gathering Strategies

The researcher purposefully selected the subjects for the interview process of this study because they are experts on South African education. The researcher conducted a series of interviews at Dominican University of California's campus at the most convenient location for the interviewee. Both Dominican University faculty members that

participated in this study had first hand experience with the Teach with Africa program, the LEAP school of Science and Math as well as extensive knowledge of contemporary issues facing South African education.

Interviews with fellows from the Teach with Africa program were conducted in a private location on the Dominican University campus to minimize distraction and ensure privacy. South African participants in the interview process of this research were conducted via Skype and email. Additional information was obtained on the South African participants from speeches given at the Teach with Africa fundraising Gala on February 3, 2010 in San Francisco California.

Data Analysis Approach

All data and information collected was categorized by student, faculty member, TWA fellows as well as observations to triangulate information to ensure accurateness.

Ethical Standards

All procedures met relevant local, state, and federal regulations regarding use of human subjects in research. The study adhered to the ethical principles in the conduct of research with human subjects as set forth by the Dominican University of California IRBPHS Handbook. The research proposal was reviewed by the Dominican IRBPHS committee, and approved, number 8064.

Chapter 4 Analysis

When visitors come to the LEAP school one of the first aspects noticed is the pride the students take in coming and learning at the school. The interviewees described the culture of the LEAP schools as a tight knit community focused on academic rigor and personal growth. Students and faculty realized the importance of their being at LEAP and work together to achieve academic excellence and social justice.

The mutual respect the students have for one and other is evident in the school atmosphere. There is an understanding of the importance their work at the school will have on the personal lives of the students as well as the impact it will have on the future of South Africa. Current economic, social and political barriers have made education inaccessible for the majority black South Africans. Educators and fellows see their work at the LEAP school as a moral imperative, leveling the field for all South Africans. For every student who passes the matriculation examination through LEAP defies national statistics and brings hope to South Africa's future.

In the 6 years since the first LEAP school measurable achievement can be observed. In 2005 the LEAP school had its first class take the annual matriculation examination and achieved a 94% pass rate. 2008 represented a benchmark year for the school as it had its first cohort of students who attended all four years at the LEAP school. Of the 40 students who sat for the matriculation examination, all students received a 100% passing rate. Furthermore, in 2008 all learners surpassed regional averages set by the Western Cape Department of education in the areas of math and sciences.

In the past four years, 123 students sat for the annual matriculation examination, 115 of those students received passing scores. These scores have translated into many opportunities for the graduates with over 90% of them entering tertiary levels education at various colleges and universities throughout South Africa.

In each of the interviews conducted the topic of Life orientation was addressed. The social and emotional aspect to the LEAP school curriculum is a main pillar of the LEAP model but participants viewed its implementation differently. Dominican fellow #1 described the curriculum as a form of empowerment for the LEAP school by providing the students with an opportunity to have a voice in a safe place. Gilmour believes that only after students are given a voice and that voice is heard will they be able to achieve academic excellence. Incorporation of Life Orientation allows students to clear their mind giving them the opportunity to focus on the academic task at hand.

Dominican faculty # 2 interviewed agreed with Gilmour's assessment on educating the whole child but feared the LEAP school and other schools using the Life Orientation model in South Africa may not have the current infrastructure needed to handle sensitive topics or issues that may be brought up in these sessions. In comparing western models of social and emotional curriculum Dominican faculty # 2 believed the LEAP school needed more trained counselors who were equipped to handle possible fallout from a session before implementing a social and emotional curriculum.

Dominican fellow #2 described the holistic approach to education at the LEAP school as a reflection of Xhosa tradition, which encourages community, and the interconnectedness of individuals. For LEAP student and faculty developing the whole

child is akin to developing the whole community and find Life Orientation essential to academic and personal success.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Summary of Major Findings

South Africa's history of apartheid divided the country into a nation of haves and have-nots. The marginalization and subjugation of black Africans created a system of inequity that proved to be unsustainable. However, since the fall of apartheid the African National Congress has struggled to replace institutions that were once based on racist ideologies with new equitable and sustainable infrastructure. Many of South Africa's struggles are interconnected in a complex matrix of issues that cannot all be addressed as at but education however seems to be at the root. Education is the key for a successful South Africa. An uneducated population of unskilled workers will only continue to put strain on the new democracy and widen gaps of inequality.

Comparison of Finding/Results with Existing Studies

While conducting research for this report, it was challenging to find literature on the LEAP School of Science and Maths because the founding of the school was so recent. Readers will find similarities between this research and others in regards to historical context and review of contemporary problems facing the government and citizens of post apartheid South Africa. However, there is no other critical analysis of the LEAP school model to that the researcher came across in studying this subject.

Limitations of Study

Because literature on the LEAP School of Science and Maths was limited to the school website and blog pages from students and teachers I was unable to critically analyze peer reviewed resources. Information attained for this report directly relating to the LEAP school relied on interviews with students and teachers at the LEAP school.

Implications for future Research

Since 2005, the LEAP School of Science and Maths has been producing consistent results with an upward trend of students achieving passing scores on the annual matriculation examination. Moreover, 90% of LEAP school graduates are moving on to tertiary level of education in a country where only 5% of black Africans are eligible for such education. Further analysis of the LEAP school model needs to be conducted before implementation on a national scale.

Conclusions

The youth of South Africa have an important role to play in the transformation of their country. While the parents of these students fought to breakdown the institution of apartheid, the current generation has to solve important reconstruction issues that threaten the new democracy. Education is seen to be one of the most pressing issues facing students today because it dictates what employment opportunities will be available to them.

Under apartheid education was systematically designed to disenfranchise black Africans by withholding or not providing access to quality education. During this time, education for non-whites consisted only of trades that perpetuated a life of servitude to ensure the white dominance in the country. Now sixteen years after Apartheid the African National Congress is still seeking ways to fix the broken education system. A major contributing factor to the inequalities in the education system is the large economic discrepancies between whites and black South Africans often described as an economic apartheid.

Apartheid made it impossible for black South Africans or people of color to accumulate wealth through property or actual savings. This is especially evident when comparing resources at traditionally white schools to schools in township communities. True transformation cannot be fully realized until issues of economic inequalities are addressed. Ramphele (2008) argued that political power without economic power is slowing the process of bridging the gap affluent and poor populations stating “ there is only one economy, which marginalizes the majority of South Africans who are the poorest, least educated, least skilled while rewarding those with sought after skills and those connected to people with power and influence” (p. 245).

In this analysis we see that education in South Africa for black township students is not just about coming to school. Education is only a piece of a bigger puzzle in the creation of a sustainable post-apartheid South Africa and is connected to a matrix of issues that cannot all be addressed in the scope of this report. South Africans have to reconcile a past of white domination and inequality with a future that allows opportunities for all citizens to make critical and meaningful contributions to the developing country.

References

- Anderson, M & Collins, P. (2009). *Race, class & gender: An anthology*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Berger, E. (2003). The Right to education under South African constitution. *Columbia Law Review*, 614- 651. Retrieved July 14, 2009. JSTOR.
- Blau, J. (2003). *Race in the public schools: Perpetuating white dominance?*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienener Publishers Inc.
- Freire, P. (1988). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Corporation.
- Holtman, Z. & Louw, J. (2005). Social contact in South African: A Study of integrated schools ten years after apartheid. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 473-493. Retrieved: July 17, 2009. Academic Search Complete Database.
- LEAP School of Science and Maths. (n.d.) Homepage. Retrieved April 24, 2010 from: http://www.leapschool.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2&Itemid=3
- Lubisis, R. & Murphy, R. (2002). Assessment in South African schools. *Assessment in Education* , Vol. 9, No. 2. Retrieved: July 28, 2009. Academic Search Complete Database.
- Ramphela, M. (2008). *Laying ghost to rest: Dilemmas of the transformation in South Africa*. Heerengracht, Cape Town: NB Publishers.
- Republic of South Africa (2008) Education. *South Africa yearbook 2007-2008*. Retrieved April 24, 2010. http://www.gcis.gov.za/resource_centre/sa_info/yearbook/2007/chapter8.pdf

- Republic of South Africa. (2009) Education. National and provincial departments of education. Retrieved April 24, 2010.
<http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/education.htm#Nationalandprovincialdepartments>
- Sayid, Y. (2002). Decentralization and the construction of inclusion education policy in South Africa. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 115-125. Retrieved July 15, 2009: EBSCO.
- Shindler, J. (2007). Schooling for all in South Africa: Closing the gap. *International Review of Education*, 135-157. Retrieved: July 15, 2009. EBSCO.
- Smith, W., & Yolisa W. (2003). Education for all in South Africa: Developing a national system for quality assurance. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 345-365. Retrieved: July 16. 2009. EBSCO.
- Thompson, L. (1990). *A History of South Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Meredith, M. (1999). *Coming to terms: South Africa's search for truth*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

