
Understanding the needs and challenges of a Black community in South Africa

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Abstract

This article reports on a study conducted with an unemployed group of community members residing in the Gugulethu Township in South Africa. The study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of their needs and challenges, and what they thought could be done to assist and empower them so that they could improve their lives. Their basic human needs were violated during apartheid and as a consequence, they are still battling poverty today. We offer suggestions on how Black communities in South Africa could be supported and empowered in order to become employable and self-reliant.

Introduction

More than twenty years into democracy in South Africa the majority of the South African Black population (African and coloured) is still battling with poverty, high unemployment, disadvantaged schooling, and a lack of financial resources as a result of apartheid's ideology prior to 1994 (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2008; Kros 2010; Liebenberg 2014). Currently, the unemployment rate stands, at its most expanded estimate, at 35% (Statistics South Africa 2015). Many African and coloured communities are therefore dependent on the government's social grants as their only source of income. According to the Deputy CEO of the Institute of Race Relations, the country's reliance on welfare is unsustainable as there are more people on welfare than people who work and job creation is vital (South African Institute of Race Relations 2015).

Since its inception in 1994, the new democratic government has attempted to transform South Africa in order to empower and uplift the Black population, and eradicate poverty and unemployment. The government introduced the Employment Equity Act, the Reconstruction and Development Program, and the Black Economic Empowerment Program (Department of Trade and Industry 2015). However, only a minority of the Black elite has benefited from these initiatives and the marginalised and improvised majority remained powerless (Moodley 1995; Tight 2003). The South African Institute of Race Relations proposes one solution to the challenges that the government faces in its 85th Annual Report, which states that "*The inputs needed to empower the disadvantaged include decent schooling, opportunities for tertiary training on the sound foundation thus laid, a realistic chance of jobs and income, and*

could contribute to the upliftment and empowerment of these communities in South Africa.

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