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THE NPO-PUBLIC SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP: AN ALTERNATIVE, SHORT-TERM SOLUTION TO SOUTH AFRICA'S FAILING EDUCATION SYSTEM

Emma Milford

Mentor: Jean Allman

Under-resourced public schools in South Africa, especially those in low-income rural areas, face extreme structural inequalities, and they not only require more funding to provide integrated services, but they also require stronger accountability, transparency, and financial monitoring of those who handle the school's financials. Poor financial management of school budgets has resulted in corrupted, misguided, and delayed school funding, all of which have negatively impacted learners' ability to flourish in public schools. Instead of tackling this problem with increasingly strategic methods, the Department of Basic Education has lowered its standards of achievement, which not only prevents learners from reaching their full potential, but also reduces the number of learners prepared for further education. While the responsibility of uplifting schools that are struggling financially should ultimately be in the hands of the public education system, I propose a short-term solution that partners nonprofit organizations (NPOs) with underserved schools based on community-driven approaches to empower learners in their studies, encourage empathetic relationships, and to help address the financial needs of schools, all while also working to address the community-identified structural inequalities. This model of development is based on my field research with Thanda, a rural sustainable development nonprofit in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and supported by the existing literature on nonprofit involvement in social services.