

Chapter 1

The Effects of Intergenerational Poverty and Unemployment on South African Township Youth

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ABSTRACT

Young people throughout the world are an afterthought of policy and program interventions. In Africa, and particularly in third world nations, the irony of sloganizing youth as the cream or the future of the nation exists alongside tendencies and behaviors that impede their development towards being responsible and full citizens which rather aggravates youth underdevelopment and marginalization. It is an undisputed fact that young people have been the vanguard of liberatory struggles that resulted in dismantling colonialism and apartheid. On one hand, the chapter examines strategies adopted to overcome intergenerational poverty by using narratives (daily experiences of youth) of post-apartheid South Africa. On the other hand, the chapter highlights the uncertainties and frustrations of living in a democratic South Africa, with its failure to open up opportunities for their socio-economic growth, the apartheid discriminatory system, and survival.

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INTRODUCTION

Young people have been the vanguard of the liberation struggles that resulted into dismantling colonialism and apartheid governance systems in Africa (Mafema & Tshishonga, 2011). In Africa, and particularly in the third world nations, the irony of sloganising youth as the cream or the future of the nation exists alongside tendencies and behaviours that impede their development towards being responsible and full citizens, which aggravates youth underdevelopment and marginalisation. Youth sacrifices and their radical involvement not only rob them of their youth, but also deny them golden opportunities to advance themselves in areas of education, economics and welfare (Mafema & Tshishonga, 2011). South Africa is no exception. It is therefore not surprising that with the advent of democracy in Africa and in particular, South Africa, policies and programmes have been developed with the primary aim of restoring young people's dignity and advancement for their development.

At a national level, attempts have been made to address youth related challenges that have seen the introduction of the 1996 National Youth Commission, an enactment of the National Youth Development Policy (2002-2007) and the establishment of the National Youth Development Agency in 2008 (De Lannoy et al, 2015, p. 28). Among the functions assigned, these formations were to mainstream youth development within government departments, initiating, designing, coordinating, evaluating and monitoring programmes aimed at uplifting and empowering young people. The absence of youth engagement in policy development and implementation compounded by fragmentation and lack of co-ordination, gave birth to the National Youth Policy (2015-2020). The National Youth Policy (2015-2020) is anchored on five pillars geared towards enabling youth development: 1) economic inclusion and participation; 2) education, skills and training; 3) health and well-being; 4) nation-building and social cohesion; and 5) building a youth machinery for efficient delivery and responsibilities. Despite these policies, youth are still faced with deprivation and marginalisation which manifest themselves through the continuity of poverty, unemployment, and a lack of educational and economic opportunities for them to lead a decent life (Mlatsheni, 2010).

It is against this background that this chapter interrogates factors and conditions that recycle intergenerational poverty and unemployment among youth people, especially those residing in South African townships. Compared to the older generation which was characterized by harsh conditions due to apartheid's discriminatory laws, the current –born free' generation have abundant opportunities at their disposal. However, most of these opportunities are often thwarted by educational deficits, lack of economic growth which in turn, results in rising unemployment, persistent poverty and social unrest (Kobokoane, 2019, p. 2). The biggest among these challenges is youth unemployment (Kuzwayo, 2019), which despite the government interventions

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