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Faculty Advisor: **Sam Tenenbaum**

Research Group Members: **Paul Conrad, Charan Devireddy, Molly Newland, Puja Singh, Benno Weisberg, Will Yoon**

Paper Title: **South Africa's Educational Paradox: Paving the Way for Independent Schools to Serve the Poor**

Abstract:

Throughout the developed world, free primary education is all but assured for the majority of children. Public education remains the mainstay of the so called “American Dream,” notwithstanding its deterioration in the eyes of many. This reality is starkly different in other parts of the world. Perhaps in no other region is education more crucial than Africa – a continent still struggling mightily to achieve economic sustainability, political stability and social harmony. Fortunately, all is not lost. Blessed with modern infrastructure and a revitalized national identity following the end of apartheid, South Africa is one country that can serve as an archetype for the development of education in the African continent. South African low free private schools have the potential to become viable vehicles for bridging the educational gap between elites and the impoverished majority. The road to success remains perilous however. The South African government must play a significant role in deconstructing the perception that private schools are vestiges of race-based elitism; and assuring that the combination of public and private educational sectors does not devolve into a state of fragmented entropy. Thus, this article paradoxically argues that increased public sector intervention is vital for the effective provision of private education in South Africa.

This article starts by addressing what exactly it means to be a “private school” in South Africa. After addressing the definition of “private school,” Part II discusses the foundational, typological and legal frameworks governing education in South Africa, with a

particular focus on the constitutional right to private education. Part III provides brief history of private education in South Africa to provide context for the contemporary system. While apartheid-centric debates have become rather well-traveled roads, it is impossible to sunder any South African social issue from this historical episode. Thus, Part III will outline the history of education in South Africa through three stages: (1) pre-apartheid; (2) under apartheid; and (3) post-apartheid. Part IV and IV will provide empirical and conceptual analyses of low and high-fee schooling for the poor in the post-apartheid era. While employing a structuralist approach, both sections will also utilize narrative tools from collected field research data. Part VI, argues that, in order to effectively serve all South Africa's children, the government must transform and increase its involvement in private schooling to assure poor children as well as the privileged receive the education they are entitled.