

Dylan Barry

HOMETOWN Johannesburg

UNIVERSITY University of the Witwatersrand

FUNDING Scholarships and family

In 10 years' time ...

'I would like to graduate with a PhD in political economy. I would like to play some role in changing the structure of the South African economy to make it equal and accessible to all South Africans.'



Essay synopsis

Dylan's paper examines three challenges facing the education system: persistent socioeconomic inequality in education outcomes, challenges in early-childhood development impeding educational performance, and the poor quality of teachers in South African schools.

He states that the allocation towards early-childhood development (ECD) subsidies should be increased significantly. Inadequate subsidies (which are intended to cover child nutrition), the wages of ECD workers and running costs for these facilities, lead to a tradeoff where ECD facilities often have to choose between spending on proper nutrition schemes and practitioners' wages. This leads to financial obligations for parents, which are prohibitive for poor families. Dylan proposes that the state considers direct public provision of ECD facilities in rural areas, informal settlements and other poor areas in the form of public crèches.

He tackles the issue of teacher quantity and quality, noting that teachers are paid less than equivalent professions, often unable to afford furthering their studies and offered little incentive for higher qualifications. Additionally, demand for high-quality teachers outstrips the supply, resulting in educators teaching subjects they were not trained in.

He proposes reforms for teacher pay, incentivising teacher content knowledge and increasing the reward for teachers at the poorest and worst-performing schools to redress the systemic inequalities of the education system. He also proposes recruiting foreign teachers to combat shortages; if South Africa invested in a system that allowed more foreign teachers to have their qualifications recognised, or to transition into a South African qualification through a short conversion course, the new supply of teachers could immediately address the supply-demand issue.

More about Dylan

Favourite subjects:

Macroeconomics, Quantum Mechanics, Waves and Modern Optics, International Trade, Finance

Interests:

Art, politics, economics, theoretical physics

Inspired by:

Amilcar Cabral, Alexander Hamilton, Valentina Tereshkova, Ai Weiwei

Main achievements:

- Main economics contributor for the student team that put together a financial model and road map towards fee-free undergraduate higher education in South Africa, alluded to in Pravin Gordhan's 2016 midterm Budget Speech
- Head: Wits #FeesMustFall student task team
- Contributor: European Student Union global #FundOurFuture campaign for free, quality tertiary education (2016)
- Wits student leadership award: Wits SRC #OneMillionOneMonth campaign