ENTRY #1764

Have you questioned yourself on one of the many factors contributing to youth unemployment in South Africa? The main victims of this vicious trap are the South African youth. One can argue that the nation has shifted to prosperity because of the transition from apartheid to democracy. However, the country remained affected with severe high levels of poverty and social inequality from the apartheid era. This creates high barrier accessibility of higher education, and this essay will discuss means of tackling this challenge.

Poverty is the major barrier for upward social mobility. South African households that lack enough finance to further studies are left with no other choice to have their children taking gap years. Good grades are not enough to get a candidate through college and university financial needs. Children born in a financially struggling household often inherit their parents' economic disadvantages. This is what's known as intergenerational reproduction of inequality. Without proper financial assistance, poverty traps individuals in low-wage cycles across generations.

Most of the youth are stuck at home after completion of their matric. Research claims that about 40% of students are locked out due to financial funding (School, 2024).Based on my experience I cannot agree less on this claim, one has seen various students with potential taking gap years, this has a negative effect as this students end up distracting themselves with drug abuse, some even go to an extent of making a living out of crime. This destroys the future of the new generation; they turn to ways that will only cost their opportunity of a better life. In my area this can be clearly observed, a group that chills in the local shop from morning till the shops close, no motion, just another day gone to waste.

However targeted state interventions like the National Student Financial Aid Scheme play crucial in breaking this cycle. It provides financial access to higher education, NSFAS enables poor students' students to achieve upward social mobility, thereby helping to ease off the continuous intergeneration reproduction of equality. As an undergraduate student NSFAS has really come through for me financially, I can focus more on

my studies since there is not much financial burden and stress. NSFAS funded students get their tuition fees settled, accommodation, transport to campus if residing off campus and living allowance to cover for groceries another necessity.

Some argue that the NSFAS funds are not enough, I stand to disagree majority of students manage to make the most of that capital, from starting their entrepreneurial journey and capitalizing their portfolio. The money can also be used to invest in an existing business to stabilize and grow it. Nkosinathi Makamela who in 202o decided to start a Agri business that became successful for his NSFAS monthly allowance (Kamko, 2026).

However, as much fair the financial Aid sound some may argue it is not. Financial disbursements and instable management structure have a negative effect on a student who has applied and accepted in Uni. The delays of eligibility acceptance from NSFAS put some households in debt just to cover for the registration so the children secure the place in university. Some students cannot cover this fee if NSFAS hasn't yet been funded, leading them to go back home and take a gap year. It also causes tension between the student and landlord when NSFAS delays with the payment, pausing Wi-Fi access, water and transport service affecting the school and academic performance of a student. Some students are solely dependent in these funds, staggering cause students to fall into depression and even suicidal attempts.

However, I believe that the state can improve their systems. They must structure it to accommodate every student who has completed their matric. The addition of colleges eligible for NSFAS is highly recommendable for it to increase to cater for every student, especially the skill equipped colleges. NSFAs should avoid delays that affect the academic journey of students. Financial support should increase that is the expansion of bursaries and affordable student loans for students from low-earning households. The construction of more universities, expanding online learning for certificates which can improve a student CV. The government should encourage foreign and local businesses to fund scholarships, internships and study programs to help students afford higher education.

In conclusion, improving access to higher education requires more than increasing university premises. South Africa must provide improved financial support, improve educational opportunities and strengthen partnerships with the private sector and foreign investors. By adopting these solutions, the country can create a fairer and more sustainable education system that gives every deserving student an opportunity to study and succeed.