



The LEAP Science and Maths Schools.

An Introduction.

Providing quality education to members of marginalised communities is a global problem, but one which is particularly severe in South Africa. This is because during the era of Apartheid the vast majority of Black South Africans were denied quality education as a result of the Bantu Education Act.

The African National Congress, led by Nelson Mandela, came into power in 1994. Since then the South African education legislation has changed, but to this day the Apartheid legacy of educational deprivation continues in disadvantaged communities throughout the country, affecting the majority of our people. Unless something is done to address this crisis, it is difficult to imagine how South Africa will ever realize it's true potential of developing into a "winning nation".

The LEAP Science and Maths Schools represent a unique and innovative solution. The LEAP School model was conceived by John Gilmour, Founder and Executive Director of LEAP. Since 1980, when John started his lengthy and successful career as a High School teacher, educator, and later Principal, he had deep concerns about the inequities in South African education and how this was affecting the South African nation as a whole.

In 2003 he took a year's sabbatical in order to research and design a solution aimed at the "poorest of the poor" of South African high school students, most of whom live in urban townships -- another ongoing legacy of the Apartheid era.

In general, the quality of education in South African township schools is shockingly bad. As a single example, although undoubtedly representative of many disadvantaged township communities throughout South Africa to this day, out of a group of roughly 650 Matriculants in the township of Langa in Cape Town in 2002, only 6 (1%) managed to get a university-level qualification, and not one of them had both Mathematics and Science included in their subjects.

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This means that an entire school-leaving cohort of students faced grim prospects for future employment, and would almost certainly perpetuate the cycle of poverty, crime and violence within their community into the future — if they were able to survive !

John's research culminated in the design and development of a Community-based LEAP School model, using a powerful "self-liberating learning" approach.

In June 2003 John established the LEAP Board of Governors, which met for the first time in August that year under the Chairmanship of Anthony Galloway. The first LEAP Science and Maths School opened its doors in January 2004 (see www.leapschool.org.za) with 73 students. In 2021 there are 6 LEAP Schools with 1 640 students !

Since the first LEAP school (in partnership with the Langa community in Cape Town), another 5 schools have been replicated — a second school in Cape Town that partners with the Gugulethu/Crossroads communities and a third school in Johannesburg that partners with the Alexandria community. In 2011 a fourth LEAP school was opened in Johannesburg, which partners with the Diepsloot community --this school had its first Matric class in 2014. Another 2 LEAP Schools were opened in January 2012 — LEAP 5 in Limpopo province and LEAP 6 north of Pretoria in the Ga Rankua community – they both had their first Matric classes in 2015.

LEAP has achieved outstanding results. With all its students drawn from its township school partners and selected mostly on the basis of attitude, rather than aptitude, since the first Matric class in 2005 LEAP students have achieved an average of a 92% annual Matriculation pass rate by the end of 2020, with an average of over 60% of LEAP graduates achieving a University-level Bachelor pass.

Every one of these students has Mathematics, Science, English, and Life Orientation included in their subjects. 75% of all LEAP graduates are involved in tertiary studies and/or full-time employment. In 2009 LEAP was able to celebrate it's first B. Comm. university graduate. Over 425 LEAP University Graduates have followed since then, including Qondisa Ngxanga who became the first LEAP student to achieve a Masters Degree (in Mathematical Finance) in 2013.

Our aim is to accelerate the replication of the LEAP model throughout South Africa, and beyond it's borders, in the coming years. This vision is achievable and realistic, with the biggest limiting factor being access to large-scale funding and developing a financial reserve that will ensure LEAP's long-term sustainability.

