



Towards a Sustainable Model for the Development of the Arts in Low Income Communities in South Africa

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Abstract

The arts play a critical role in the social development of communities especially in developing nations. Projects such as El Sistema in Venezuela have resulted in an abundance of research studies focusing on the vital role that the arts can play in developing social and psychological skills in disadvantaged youth. Yet, the single biggest challenge to arts education remains a sustainable model both from a financial and entrepreneurial perspective. In tough economic times, the arts become the primary targets for budget cuts.

In post-apartheid South Africa (post 1994), the arts were all but eradicated in the public school system. The result has been a devastating impact on arts programs across all educational sectors. In recent years there has been a renewed effort by the public and private sector to reintroduce the arts. The South African Music Outreach Project (SAMOP) is one of the pioneering projects that is paving the way for the reintroduction of music into low income communities in South Africa. Over the past six years the project has positively impacted hundreds of disadvantaged youth across the country by establishing wind ensembles at public high schools. Based upon a model of business and arts partnerships, the project is proving to be sustainable while expanding at a rapid rate nationally.

This session will present an overview of the SAMOP and the current business model being utilized to sustain the project through government, the business sector, instrument manufacturers and funding organizations. A core component of this project has been the large number of quantitative studies conducted on the impact of the SAMOP. An overview of some of these studies will be presented together with an overview of the entrepreneurial model used by the SAMOP to ensure sustainability.