

“The Journey of Education: Deriving Relevant, Practical Classroom Tactics and Theories from the Bottom of the World”

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I arrived in South Africa with preconceived notions of how a classroom should operate, how the student-teacher relationship should mature, and how assessment tools should be structured and executed to maintain student motivation; however, my exposure to South African pedagogical techniques and conceptions of student acquisition of material transformed my educational perceptions constructed over the past two decades of my life. Observations of classroom activities and in-depth interviews with instructors at a local Primary School in Cape Town, South Africa, led to a new consideration of the most important academic values and strategies. Educators in these institutions relied heavily on corporal punishment, a restricted core curriculum, automatic graduation to the next grade level and little to no agency or student empowerment in terms of academic material. All students are punished and publicly critiqued for mistakes; improvement and real-world application of the material are rarely mentioned. Both classroom observations and intimate interviews with established instructors crafted an image of South African pedagogy drastically different than the educational standards in the United States. Combining classroom experience at the University of Vermont with first-hand, diverse student-mentor relationships abroad has morphed my perspective as a future instructor to one encouraging student mistakes, engagement, motivation and appropriate forms of comprehensive assessment. Errors will occur; students will have conflicting levels of comprehension; punishments must be pertinent and enforced; material must be tailored to adolescent familiarity.