

Bisho High School Students Interview  
Interviewer: Patti Kotrady

Patti: Umm so I don't know how much you know about what we are doing, but, we're three students from the United States, umm, Pennsylvania, in the United States of America and we are doing research on the education system in South Africa. So, we're basically here to talk to you about your experiences in school, past, present, and it will be really informal. Just like talk to us, we will ask you questions, going on a tangent, that's fine, not super formal or yeah. So we are just talking basically if that's ok with you.

P: Umm so first before we start I am just going to ask you a few questions if that's ok. Just umm a few formality questions. Umm so where are you all from? Were you born here or were you..

Student 1: Yeah we were born here.

P: All from Bisho?

S1: Well I think these two were born in Bisho, I was born in Butterworth.

P: Ok cool. Umm and what do your parents do?

S1: Well I have a single mother. And my mother is the only parent I have she is a uh, pre ordinant clerk.

Student 2: And I have two parents. My mom works as a clerk here, Bisho High school, and my dad is a principal also teacher too.

Student 3: My mom is a teacher at Boxford College

P: Ok so just testing the Camera, my name is Patti and today on August 19, 2015, I am interviewing these three students here at Bisho High school in South Africa. So if you don't mind could you all state your name and that you are willing to be part of the interview.

S1: sure I am Athi Zangqa and I am willing to take part in this interview.

S2: I am Camva Ngcauzele and I am also willing to take part in this interview.

S3: I am Luvo Mcathwa and I am also willing to take part in this Interview.

P: Ok thank you, so I will just go ahead and start, what subjects are offered here at school? At Bisho High school, what kind of subjects do you have?

S1: umm math, Literacy, Physical science, theres umm economics, Accounting, what else, history, geography, math sciences, computer education, home language, and uh English, first additional language,

P: So what classes are you guys taking right now?

S1: we are all doing science and Xhosa at the same time because we take up physical science and economics at the same time.

S2: well I'm doing math sciences, physical sciences, Computer applications technology,

P: Nice, so which is your favorite? So I know you said that you both are doing sciences, is that your favorite subject?

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S1: Na, favorite subject is ..

P: So which is your favorite subject?

S1: Accounting

P: Accounting?

S2: Mine is life sciences.

P: You don't have one?

S3" No, I just like all of them.

P: ok great! And which is your least favorite? And why?

S1: It has to be physical science.

P: why is that?

S1: It is so complicated. Very complicated, I perform least in it.

S2: Yes, that one is complicated .My challenge is between this and chemistry. I can't deal with medicines.

S3: Mine same as theirs is in physical sciences. Its part of physics, I know it but it is tricky.

P: yeah, umm so when was the last time you all took a history class? Was that recent?

S1: History?

P: yeah

S1: It's grade 9.

P: It's grade 9, so that was a long time ago, ok what about languages?

S1: Ok umm, well as I have said before we take english the first additional language and Xhosa as home language.

P: So what languages are used in the classroom? And in like the textbook, like while your taking a class science class or your physics class, what language are your teachers speaking in?

S1: Its English.

P: And the textbooks are in English too?

S1: Yes.

P: What do you think about that? What do you think about english as the primary language being taught?

S2: No problem

S1: Actually I think it is quite good because I think it is a medium where all countries can communicate. It makes it easier for us to communicate with people from other countries. For instance if ever we were taught math, sciences and other subjects in xhosa, we wouldn't be able to communicate with you guys right now. So I think its fine, there is no problem.

S2: and I think if we were taught mathematics maybe with our home language, it would be difficult if we were going to a university because at a university we would be taught everything in english and you might have some challenges with that.

P: And how many languages do you speak?

S1: There's a lot! I speak very fluent Sisoutou, fluent Xhosa, fairly fluent sizuatey, and English. But I speak five.

S2: I speak my language which is Xhosa and English. And a little bit of Sisoutou.

S3: I can speak Sisoutou. I can speak in Xhosa and I can speak in English. I can understand Sizuatey...but I can't communicate.

P: And what languages are spoken at home for you all? Like, what do your families speak?

S1: At home, it's Xhosa and English. A mix of those two languages pretty much.

S3: At times there are words and sentences that they use English, but sometimes it's Xhosa.

P: So what does your family then think about you learning in English most of the time? Do they think it's a good thing or a bad thing? Do they talk about it?

S2: Well, I learned English first when I was in primary school and grade school, so my mom typically knows that in the future I would be doing everything with English. So they don't have a problem with it.

S1: They never really cared about that, my mother. So I don't know whether she likes it or not. However, um, she doesn't seem to have a problem with it. She's good. But I wouldn't know whether she likes it or not. We never get into deep conversations about me being taught in English and stuff. We never have those kind of conversations.

S3: I do know that my mother is happy because she does love English. Even when we are speaking together she only use English and I reply in Xhosa.

P: So do you feel that English in any way contradicts your culture, like the Xhosa culture or not?

S1: Well, I don't think it does. And anyway, it's just the way you decide. It's your own choice to use Xhosa or English. It doesn't in anyway interfere with our culture. In my own opinion, you see, I don't see it as a threat to my cultural related things, you see. It's just a language.

S3: I know for certain that it is just a language. But I can't say it interferes with the culture I was raised with. So it's just a language. I will just translate some words to English and then nothing...

S2: Like they said, it's your own choice. If I want to speak English, I will mix it with Xhosa because nowadays, when you speak Xhosa, there are some words that are used with English.

P: Have you taken a world cultures class at all? Are there culture classes here?

S3: No, no I don't think so.

P: No? Okay, I was just wondering because I know other schools may offer a world cultures class. So, who's your favorite teacher? You don't have to say their name, but what's your favorite teacher like if you have one?

S1: Ms. X. That's why she's my favorite teacher because she's not only a teacher. She's a parent, sort of a priest because she sometimes tells us about bible verses and stuff, so she gives us light to life, you see. She gives us direction and stuff. She talks to us in the classroom as if we are her own children. She even...she doesn't want us to call her ma'am sometimes. She demands being called mom and we do that because that's how we feel around her. She's fine, yeah.

S2: I'm sorry, I don't have any favorites.

P: That's okay.

S3: I, think that for me it's Mr. (inaudible) our Life Orientation teacher, there is my (sic), I like him because I'm always free around him and I'm always free to express my thoughts and feelings around him. I can talk to him about anything, um, all the challenges I face at home, at here in school. I can have a conversation with him and we talk, and he could advise me, so he's my favorite teacher.

I: And who's your least favorite teacher? You don't... Don't say their name!

S1: (Laughs)

P: What's your least favorite teacher like? Why are they your least favorite teacher?

S1: Least favorite? I don't think I have one.

P: If you have one... you don't have to.

S1: I don't think I have one.

S2 & S3: (Agree with hmm)

P: Good.

S1: My least favorite teacher last year in 10<sup>th</sup>. Then I had a least favorite teacher because she didn't come to class often, like she'd skip 3-4 days of coming into class so it was a major setback for us because we were getting ready for grade 11 which is pre-Matric. Now, when the teacher doesn't come to class often, it..., you see, it damages the way we, we learn in a way, so I didn't like that about her, not that I didn't like her as a person, I didn't like those qualities about her. Yeah...

P: And do you all wanna go to university?

All: Of Course!

P: Yeah?

S2: Yeah!

P: Is there any particular place you want to go? Or what you wanna study?

S3: Uh, I wanted to, for history or agricultural sciences.

S2: Well, since now I'm doing Matric, um, I wanna do the coursework for media communications and culture in Port Elizabeth.

S1: Ahh, I don't know what I wanna do but it has to involve something... it has to involve accounting in a way because it's my personal favorite. So whatever I'm gonna do, its gonna involve accounting.

P: And why do you think you all stopped taking history classes in 9<sup>th</sup> grade?

S3: The problem here at school... If I take history, you must take math literacy and I don't wanna take math literacy. I want to do pure maths.

S1: Yeah, I think...

S3: Otherwise, if it was my choice, I would've taken history because I love history. The stuff about Hitler and (inaudible)

S1: The thing is, here at school, eh... subjects you choose are restricted like um, certain subjects go together, we don't pick and choose whatever you want because if it were according to me I would've chosen accounting and history in the place of physical sciences. However, we don't have a class that offers history and accounting at the same time. And if ever you take up history, you have to take up maths, which is... My mother never, never, would've never allowed that.

P: Hmm.

S1: You see?

P: And how were your history classes when you did take them?

S1: Fun.

P: Good.

S1: Very fun. We liked history.

P: How were they generally taught? Were they taught in order or were they a lot of lecture? Or... If you remember. I know they were far away.

S1: Could you rephrase? I don't understand the question.

P: Umm How were the classes taught? Were they taught umm would the teachers talk to you about history? Or would you have group discussions? Umm would you have debates or?

S1: umm some days the teacher would come into class and teach. Some days she let us discuss the topics at hand/. Yeah, and umm she was very flexible. She was going to do this and then the next another form of teaching. Not everything the same each and every day.

P: In your history classes do you learn primarily South African history? Or do you learn about all over the world?

S1: all over

P: So what other countries do you learn about?

S1: we learn about revolution and industrial revolution Then the world wars. Then south African.

S3: In this organization we are taught about our history and what happened during the apartheid era. In this organization I learned about the history, I don't do history as my subject but I learn a lot about it.

P: Whats the first event that comes to mind when you think about American History?

S1: For some reason I feel like Martin Luther king jr. is the American Nelson Mandela. For some reason that is the first thing that comes to mind when I think of American History.

S2: I don't know much when I think about American History.

P: Now which kind of history are you particularly interested in? Is it South African?

S2: The most that is talked about in South African history is regarding the Education system and the activists and the activationists and it is these things that we get better education now.

S3: If it is just history then it is fine.

S1: To me South African History is boring. Television South African History, Equality, South African History, Education is also South African History. When ever we have assemblys they speak about South African History. Functions, events and stuff they speak about South African history. It is the same thing, Unlike most people I don't like hearing about the same thing. So to me, I find it more interesting to hear about other countries because it is more interesting. To me south African History is over rated.

P: So we went to equal education yesterday and we met with them there and it was great, it was a great experience. Umm but yeah I was just curious too, how could South African education be more interesting? If you could redo how you learned about South African History what would you do?

S1: The first thing I would take out is corporal punishment.

S2: Yes.

S1: That is the first thing I would take out, Secondly, equality in our education system, because we have public schools, that lets say uh have more resources then others, you see, and uh, And I think to us, the pupils, its unfair to have people going to government schools just like us and to have different facilities as compared to us. I think in a way, they are putting us at a disadvantage in a very very big way, you see by having different things going on in the same education system. So theres too things, equalize everything in the education system and take out corporal punishment.

P: Isn't corporal punishment technically illegal by law?

S1: Technically

P: But they still do it?

S2: ok it was banned since 1996, but then, it goes on on on.

S3: Apart from my teachers, I would also improve the sanitation system.

S1: yeah.

S3: and accomidations for other schools. We find children learning in schools which is uncomfortable for them.

S2: and also I think the other areas, in rural areas there are schools that are made of mud. I think it is the environment that they are in. Because if the students live in poverty, the school will be, umm not good enough, like they will have some bag for structure, and do not have enough resources, enough , not enough text books you see, and I think those are the challenges they are facing.

P: If you were an administrator of a school how do you think you would change the school system if you could?

S3: Could you repeat the question?

P: yeah, if you were an administrator of a school or in charge of a school, how do you think you would change how the school ran?

S1: Hmm, first things first, like what we have said the sanitation, like the sanitation at each and every school should be up to par, like students shouldn't be suffering sanitation wise. And I would make sure that no teacher punishes a student corporately

S3: yes the sanitation, and if a child does something wrong he will not be punished in that way.

S2: And if a student is pregnant in class, other students won't let them umm enter a school again until after birth. So I think in order to get her human right, her dignity to education you see that's the worst thing that happens in every most school.

P: How do you think your school compares to other schools in the area?

S1: In the area of bisho?

P: yes

S1: I think it's the best umm academic wise. I think we compete with other schools. However the only thing my school does not have that other schools do have are some things in the infrastructure. Otherwise, academics are good.

S2: also our toilets are not good.

P: what about it isn't good.

S2: for instance every time you go in that direction the smell is not good, bad smell. And when you enter there, you will find that the toilets are very very dirty, and every time you come off the toilet and go to wash your hands, you wouldn't, you couldn't, because the sink is very dirty, and you could, every time you sit on a toilet seat, you could maybe get some other diseases, its not good.

P: So you all seem very passionate about education which is wonderful, would you ever consider pursueing a career in education? Either as a teacher or administrator?

S3: no

P: no, why?

S3: because my family at home, everyones a teacher, my moms a teacher, her moms a teacher, her father was a teacher, apart from being a teacher, I want to do something different. Since its my time now, I don't want to teach.

S2: since my family members are a principal and teachers, I would like to try something different. Something I love, I am good with equal education.

S1: umm for me, no one is a teacher at home, however, I don't see teaching as a career, because I would like to be involved in improving the education system. However, not as a teacher, I would rather be in the background telling them what to do and how to do it. To improve school infrastructure and the way



things are being taught and stuff. I don't see myself standing in front of students and telling them 1+1 equals two and all that, I don't want to do that at all.

P: why not?

S1: It's boring.

P: So how do you feel about the structure of the curriculum here? I mean we talked about how you have to take certain classes combined with other classes, but how do you feel about what is being taught in your classroom?

S3: I am ok with what is being taught, because every day I learn something new. And that something that I learn every day is purely greatful. \

S1: based on the fact that I've always been taught in one kind of way, and I've never participated in any other form of teaching, I do not see a problem with the way I'm being taught. Maybe it's because I don't know the other forms, however, I do not see a problem.

S2: I also don't have a problem with the way I'm being taught. Maybe I won't understand the way a teacher is teaching the lesson, but maybe I would understand it better if a student, comes up to teach. Maybe it would be differetnt if a student, a person, a learner, can help, can learn from this form of teaching.

P: you said some of you are involved in equal education?

S1: all of us.

P: yay! That's great. So why did you get involved in equal education?

S2: Well I have joined since 2012. So the reason why I joined equal education was because it was so interesting. Fighting for equality and inequality in education. Showing other schools that your school is better than them is not what we want, we just want to help and support, and just mainly encourage.

S1: for be it's the debates, and the heated discussions. And seeing people smile because of the work we did. Based on the fact that the south African education system is so biased and unequal, Like when I heard about the organization in 2012 I saw a need to take part in it because it was for change, and improving other peoples lives, and making their lives better, and in a way improving the way the country is with educated people in the country. Its going to be a better place. Now what ever is going on now in our education system, if it goes on, if this circus goes on, South Africa will continue to have uneducated people because of the challenges, that the people face when going to school. In a way joining equal education I was selfish, because I wanted the politics, the watches, the stuff, now but also to help, the people that need the help. Women, and infrastructure, just to make their lives better.

S3: Apart from what they said, I had joined equal education first because I didn't know what it was. So I was like let me go and see how it is, I wanted to join to move people, so during the discussion, equal education kind of defines who I am as a person.

S2: Equal education gives us that confidence on how to be yourself around people. We don't judge each other and that is the most important part. It is very awesome and the other thing is mobilizing. Giving people a lesson for this kind of branch. It is very interesting.

P: Maybe just one or two more questions if that's ok? So what do you think about south African education, or South African history? What is one of the first things you think of?

S1: When you think about history in south Africa, you think oppression, you think other things, and its not something that's nice. Though we have moved past it, it taunts the nation in a way. Because, now a days, because of what went down in the apartheid era, there are people who still have hatred, and grudges, on the people oppressing during the apartheid era. When ever it was, the country moved into liberation in 1994, It was said that we are passed that, we are done with it, and opened up a new chapter, however, it made us, the people of South Africa, have grudges, they have this hate, towards white people, and its uncalled for, because we are past that, and it's a new generation, and I am 16 years old, I was born in 1999 and I don't know anything about that time, I wasn't there, I don't know why someone my age would hate someone 65 years of age who was there in 1991. That was one day and as a nation we have moved past that. We are wiser, and older now, It is just something we should put in the past.

S3: When I think of South African history, I think of the apartheid. During the apartheid era, everything was complicated, now everything is equalized. Apart from that I just don't like what my parents experienced when they were my age.

S2: And also about South African history is our education. How now, we have some rights that we have towards an equal education. Even though we have a right to an education there are some things that have been violated. This is just not right and the other thing is now there are some South African people that would say learners, we can go to some boarding schools as a black person and umm that's all

P: so you talked about moving past this era of apartheid, this mentality, do you think you have done that?

S1: no we haven't like, more than 70 percent of black people have that. When we are driving around and see a white person hiking sport, they are like how can a white person be hiking that is for black people how can a white person be riding a taxi., That's something that we should not be saying. If a black person can hike, then so can a white person, there is not difference between the black people and the white people, they are the same but not to the norms of the nation. Not all things are the same, however I think we should have moved past that stage in 1995. One year after democracy.

P: ok so we are almost done, is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences with the education system and curriculum?

S3: each and every day I get to learn more about everything that I don't know.

P: alright thank you so much for being a part of this it means so much. Thank you for your time and effort in being a part in this. WE just want you to sign this consent form it tells you that you are allowing us to use this video and information you have given us for our research and we may be doing a website and would like to use your information.