

HSRC study finds winning formula at Christel House SA

According to a Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) study conducted late last year, Christel House South Africa enables students from marginalised communities to achieve exceptional academic results and become self-sufficient adults through its holistic education model.



Christel House SA student

Established in 2001, the independent, no-fee, non-profit school is based in Ottery, Cape Town and serves approximately 1,000 students from 26 communities on the Cape Flats.

The study aimed to establish the quality of education at Christel House SA and whether its learners are enabled to be upwardly mobile after they matriculate. This was done by comparing academic results from Christel House SA, comparable schools and provincial and national averages through qualitative research, questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

The purpose was to showcase how a mix of agile and innovative teaching and learning methods, an empathetic and loving school culture and practices, and a deep understanding of the home-school nexus, allow children who come from underprivileged communities to thrive. “The information on this mixed approach is available to everyone. We hope to inspire other schools to implement these methods. If we can do it and be successful, other schools can do it too,” says Adri Marais, CEO of Christel House SA.



Education must be a crisis priority, not an afterthought

Dr Edward K. Brown 13 Apr 2021



The Christel House model was looked at through three lenses:

1. The results the school achieve compared to other schools,
2. The culture and practices that are implemented, and
3. How successful Christel House is at improving the social mobility of its alumni.

Students who matriculate from Christel House face many barriers to social mobility like so many young South Africans, including a lack of social capital, a weak economy and a lack of agency. Despite being born into a system that is geared to fail them, Christel House students consistently outperform their peers. These are some of the results from the study:

- Christel House SA's National Senior Certificate performance consistently exceeds Quintile 5 schools (schools that serve the wealthiest communities),
- 44% of Christel House SA alumni completed some form of tertiary education versus only 7% of youth, aged 20-24, in the Western Cape who have tertiary education,
- Christel House SA numeracy and literacy pass rates are at least 30% higher than government school averages,
- 93% of Christel House SA alumni were working, studying or doing both at the time that the report was published.

The South African youth unemployment rate stands at 57%, the highest globally. The mission of Christel House is to break the cycle of poverty. The school offers no-fee scholarships to students from the poorest neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats and supports them for 19 years (Grade RR to Grade 12 and five years post matric) through character-based and career-focused education. The school's beneficiaries include 762 students from grade RR to 12, 250+ post-matric students and more than 3,000 parents and other members of the communities it serves. Quality education is coupled with poverty mitigation services in the form of daily transport to school and back, professional healthcare, nutritious meals, psychosocial counselling, family assistance and college and career planning and support.

In order to be considered for enrolment at the school, a student's average household income (salaries, social grants & stipends) must be R1500 or less per person per month.

"The saying that talent is everywhere but opportunity is not, is especially true when we look at the disadvantaged youth in South Africa. Students who attend our school are the same as the many young South Africans who are identified as

multidimensionally poor, yet our students are given the right tools, skills and support - and they thrive. The HSRC research allowed us to prove that what we call our 'Christel House magic' works," concludes Marais.

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