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MASSIFICATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA, THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Abstract:

Increasingly, education in general and higher education in particular, are recognized as imperatives in the economic development and survival of a country. Education no doubt has become a means to an end and a necessary tool for sustainability of human capital. The concept of massification of higher education is part of the continuum of the demand and supply forces behind the provision of education. Higher education in South Africa is somewhat shaped heavily by the interests of the political elites, who sees the expansion of higher education as a solution to socio-economic challenges such as unemployment. The common belief is that having a university certificate is an access to having a better job in South Africa particularly amongst blacks. Therefore, making prospective students to focus on employability while calculating the likely financial benefits of having higher education certificate. Higher education is overtly, recognized by all as an integral part of economic development and considered as essential for the facilitation of nation building and promotion of greater social cohesion. However, in the ever-intensifying globalisation setting, obtaining a higher education degree is no longer a guarantee of employment, or most importantly, living a good life. From the human capital theorist, the social dynamics of growth drives participation in higher education. The belief is that the expansion of higher education is moulded by the market forces and the government and in response to the economic need for knowledge, skills, and certified professional competences. Using mixed method of analysis, this study challenges the conservative thinking that attainment of higher education not minding its quality is among the most important determinants of the upward movement of the fortunes of average South Africans. It contends that the massification of higher education in South Africa, contrary to the expectations of received higher education, may not likely boost the upward social mobility of South Africans, most especially the youths and concludes that due to poor planning and implementation, students graduate in programmes that are not relevant to the needs of the society and therefore end up joining the band wagon of unsuccessful job applicants who do not understand why they have a degree.

Keywords:

Apartheid, Massification, Social mobility

JEL Classification: A00

Introduction and background

The 5th chapter of the higher education Act (No.101 of 1997) outlines South Africa's government intentions to redress past discrimination, ensuring representativeness and equal access to and promote the potential of every student, while appreciating diversity. All over the world, education is considered a tool for empowering people, chiefly the younger generations, for socio-economic development and for sustaining livelihood. Precisely, education is seen as the major key to achieving and maintaining progressive development. The reason why Fafunwa (1991) in his opinion perceives education as an aggregate of all the processes by means of which an individual develops his/her abilities, skills and forms of positive societal behaviour.

South Africa is currently having a population of 57,725, 600 people (Statistics South Africa, 2018). More than 80% of its population are blacks of which less than 40% have access to higher education. Since 1994 South Africa has had five presidents, all with different plan for South African educational system. Inclusive governance became functional in South Africa following the demise of the obnoxious apartheid system in 1994. With inclusive governance in new South Africa came various new socio-political and economic challenges to both the people and the government on how best to live and manage policies in a democratic world.

The transition to democracy in South Africa no doubt, reinstated the circumstances pleasurable for inclusive [education] socio-economic and political growth, but the degree to which democratic governance has facilitated all round development in the post-apartheid period is questionable (Nattrass, 2014). Following the first all-inclusive democratic elections of 1994, the new democratic government was saddled with the biggest challenge of how to transform the life of its citizens with particular reference to the educational level of its black populace.

The terms higher education and tertiary education are often used interchangeably, to represent all forms of organized educational learning and training activities beyond the secondary level. These may be at universities, polytechnics (referred to as technikon in South Africa), training colleges as well as in all forms of professional institutions, etc.

In South Africa, there are three main types of higher education institutions, this include Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college, Technikon and university. What distinguish them is the level of education they offer. TVET colleges offer vocational and occupational courses aimed at equipping students with academic knowledge and practical experience while preparing them for the workplace. The duration of their programmes range from 6 months to three years. It is more or less the most affordable option for people. Technikon on

the other hand, offers career-oriented qualifications. Although students start with theoretical work, but is followed by practical training, that eventually allows graduates of such institutions to seek for employment in technological based industries. Conventionally, universities offer programmes that focus on academic, rather than vocational training. In South Africa, to get a university admission one have to be exceptionally good to be considered, hence the reason why South African sees university certificate as the gate way to living a good life.

According to Wangenge-Ouma & Cloete (2008), the White Paper on Education and Transforming (1995) laid the foundation for the new education and training system in South Africa, and it reassured government's commitment to opening up learning and removing barriers to education for those who had been previously disadvantaged by the past educational system. In contrasts to this framework, South Africa seems to be facing an unresolved issue regarding higher education, and perhaps it's funding. It is therefore not surprising that each year of the calendar starts with student protests demanding free education or lower tuition fees; believing that, once there is free higher education people, particularly the *former disadvantaged group* will have access to higher education.

It has been argued that the history and current socio-economic reality of South Africa can be re-addressed through the accessible higher education and training for all. Muller (2018) contends that government overall investment in the higher education of lately has been witnessing constant decrease, which seldom forced University management to increase school fees as a result, numerous factions demanding for access to higher education sprang up and hence the emergence of the "Fees Must Fall" movement of 2015. Cloete (2004) agrees that severe pressure has been placed on the South African government demanding free University tuition by several unprecedented post-1994 movements. The submissions and presentations made to the Commission of Higher Education (CHE) in 2016 by the South African Union of Students (SAUS) clarified the demand for free education. It posited that free education will solve the issues of social justice and transformation, which it argued that it is a spirit of the Freedom Charter of 1995 (SAUS, 2016).

In the spirit of 1995 Freedom Charter, the former president of South Africa (Jacob Zuma) in December 2017, with little or no consultation or planning, announce at the ruling (ANC) party's elective conference that in 2018 there would be free higher education for prospective South Africans, which is going to be provided to all new first year students (Areff & Spies, 2017).

The common believe is that having a higher degree, precisely; university certificate is an access to having a better job in South Africa particularly amongst blacks. Mok (2016) however contends that, things have significantly changed in the ever-intensifying globalisation setting and improved information technology, thus obtaining a higher education degree is no longer a guarantee of employment, higher earnings or, most importantly, living a good life.

This study therefore challenges this conservative thinking that attainment of higher education is among the most important determinants of the upward movement of the fortunes/success of average South Africans. This work contends that the massification of higher education in South Africa, contrariwise may not likely boost the upward social mobility of South Africans, most especially the youths rather it may engender production of unemployable graduates.

Literature Review (Theoretical Discussions)

Theoretical framework in research, is understood to be an approach to describing, analysing, interpreting, and possibly predict issues under investigation, it is the structure that hold or support a research study. Therefore, it is absurd to discuss and analyse concepts particularly in the field of higher education without connection to some theoretical viewpoints, hence, the adoption of human capital theory for this study.

Human capital theory from Trow's 1973 essays on massification of higher education expounds that the social dynamics of growth drives participation in higher education. The main explanation of the relationship between higher education and the social dynamics of economic growth was provided by human capital theory. For some time, this theory has remained as the dominant intellectual framework within the domain of higher education and rooted as the accepted policy.

Within the premise of this narrative, the belief is that the expansion of higher education is moulded by the market forces and the government and in response to the economic need for educated human capital and by extension the country. Higher education expands more or less in step with growing demands for graduate knowledge, skills, and certified professional competences.

Signalled by the economic demand and labour for wage in the labour markets, human capital theory explains that prospective students focus on employability while calculating the likely financial benefits of having higher education certificate. On the part of the government, people would probably invest in education seeing it as the point where the lifetime returns to degree holders equal the costs of investment argues Trow (2016). From this argument one would say

that this is the reason why South African government sees the need for massification of higher education. It should however be noted that massification of higher education can lead to the overproduction of university and other corresponding institution graduates the resultant effect of which may be the demand for graduates with better result (distinction) or higher qualification levels.

Human capital theorists posits that families and students invest time as well as resources in higher education to enhance their societal and educational position, but for the most part people may not or do not know what the outcome of massification of higher education will be. What people know is that whatever the state of the [economy] labour market in South Africa at the point of graduation, people would say it is better to be a graduate rather than be a “mediocrity”. In their explanation, Lui and Suen (2005) contends that in addition to the response of the changing labour market needs generated by the increasingly globalising economy, a government’s decision to expand higher education is far from random, but may be prompted by an increase in demand for skilled labourers domestically.

Trow (2016) on human capital theory concludes that basically, there is no limit to people aspiring to better their lot in terms of acquiring higher education, which means there is no limit to participation in educational growth not minding the way it is achieved. Acquiring higher education is not subject to scarcity economically, and that irrespective of the situation of the state of the economy of a state, there will always be a continued and popular demand for an increase in the number of places in colleges and universities.

One of the challenges facing accessing higher education in South Africa is the inconsistency in admitting and progressing beyond the systemic contextual problems inherited from the apartheid government’s educational policies to attain participatory parity (Ng’ambi, Brown, Bozalek, Gachago, and Wood, 2016). In South Africa, the education that served as a foundation for building and entrenching inequalities in the past now has to reverse the effects of unequal educational opportunities through massification. Higher education in the past few decades has been transformed in many countries across the world, choosing massified systems over the elitist system, with universities partially or sometimes fully funded by the government while competing for global reputation and academic talents argued Lee (2016). South Africa is therefore no exception. Following the unceremoniously demise of apartheid system, South Africa’s higher education has witnessed rapid massification. The new generation of students, born after 1994 (the born free) are therefore, expecting equal educational opportunities for all.

To Akoojee and Nkomo (2007) the concern with greater participation in higher education is not new in South Africa but rather seen as an urgent imperative issue after the demise of the obnoxious apartheid system. The importance of higher education, especially for former disadvantaged group cannot therefore be overemphasized. In its 1997 report on the state of Education in Africa, UNESCO (1997) describes higher education as being to the education system, what the head is to the body. With democratization as the new watchword and with UNESCO (1999) emphasising that access to higher education must be equitable for all citizens based on the principle of merit and regardless of gender, religion, ethnic or socio-economic background, this explain the efforts to widen access to higher education in South Africa.

One principal challenge in most developing world is the growing demand for higher education. In most of these countries the government lack the ability to provide resources that are adequate to meet these demands. According to the National Plan On Higher Education (NPoHE), one of the key policy goals which are critical for funding South African higher education includes, producing the graduates needed for social and economic development (Ministry of Education, 2001), hence the massification of higher education.

Massification has been described as the mass adaptation of a phenomenon by the suppression of its distinguishing features (Mohamedbhai, 2008). In the context of higher education systems, Scott (1995) describes massification as the rapid increase in student enrolment in higher education in the latter part of the twentieth century. Debatably, higher education is overtly, recognized by all as an integral part of economic development. Tertiary education no doubt is significantly, essential for the facilitation of nation building apart from promoting social cohesion while inspiring confidence in social institutions, as well as encouraging democratic participation through open debate.

It has also been argued that higher education facilitate an appreciation of diversity in gender, ethnicity, religion and social class, perhaps one of the reason for which South Africa is going that route by declaring higher education free; believing that it is a major avenue for social mobility and a carte blanche for upward movement to the upper echelons of society apart from being considered as a vital instrument for human capital development, sustaining economic growth, restructuring society and promoting national unity.

Martin Trow in his work, *Higher Education and Its Growth* identified three broad pattern of development of higher education in every advanced society. The first is elite higher education; mass higher education, and universal systems, with transformation in higher education where its

access has shifted from being a privilege in the elite phase to a right in the mass phase when higher qualifications seems to have become mandatory for full and effective social engagement, and failure is considered as a mark of mind or character defect (2016).

Owing to the persistency in social inequalities which is apparently visible everywhere in South Africa, the government has always been in full support for massification of higher education. What this implies is that the curriculum will have to move from a structured program based which was the order of the day in the elite phase and move to a flexible modular structure to accommodate the mass phase where choice of program is facilitated to the total collapse of sequencing, structure, and assessment requirements (Trow, 2016) in the universal phase.

This argument is supported by Nhat & Bich (2017) that besides the achievements, the rapid expansion of higher education has resulted in various issues, especially an increase in low-quality programs and the mismatch between industry requirements and university graduates' knowledge and skills.

While trying to accommodate the large numbers of students that are willing to access higher education in South Africa, there is probability that higher education institutions in the country may likely experience huge turnout in student enrolment with its immediate and structural effects. Overtly, this may be considered as institutional massification, granting that there is barely any definition of institutional massification in the literature of higher education. Although, countless number of South Africans are without higher education hence, the growing demand for higher education. The question that rightly comes to mind is whether South African government and its institutions are well prepared to cope with the attendant challenges of this "massification phenomenon"

At global level, Gibbons (1998) contends that massification has numerous consequences for higher education systems, not just in terms of the increase in the number of students but the negative accompanying changes in the composition, character and aspirations of the student population. According to Bunting and Cloete (2008), Wangenge-Ouma (2012) South Africa's higher education witnessed a rapid increase between 1995 and 2005 with a policy thrust that was accepted as "the more is better", later couched as "more was not affordable" due to financial constraints. The policy was later accepted as "not more, but more equity". Owing to the rapid increase in the demand for higher education between 2000 and 2004 the policy thrust was changed to "more is not better", due to government's inability to fund education and a poor output results. This corroborate Lomas's statement that massification of higher education seems to

confirm the claim that more means worse due to the innumerable challenges that higher education institutions may likely face (2001).

In International Relations, the human force is a requisite to determining a good and sustainable foreign policy. In other words, the strength of a nation no doubt depends upon the quality and quantity of its human force. For example, the enormous population of China has enabled it to pursue a forceful foreign policy. Qualitatively, the population of a country should be healthy, *well-educated* and prosperous. It should also possess technical know-how aided by quality education. By implication the strength of a nation depends upon the quality and quantity of its human factor.

Understandably, South Africans, precisely the blacks in the time past (during apartheid) witnessed some sort of deprivation in terms of having access to higher education apart from economic hardship being expressed by the majority which is why the clamour for free higher education in the country has intensified. Letseka and Maile (2008) though contends that higher education institutions [in South Africa] have not produce sufficient number of quality graduates, especially blacks. While trying to justify their argument Letseka and Maile explained that the cause of the low levels of disadvantage students to access higher education lies on the Universities' fees, and therefore, automatically shut out the poor and reducing the ability of Universities to contribute to social and economic development.

One thing that is cleared about massification of higher education is that the pedagogical relationship between learner and teacher might move from personal mentoring that shape individual development to formal instruction in large classrooms. This is because in a large class which is the resultant effect of massification; students would be exposed to new perspectives in higher education such as correspondence programs. Therefore, trading quality and diversification of higher education for quantity in the name of massification. This study therefore contends that the massification of higher education in South Africa, contrary to the expectations of South Africans higher education qualification may not likely boost the upward social mobility of people most especially the teaming youths who do not understand why they have a degree.

Methodology

Research methodology is an in-depth and detailed description of data collection and analyses procedures for a planned study. It covers the techniques that will be employed in a study, the precise tool that will be used and specific instruments that will be used to collect the relevant data. Considering the nature of this work, the researcher will rely on mixed method of analysis. This method allows researchers to use multiple methods and measures of an empirical phenomenon

in order to overcome problems of bias and validity. When dealing with a particularly slippery and empirical phenomenon like massification of higher education in racially divided society like South Africa; a lack of specifications can be exclusively worrisome. The study is designed to explore and discover the values of higher education in South Africa vis-à-vis its massification. The study shall use a combination of an integrative research approach, with specific focus on the issues surrounding higher education in South Africa.

Mass higher education; what it is to South Africans

Education in South Africa is considered very crucial for upward movement of individuals particularly the disadvantaged. Education is at the very heart of the process of laying a sure foundation for achieving sustainable development. It is seen as agent of change and progress, as well as an instrument for empowering individuals; it is designed to affirmatively assist individuals to develop their skills and intellectual abilities in order for them to fulfil their potentials thus leading to a robust productive and satisfying lives (Yakubu, 2012). Therefore, having higher qualification to South Africans will allow participation in a knowledge based economy as well as help to achieve economic success.

Badat (2010:2) in his work *“The Challenges of Transformation in Higher Education and Training Institutions in South Africa”* expounds that in South Africa, social inequalities were embedded and reflected in all spheres of social life, as a product of the systemic exclusion of blacks and women under colonialism and apartheid. He further explains that the higher education system was no exception and that South African higher education was shaped by socio-political and economic discrimination and inequalities of a class, institution, race and gender. Thus making the South Africa’s government to be committed to transforming/massification of higher education after 1994 while trying to shape the inherited apartheid socio-economic order and institutionalising a new social order in the former apartheid enclave.

It is within this premise that South Africans are demanding for free inclusive higher education, where more blacks will have the opportunity of attaining higher education. One respondent (a high school teacher in Empangeni, Kwazulu-Natal) on why he thinks higher education is a must; reiterates that *“South Africans had suffered a lot in the hands of whites led government during the time of apartheid and now that we are free, we should have access to everything particularly higher education. I only had my degree after 1994 at a very old age because of apartheid and now that we don’t have such system the younger generation should be given the opportunity to have their degrees so that they can have better job opportunity”* To many South Africans, having

higher education is seen as a means to close if not destroy the exclusionary bridge that has made them to remain at the bottom of the ladder for too long a time. The former South African minister for higher education and training, Blade Nzimande; agreed with this statement when he said that the proportion of [South] African students in South African universities has increased dramatically from 49% in 1995 and is estimated to 72% at present. He went further to say that “we want our universities to become African universities in a developing country that has a history of racist and gender based, class exploitation. These universities, all of them, must shed all the problematic features of their apartheid and colonial past” (Business Tech, 2015), hence one of the reason for massification of South Africa’s higher education.

South African Universities showing the number of students 2015-2016

University	2015	2016
University of South Africa (UNISA)	400,000	299,324
North-West University	74,355	63,395
University of Pretoria	50,000	53,323
Tshwane University of Technology	50,000	58,901
University of Johannesburg	48,500	51,795
University of KwaZulu-Natal	40,000	46,472
University of the Free State	33,000	36,269
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	33,000	34,455
University of the Witwatersrand	32,703	37,448
University of Stellenbosch	30,150	30,161
University of Cape Town	26,322	29,232
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	26,000	27,780
Walter Sisulu University	25,000	28,581
Durban University of Technology	25,000	28,377
University of Limpopo	20,000	19,843

Vaal University of Technology	17,000	19,241
University of Zululand	16,100	17,662
University of the Western Cape	15,200	21,796
Central University of Technology	13,534	15,708
University of Fort Hare	12,000	13,831
University of Venda	12,000	15,237
Mangosuthu University of Technology	10,000	11,588
Rhodes University	7,000	8,136
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	5,060	5,502
University of Mpumalanga	140	1,268
Sol Plaatje University	135	703
Total:	1,022,000	954,232

Source: Business Tech (2015) and South African market insights (<https://www.southafricanmi.com/education-statistics.html>)

Answering question on the choice of programme of study, a respondent who is equally a new university student said . . . *I don't mind any programme given to me, all I want is a university education, my friends told me that National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) will fund my education and when I get a job, I can pay back the money gradually.* (the National Student Financial Aid Scheme was established in 1999 to provide loans and bursaries to South African students who qualify at all public universities and technical vocational education and training (TVET) colleges) This respondent is not the only one with this belief, there are thousands of students whose aim is to get to university not minding the marketability of their degree of choice. Perhaps, one contributory factor is the financial aid from the government who also believe in bridging the gap between the educated white South Africans and black South Africans. Thus placing value on acquisition of university education as the determinant of social mobility.

Hence the argument that the wage advantage of university graduates over high school graduates can be explained by the distinctions in the demand for and supply of university graduates (Goldin

and Katz 2008). By interpretation, a university graduate who has completed a four or three-year university degree, relatively; may likely enjoy and have upper hand in the competitive labour market and thereafter enjoy a higher income in later life.

During 2019 registration period, this author encountered a student who was bent on studying iSizulu language based on the fact that she is a Zulu. When she was challenged on the basis that knowledge is a speciality and this is in demand in the labour market, her response was that *she will get a job if she knows someone who can connect her*. A final year law student respondent however said that *it is better to pursue an academic degree that is relevant to your dream job as it will make you to become productive and contribute to the development of the country. I also believe that if you go for the right programme in university, one will be able to encourage the younger generation to do the same more so the future is meant for the creative mind and not base on your certificate*.

Debatably, the survival of a nation is not hinged on the number of university graduates it role out every year but on the quality of university graduates to feed its industries. Good and quality education is the foundation of moral regeneration and revival of its people. But where this is lacking there is bound to be a problem. Education should be seen as a life-long process which enables an educated individual to develop his/her potentials in order to give service not only to himself/herself but to the community at large (Onyekachukwu and Oghogho, 2018). Education is therefore expected to inculcate in individuals the right types of values and attitudes for survival, as well as enable such individual to acquire appropriate mental and physical skills, abilities and competencies, for him to live in and contribute to the development of his/her society. But to average South African, higher degree certificate is considered a meal ticket.

One twist to higher education in South Africa is when political parties use it as a means to get the support of the masses for their electoral success. For example, in 2017, during the elective conference of the South Africa ruling party (ANC), the former president (Jacob Zuma) whose wife was also contesting for the president of the party, announced that higher education will be free from the following year. Political pundits have argued that he did that in a bid to solicit for the support of the people (the poor and uneducated blacks) who are directly affected to vote for his wife. Debatably, higher education in South Africa should not be seen as a matter of time and the number of throughput but a matter of quality.

With massification and increasing enrolment, the output of graduates from South African higher education institutions has inevitably increased. In the recent years, the higher graduation rate has

also resulted in an increase unemployment among graduates in South Africa. According to a quarterly labour force survey released by Statistics South Africa in 2018, there are over 430,000 unemployed people in South Africa, out of which 7.3 % of them are university graduates (News 24).

Counting the cost of massification of higher education in South Africa

In November 2018, I had the opportunity of interviewing two graduates from University of . . . for teaching positions; their response to questions asked from them somehow exposed the quality of graduates produced in South African Universities. Theoretically, they lack the knowledge of the subject they have applied to teach, we couldn't employ them because of this. This was the response to the question on the quality of graduates from South African higher education system. Responding to the same question, another respondent *commented that massification of higher education will not only destroy the quality of higher education but will prevents students from opting for professional programmes that takes a longer period of study, because of erroneous believe that the quicker they graduate the faster their chances of getting a job.*

What the above portends to mean is that there is possibility of compromising quality in a bid to create mass higher education. This is the challenge (creation of a higher education system that combines mass access with quality) that policymakers in the educational sector may have to contend with. In his work, “*Educating for the Knowledge Economy*”, Obanya (2004) contends that massification of higher education that resulted from throwing the gates more widely open and the specific challenges, were those of ensuring quality and ensuring the judicious use of available resources, the size of which have not matched the rate of increase in student numbers where more than 200 students are made to receive lecture in a venue that is meant for 75 students. As a result of the demand for higher education private institutions whose programmes have not been accredited by the relevant authority are increasingly springing up. Therefore, quality education that will enhance socio-economic development is not attainable where there is poor and unmaintained physical infrastructure.

In their contribution, Harvey and Green (1993) proposed that educational quality could be framed as falling into one of five different conceptions, quality as exceptional in relation to some form of standard or norm that is exceeded. Quality as perfection, describing the state of flawlessness in educational system, quality as fitness for purpose referring to the degree of utility or impact. Quality as value for money, that is focusing on the provision of an adequate return on investment

and quality as transformation, focusing on quality as improvement rather than quality as assurance.

Education no doubt is a tool for empowering people, most importantly the youth, for sustainable livelihood and socio-economic development. It is considered as the key to achieving nation's sustainable development. But how relevant is the programme a student chooses to do vis-à-vis industries requirement? A respondent said; *in 2014 when I was registering for my first degree, my intention was to study iSizulu since it's my language and I believe it's going to be easier for me to pass but the lecturer who was assisting me with my registration refused to allow me go for iSizulu, he said such programme is not relevant nowadays, he said I should go for Information Studies. In fact, he told others not to register me for iSizulu at that point I got angry not knowing that he was helping me. At the end I agreed to study Information Studies and I did very well. I only stayed at home for 2 months and I landed my dream job, I have completed my honours and planning to go for my Master's degree. I will always be thankful to him . . . you know what, he is not even a South African.*

The above testimony shows that if one must go to university, whatever programme that such student will go for must be relevant and meet up with the needs and the demands of the labour market. Lomas (2001) argues that as a result of massification of higher education a lot of quasi-academic courses that has no relevance to the economic and technological development on a global scale have been introduced.

Debatably, and as a result of the importance attached to university certificates in South Africa, its universities have continued on annual basis role out graduates whose degrees are not relevant to the needs and development of the South African society thus, joining the long train of unsuccessful job seekers who doesn't understand why they have a degree but cannot be gainfully employed. Obanya (2004) couched it as education for the world of no work. By implication, the rapid increase in tertiary enrolments is not necessarily based on the needs of the employment sector, rather to correct the seemingly educational inequality in South African society.

In South Africa, there is a culture of copycat style of educational programme amongst students. It has been observed that students often believe that if "A" graduated in a particular programme and got a job immediately "B" will get a job if he/she does the same thing. A very good example of such programme is education offered by various faculties of education in South African universities. It a common knowledge in South Africa that once a student graduates and there isn't immediate job the next thing is to go for Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGCE), hence the

reason why students prefer going for teaching subject rather than professional programmes such as engineering, medical sciences, information technology etc. They (the PGCE graduates) often forget that there are students who actually spends four to five years to qualify as a teacher. These set of graduates ended up adding to the ban wagon of half-baked primary and high school teachers who have contributed to the decay in primary and secondary education in the country.

In Africa and in particular South Africa, most higher education institutions depend solely on government for funding as well as for policy-making. In a report by News24 (24/3/2019), a sum of R967 million was allocated to the debts of continuing National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to settle historic debts for 52 514 NSFAS-funded students currently studying. This comes following widespread students' protests calling for free education and for government to commit more funds to assist students who often found themselves unable to study due to affordability.

In Africa (South Africa inclusive) Ajayi et al. (1996) contends that funds available to run higher education institutions are exceptionally insufficient, thus making them to survive on what they refer to as a 'starvation diet'. Debatably, the avoidable contraction of financial resources to South African universities with an unprecedented increase in the demand for higher education, constitutes the most serious if not the greatest challenge to South Africa's higher education.

Concluding remarks

The massification of higher education in South Africa no doubt has increased access to higher/university education therefore enhancing the scope of equity and equality in South African society where everything was previously based on race. However, South African university graduates are beginning to doubt the worth and the efficacy of higher education to improve graduates' competitiveness in the job market.

In response to a question, a university lecturer said . . . *I often told my students that having a degree is not a guarantee that they will get their desired job rather university education should be seen as a leeway to having a better chance of utilizing what is on ground in terms of applicability of what you have learnt. If all of us continue to look for employment in a highly saturated system without thinking of taking the risk to go out of our comfort zone to create something out nothing, there will always be crisis of unemployment.* Many South Africa's university graduates may not likely agree, but the fact is that the situation in South Africa's employment market is becoming more complex owing to the fact that returns of education and social mobility has slowed down. Another lecturer comments that *in the late 90s up until 2007 as a Social Work graduate, there is*

hundred percent chance of getting a job immediately you are out of university but today there are hundreds of Social Work graduates on the street without a profitable job. What this portends to mean is that the assumption that higher education degree as traditionally considered to be among the most effective measures to support upward social mobility is superficial.

The output of graduates from South African higher education institutions has increased tremendously, with massification, the number of enrolment is also increasing. Generally, the trends seem to be the higher the graduation rate equals the high rate of unemployment amongst these graduates. In the first quarter of 2018, Statistics South Africa in its Quarterly Labour Force Survey, shows that South Africa's unemployment rate stands at 26.7%. While a university degree is often seen as a means of lifting the population out of unemployment, Stats South Africa expounds that the graduate unemployment rate stands at 33.5% for those aged between 15–24, and 10.2% among those aged 25–34 years (Business Tech, 2018).

According to human capital theory, education is an investment and it is believed that education has the capability to raise individual's productivity as a result of acquired skills and knowledge that is capable of increasing the efficiency and the value of the more educated. From the interpretation of the human capital theorists this has implications for the quality of higher education, this is because it suggests that higher productivity can be viewed as an indicator of the quality of higher education programmes.

If that is the case, it means that the poor quality of higher educational provision; the incompatibility between the educational curricula and the needs of the labour market; lack of practical skills which is pivotal to been sort after by employers must be addressed by policy makers. It is expected that in the coming years, there will be increases in student enrolments, this is a matter that deserves serious attention, from higher institutions as well as policymakers. As a matter of urgency the existing infrastructure in these institutions must be comprehensively rehabilitated. In essence, as government is trying to promote the expansion of higher education to meet with the increasing demand for the sustainability of the country's economic growth, the production of quality university graduates must be top priority.

It must be cautiously done to avoid the negative impacts of overcrowding of classes, overstretching of the available human and material resources that can impacts the quality of education provided and by extension affect the labour market which the university projects to serve. Therefore, there is need for policy makers to be clear about the drive to engage with quality, differentiating between quality educational models where specific outcomes driven by

technology, economic and pedagogical perspectives where students are placed at the centre in more holistic terms.

7. References

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