

The State Of Quality Of Teaching And Learning In Higher Education in South Africa: The Misalignments

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Abstract

In the absence of adequate funding, the emphasis on enrolling a significant number of students in higher education sector often takes precedence over ensuring effective teaching and student achievement. Addressing persistent challenges such as improving academic outcomes, reducing university dropout rates, and maintaining access to quality higher education remains a critical concern in the sector. Even though admission to post-secondary education has increased, student success rates have not shown corresponding improvement. This qualitative study applied growth model theory to examine and evaluate the efficiency of tertiary education in South Africa. This research aimed to investigate the hurdles experienced by tertiary institutions in their efforts to produce graduates of high calibre. The research was guided by the question: How can misalignments within the education sector be addressed to enhance efficiency in higher education? The study sample comprised ten first-year undergraduate students. The research applied semi-structured interviews to gather evidence and thematic analysis was conducted to analyse data. In conclusion this study argues that in efforts to provide education to numerous previously disadvantaged groups, quality is often compromised in favour of quantity, creating an "articulation gap" Student unpreparedness represents a significant barrier to academic success, often resulting in high dropout rates or prolonged degree completion

Keywords: Teaching And Learning, University, Quality, Higher Education, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

The rise of knowledge society is transforming higher education worldwide. The current transformation has prompted a global transition from resource-based to knowledge-based economies, as knowledge now surpasses physical capital as the principal driver of national prosperity (Åhlberg, Äänismaa, & Dillon, 2005). The importance of higher education establishments to their communities depends largely on the degree to which they align with the principles of a knowledge-based economy and engage in collaborative networks (Citaristi, 2022; Miño Puigcercós et al., 2019). Such alignment enables the cultivation of a progressively diversified set of skills to address emerging developmental demands (Kaliisa & Picard, 2017). Within the South African setting, tertiary studying serves as pivotal instrument for social upliftment, especially in overcoming the enduring legacies of oppression, skills shortages, limited access to knowledge, and chronic dependency (Maharasoia & Hay, 2001). Consequently, among the core mandates of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is to “increase the rate at which the key skills necessary for economic growth and social development are delivered” (DHET, 2019, p. 1). An effective post-secondary schooling system is thus vital for narrowing the skills gap by enhancing the nation’s human capital, skills that are indispensable not only for improving operational efficiency but also for strengthening the economy’s innovative capacity (Fisher & Scott, 2011). Furthermore, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) emphasise the prioritisation of skills development over the mere accumulation of official knowledge, in acknowledgement of the Republic of South Africa’s broader socioeconomic imperatives (National Commission on Higher Education, 1996).

Continuous challenges in tertiary institutions include sustaining both attainment to and the importance of education, advancing student results, and reducing attrition rates (African Development Bank, 2008; López-Pérez et al., 2011; RSA, 2013; Chaka & Govender, 2017). Despite these efforts, a sizable figure of undergraduates ceases their studies at critical transformation point during the education continuum, from post-secondary education to higher education. Less than 15 per cent of matric learners on average, are admitted to tertiary institutions, and of these, below half in the end complete their university studies (Tewari, 2014). The high dropout rate, largely attributed to poor academic performance in South African tertiary institutions, continues to be a major concern for policymakers and education authorities (Author, 2014; DHET, 2011; Letseka & Maile, 2008). This challenge imposes financial problems to the state and other interested parties in the education field. The present study seeks to identify the existing weaknesses in admission to, and the effective instruction within the South African university structure, with the aim of proposing policy recommendations to address these gaps.

After 1994, the government of South Africa implemented various strategies intended for the purpose of improving the country's post-secondary education framework (Machingambi, 2011; Mouton et al., 2012). An example of similar strategies is to safeguard reasonable entry into post-secondary learning, regardless of student's socio-economic background. Substantial advancement has been made in this regard, particularly in terms of admission, nonetheless, the attributes of graduates is not comparable (Chaka & Govender, 2017; Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014; Motala & Pampallis, 2005). The emphasis on increasing enrolment often overshadows the importance of achieving high standards in education. Many first-time registering students do not have the necessary knowledge and competencies for higher education studies (Tewari, 2016), a situation largely caused by the disparity between high school education and university expectations. Some students take an extended period to graduate due to this readiness gap (RSA, 2012), and the instructional setting frequently unable to provide adequate support for their achievement. Essentially, South Africa's higher education sector faces an articulation shortfall, which denotes an inequality concerning the academic demands of tertiary pathways and the actual expertise and skills that incoming students possess (Author, 2016). While expanding admission remains an important factor of South Africa's post-secondary education restructuring plan, there is a pressing need for institutions to not only increase participation rates but also to ensure that such efforts result in positive and successful educational outcomes (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007).

The student success rate at South African universities stands at 74 per cent, compared with 80 per cent reported nationally (RSA, 2013). This resulted in a completion rate of only 16 percent, significantly failing to meet national and global expectations for students registered in three-year diploma programmes (Centre for Higher Education Trust, 2016; RSA, 2013). As noted previously, the issue of articulation shortfall contributes to poor completion rates and imposes significant costs on institutions, this includes prolonged degree achievement times and other inadequacies, such as a heightened need for remedial education (Fisher & Scott, 2011). This paper argues that the extent and quality of graduate recruitment does not reflect the fact that teaching is difficult to understand or cannot be said to be complete or effective.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study relied on qualitative research to better understand complex contextual factors that cause misalignments in South Africa's tertiary institutions. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for the exploration of subjective experiences and social phenomena which is an ideal way to understand the disbalances in higher education (Creswell 2014:57). Merriam (2017) emphasizes that qualitative research is suitable to comprehend the views of those who

participate. Since the quality of education is shaped by several aspects, such as availability of resources, large university classes, superficial learning, inadequate staff, poor communication and reading abilities, and poor mathematical skills, qualitative research is used to collect rich descriptive data. Through qualitative research, the experiences of people affected by this phenomenon have been revealed. The qualitative methodology is flexible, allowing researchers to explore emerging themes and adapt data collection processes based on participants' responses (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). The study applied in-depth analysis to systematically explore factors that model the quality of education and studying in a precise environment, as suggested by Yang (2018). Case studies are especially useful to understand specific problem in a specific context (Stake, 2017:35). The design of case studies allows for a detailed analysis of aspects that affect the significance of education delivery in tertiary establishments (Yin, 2018:113).

The investigation is rooted in the growth strategy, noting the fact that the effectiveness of tertiary education is closely associated with quality indicators (CHE, 2000, p. 21). Quality is guided by a variety of elements, most notably the size and calibre of university staff and the ratio of staff to students. Spaul (2013) asserts that without expanded access and enhanced quality of education, neither economic nor social development can be realised. Economic growth and the creation of opportunities for sustained expansion are driven primarily by the accumulation of skill than labour or funds (Cortright, 2001; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2008). The principal aim of academic sector is to cultivate an immersed comprehension of essential knowledge that can foster growth and development initiatives. According to the Growth Model, increases in output and production result from the growth of human investment, including knowledge, skills, training, and technological innovation. While the returns from labour and capital may diminish, knowledge continues to generate increasing returns and promotes economic growth. To enhance the quality of graduates, preparing them with robust knowledge and skills that are responsive to the demands of developing nations, and to strengthen the production of academics and researchers, stakeholders must recruit specialised personnel capable of training others, irrespective of race, colour, or nationality.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study came up with the following seven (7) findings: (1) Poor mathematical skills; (2) Poor reading and communication skills; (3) Less qualified staff; (4) Lack of resources; (5) Large classes at undergraduate levels; (6) Superficial learning; and (7) Larger number of unfit entering students. The study indicated that student success is mostly shaped by the value of input. It further showed that both the quantity and quality of research output are strongly influenced by the calibre of academic personnel, with those holding a minimum qualification of a PhD tending to contribute significantly to increased research productivity. The findings have several implications: first, curricula should include compulsory English modules; second, investments aimed at enhancing the quality of facilities should be implemented; and third, teaching within universities should be professionalised. (4) More qualified lecturers should be employed. (5) Subsidy for Higher education needs to be increased. (6) Building the infrastructure that will provide the necessary supporting setting for high-quality teaching and learning activities, would require a public-private stakeholders with international organisations; and (7) To be certain of first-year students' abilities, universities should set entry qualifying examinations.

The weak links between basic and higher education in South Africa

The quality of advanced teaching and learning in South Africa is shaped by multiple factors, such as student preparedness, staff-to-student ratios, the availability of local resources, the adequacy of learning support services, financial contributions from public and private sectors, and the level of lecturer expertise within tertiary institutions. Though, sustaining these standards

remains a significant setback for tertiary education in South Africa. Various tertiary institutions don't regard learning support services as part of their fundamental mandate; students often enter higher education underprepared; large cohorts of non-graduating students persist; student-to-staff ratios remain high; academic staff are, on average, less qualified than the norm within the university sector; and there is a lack of effective management structures (RSA, 2012).

A significant obstacle to improving quality in tertiary education lies in the higher figure of underprepared undergraduates entering the system. This issue stems largely from the misalignment between prior learning experiences and the academic expectations of tertiary institutions (Scott & Ivala, 2019). Most of the students are new in higher education and often lack the foundational skills necessary for academic success and tend to display low levels of motivation (Fisher & Scott, 2011). These challenges manifest in poor academic performance, including high repetition and dropout rates, as well as extended completion times (Fisher & Scott, 2011). Consequently, graduation rates are negatively affected, constraining the sector's ability to address national skills shortages (Fisher & Scott, 2011). It is consequently critical to advance the standard of tertiary studies by implementing curriculum reforms that effectively address the needs of these student groups.

Huge classes at junior degrees levels.

Following the democratisation of South Africa in 1994, the higher education terrain undertook significant change, including the massification of higher education, primarily intended at redressing the inequalities of the apartheid education system. This expansion has often resulted in very huge classes, particularly in initial modules. Although the national average lecturer student ratio in South Africa's tertiary settings appears reasonable, ratios within individual institutions can be exceptionally high. At the University of South Africa, for instance, the comparison of students to personnel reached a peak of 87 to 1 in both 2008 and 2011. In faculties such as commerce and the humanities, these ratios are particularly disproportionate, sometimes rising to as many as 100 students per staff member. The presence of large class sizes, coupled with students from varied educational and linguistic settings, characterises much of initial education (Fisher & Scott, 2011, p. 28). This situation is at times exacerbated by the resulting deterioration in student attainment.

The challenge of figures

Tertiary education in South Africa is at present at a critical juncture. Nationwide processes of democratization and liberalization have created a more dynamic and accountable environment for tertiary institutions. In this case, tertiary studies assist in addressing the country's skills scarcities by supplying graduates and postgraduates, while also fostering research and advancement (Fisher & Scott, 2011). The overarching objective of the policy agenda for transforming the tertiary education structure, as articulated in White Paper 3, is to ensure equitable entrance and provide all individuals with a fair opportunity to recognize their capabilities via tertiary learning (Council on Higher Education, 2013; Department of Education, 1997). To address the disparities in educational access created by apartheid, considerations of quality and learning outcomes are often compromised to enrol as many students as possible in post-secondary education (Badat, 2010; Scott & Ivala, 2019). The intention is to provide equitable opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (DHET, 2014). Nevertheless, this goal has not been fully realised, as many students from underprivileged backgrounds withdraw in significant numbers, while those who remain frequently fail to attain the anticipated academic standards, often taking longer than anticipated to complete their studies. Consequently, improved access has not been matched by a corresponding improvement in student accomplishment.

As a result of ongoing efforts to improve educational quality, the number of unqualified or less employable graduates entering the labour market has started to decline. Education quality refers to the maintenance and implementation of academic and pedagogical standards, including

clear expectations and requirements that are established and upheld (Department of Education, 2001). The issue of quality remains fundamental to achieving both excellence and equity in education. Since the attainment of new South Africa in 1994, students figures in tertiary institutions has grown considerable. Enrolments have grown by more than 80 per cent, reaching more than 900 000 students (Council on Higher Education, 2013). However, completion rates have shown only a slight improvement, rising from 15 per cent in 1994 to 17 per cent in 2010 (Council on Higher Education, 2013). As a result, progress towards achieving broad success has remained limited.

A central strategic goal of tertiary education sector is to supply a larger figure of talent equipped with the skills and competencies necessary to meet the country's human resources and knowledge demands. Achieving this goal, however, remains a significant challenge. The disparity among admittance, specifically to programmes with specific entrance requirements, and successful qualification completion can largely be credited to the misalliance between the escalating prerequisite for tertiary education and the preparedness of school dropouts. This misalignment primarily stems from the underperformance of the schooling system, which contributes to high failure rates and limited achievement in higher education (DHET, 2011, p. 37; Council on Higher Education, 2013, p. 27).

Post-secondary institutes are presumed to produce graduates capable of contributing meaningfully to nation-building by applying their knowledge and skills toward societal development (Osman & Petersen, 2010; Scott & Ivala, 2019). The fundamental aim of these institutions is to develop manpower that drives the nation's socio-economic and political advancement. To address social challenges including inequality and systemic inefficiencies, South African higher education institutions are tasked with several key objectives: expanding access and participation, responding to social needs, promoting collaborative governance, and securing adequate funding to ensure effective institutional management (Department of Education, 2007).

The Government of South Africa has made considerable progress in achieving near-universal admittance to initial education; however, the similar cannot be said for the achievement of quality education with meaningful results (Department of Basic Education, 2010). In South Africa, regardless of substantial government funding in the education sector, student performance remains poor and graduation rates are notably low, particularly at the university level. Between 2009 and 2017, the average annual graduation rate stood at 16.43 per cent, which is significantly under the national benchmark of 25%. The impacts of articulation gaps are evident in graduate enrolments, as well as in the quality and output of postgraduate research. The low graduation rate represents a considerable loss of both economic and human resources, as many students delay completing their studies or leave university without graduating.

According to the National Plan for Higher Education, a student dropout of 20 percent corresponds to approximately 1.3 billion rand in government grants spent annually on students who dropout (Department of Education, 2001, p. 18). In 2005, DHET indicates that of the 120,000 students who registered in tertiary institutions in 2000, only 60,000, or 50 percent, had graduated within three years (Letseka & Maile, 2008). Of the remaining 60,000 students, only 22 percent completed their studies within the standard three-year period for a general bachelor's degree, resulting in a loss of 4.5 billion rand in government allowances and grants without yielding proportional benefit (Letseka & Maile, 2008). A significantly lower dropout rate could have allowed these funds to make a substantial influence to advancing the quality and the development of tertiary education structure and to addressing historical inequalities.

Enhancing the high standard of post-secondary education is anticipated to promote research and advancement, encourage economic divergence, reduce educational inequality and unsatisfactory academic performance, validate both public and private investment in the sector, and position the country more effectively within the global community of nations. Several factors

lead to the low quality and inefficiency of tertiary education in South Africa, including sizeable number of students who are not yet ready to enter universities, overcrowded lecture halls, high student-to-staff ratios, inadequately qualified lecturers, and reduced government funding. Consequently, it is essential to re-evaluate the teaching and learning environment to identify existing gaps and propose viable solutions to reverse this trend. Considering the issues discussed above, it is necessary not only to identify the weaknesses within the system but also to develop strategic measures aimed at improving graduation rates while focusing systematically on producing exceptional graduates equipped with sound knowledge and skills applicable to national development needs. This approach will assist cultivate a new generation of scientists and researchers capable of transforming the country's knowledge base and driving sustainable economic growth.

Poor quality learning

The continuous increase in National Senior Certificate (NSC) results without a matching improvement in students' actual abilities, a phenomenon known as grade inflation, has raised serious anxieties amongst officials, and other role players in the educational industry (Kizito et al., 2016). Globally, final year of secondary school outcomes are considered reliable analysis of first-year tertiary accomplishment (Nel & Kistner, 2009). Nevertheless, in South Africa, questions have been raised about whether NSC results accurately predict students' academic performance at the tertiary level, as many students who achieve high matric scores perform poorly in their first year of study (Kizito et al., 2016).

Grade inflation, often driven by pressure to produce higher pass rates rather than genuine improvements in quality, manifests in several ways, including lenient marking that inflates grades, low pass requirements (40 per cent for three subjects and 30 per cent for another three), and the design of examinations to accommodate learners with lower academic ability, particularly those from previously underprivileged backgrounds (Ramphela, 2009). For instance, while the average final year secondary school performance between 2001 and 2005 gradually improved, the academic achievement of first-time tertiary institution students declined during the same period, with the performance gap widening from 22.2 per cent to 26.6 per cent (Nel & Kistner, 2009). Indication of score increase, particularly among lower-performing students, was found in research done at the University of Stellenbosch, which examined the predictive validity of the new Grade 12 NSC grades for admission into tertiary institutions (Nel & Kistner, 2009). Nel and Kistner add that this trend may lead students to develop unrealistic perceptions of their academic abilities. Furthermore, university curricula are often not designed to tackle the needs of such cohorts. It is therefore recommended that universities consider implementing entry qualification assessments for first-year students to accurately gauge their academic preparedness.

Availability of resources

The accessibility of resources is additional critical issue that hinders students' admittance to and performing in tertiary institutions. Insufficient funding for tertiary institutions often leads to higher tuition fees, which can exclude students from economically underprivileged communities and limit universities' ability to contribute effectively to the political, socio-economic, and cultural progress of society (Letseka & Maile, 2008). For example, in the United Kingdom, a study by HEFCE found that students from deprived backgrounds were six times less likely to enter higher education compared with their more privileged peers (Scott & Ivala, 2019). In the United States, student success is strongly influenced by parental income, with 90 percent of graduates coming from the highest income groups, while only 25 percent is from the lower half (Scott & Ivala, 2019). In South Africa, 70 per cent of the households of tertiary education dropouts were classified as having a little-salary status, with some households receiving lower than R1,600 per month (Letseka & Maile, 2008). The current financial constraint makes it extremely difficult for the average South African student to get tertiary admission, a challenge that was highlighted during the widespread student strikes across South African campuses.

Enhancing funding for universities, particularly those historically disadvantaged, would significantly boost academic achievement in tertiary institutions.

Less qualified staff

A key factor influencing students' academic achievement is the qualification level of their educators (Omolara, 2008). Barber and Mourshed (2007) argue that the excellence of teaching and learning can't surpass the quality of its educators. Similarly, Chong (2009) emphasises that the competence of teachers and lecturers is a critical determinant of student learning and development. In South Africa, developing a highly educated workforce has been identified as essential for establishing a knowledge-based economy capable of providing education and training to a broader segment of the population than previously possible (Kruss, 2004). Achieving this objective relies heavily on the preparation of a skilled and motivated teaching workforce, which remains a traditional responsibility of universities.

The prevalence of teachers without qualifications and teachers who don't meet minimum requirements to be qualified teachers in South African schools continues to hinder learners' academic progress. The quality of teachers has long been a primary concern for both educational authorities and the public in South Africa, as it directly affects opportunities of quality education. From the time of the attainment of democracy, South Africa's education approach has witnessed multiple transformations aimed at addressing the enduring legacies of racially segregated schooling under apartheid. Despite government initiatives to correct imbalances of the past, particularly in teacher education, the quality of teaching in historically underprivileged societies continues to be a serious problem (Department of Education, 2005). For instance, in 2010, only 41 per cent of permanently employed academic staff at universities held doctoral qualifications, while merely 34 per cent possessed a master's degree (Centre for Higher Education Trust, 2016). Such figures are insufficient to support the progression of the tertiary education sector and, by extension, the broader economy.

The need for highly qualified teachers is critical, as they contribute significantly to learner achievement and higher graduation rates. Professionalising teaching at universities is therefore essential, with doctoral qualifications serving as a key mechanism for enhancing professional standards. Although there has been considerable progress in the quantity of doctoral graduates in South Africa, averaging twenty-six doctorates per million of the inhabitants in 2016, this is far below international benchmarks. For comparison, Portugal produced 569 doctorates per million, the United Kingdom 288, Australia 264, the United States 201, Korea 187, and Brazil 48 per million. The above figures indicate that South Africa has a lengthy road to progress in the production of PhDs if it needs to produce quality graduates at its universities.

Poor communication and reading abilities

Bharuthram (2012) highlights a considerable relationship linking studying ability and students' academic outcomes. Limited communication and reading skills, particularly in the languages of instruction, are key aspects influencing student achievement in tertiary institutions (Howie, 2003). A study by Riti and Ramachandran across eleven African countries, South Africa included, highlighted that the language of teaching, especially English, poses a considerable barrier to student achievement. Enhancing the quality of education can provide conditions in which disadvantaged students can escape the cycle of poverty that affects society. Nonetheless, Taylor (2006) notes that many South African students perform considerably worse in international assessments compared with their regional peers. Results from the advancement in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2009 and 2011 display that South African students rank near the lowest, although there has been slight improvement since 2006 (Kelly et al., 2014). Proficiency in the instructional language is fundamental to academic success (Masasi, 2012). Although, in South Africa many students lack proficiency in English literacy and communication skills. As English is not their first language, they often struggle with subjects taught in English, which negatively impacts their overall academic performance.

Poor mathematical skills

Learners' achievement in key learning areas, especially Mathematics, serves as a critical indicator of progress in higher education (Bokana & Tewari, 2014). For example, proficiency in Mathematics is often a prerequisite for entry into programmes in the sciences, engineering, technology (SET), as well as business and management (BM). Conversely, weak performance in Mathematics and other quantitative subjects significantly limits students' access to, and achievement in, these fields (Fisher & Scott, 2011). In the 2010 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, Mathematics recorded the lowest pass rate at 47.4%, with many passes scoring below 40% (Fisher & Scott, 2011). Similarly, data from the 2011 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) emphasized the poor achievement of South African learners in these disciplines (Kelly et al., 2014). This shortcoming in mathematical skills remains a major issue hindering students' academic success at tertiary level (Howie, 2003).

Efforts to solve the problem

Since the new dispensation in 1994, admittance and achievement in tertiary institutions have received considerable attention in policy development, beginning with the 1997 White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education, continuing with the Green Paper on Post-School Education and Training, and more recently the National Development Plan (NDP). The White Paper (1997) highlights that "the principle of equality requires equitable opportunities for entry into and successful higher education programmes" (DoE, 1997, p. 11). Its objectives extend beyond promoting equitable access to ensuring high-quality learning outcomes. Effective learning is expected to be profound, meaningful, transformative, and metacognitive, encompassing the understanding of content, grasp of concepts, and the development of strategies for exploring new ideas (Hilberg et al., 2005; Teise & le Roux, 2016; Killen, 2012).

It is particularly important that graduates, especially those from historically underprivileged societies, are not disadvantaged by the quality of programmes, as this would limit their personal advancement and hinder broader societal and fiscal expansion. UNESCO (2002) say quality education requires students who are healthy, well-nurtured, and inspired, as well as highly skilled educators, interactive learning methodologies, sufficient resources and instructional resources, applicable curricula that are deliverable in local languages, and approaches that draw on teachers' knowledge and experience while respecting local communities and cultural contexts. A precise description and comprehensive assessment of learning results are essential, encompassing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, as well as inclusive decision-making. Additionally, creating an inclusive, healthy, safe, and gender-sensitive environment is crucial, one that not only supports learning but actively fosters and encourages it.

To accomplish the dual objectives of broadening access and enhancing student outcomes, current strategies emphasize subsidizing institutional development programmes, enhancing school quality, and providing financial support to learners (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). Academic enhancement initiatives primarily aim to strengthen tertiary education structure by increasing both the number and quality of graduates (DHET, 2012). These objectives are supported through student mentoring schemes and professional development workshops for staff. Nonetheless, the national government faces persistent challenges in improving education quality and graduate production due to rising social demands and comparatively limited fiscal resources (Teferra, 2015). Delivering high-quality education requires skilled personnel, costly resources, infrastructure, and additional logistical support (Teferra, 2015). Consequently, the Education Authority is maximising various funding channels, including National Research Funds (NRFs), the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), Educational Development Grants (EDGs), and contributions from national and international donors. Other strategies to promote access and success include initial risk assessment for new students, tracking educational improvement, mentoring and tutoring programmes, employee growth, and the effective utilisation of online learning and support platforms

CONCLUSION

This study argues that in efforts to provide education to numerous previously disadvantaged groups, quality is often compromised in favour of quantity, creating an "articulation gap" Student unpreparedness represents a significant barrier to academic success, often resulting in high dropout rates or prolonged degree completion. A persistent challenge within tertiary education sector is to prepare students for participation in emerging economies, while simultaneously ensuring both admission to tertiary institutions and the maintenance of quality, achieving improved outcomes and reducing attrition. The study emphasised that teaching can only be considered complete and successful when its effectiveness is evident in the graduate output. Overall, the findings indicate that students' success is largely determined by the quality of educational inputs. For instance, a surge in the number of academic personnel holding at least a PhD is associated with a 0.4 per cent improvement in student success rates. The study also highlighted that both the number and quality of research output are strongly influenced by the caliber of teaching staff, with a higher number of PhD-qualified staff contributing to a 0.06 per cent increase in research productivity. To achieve the overarching goal of producing high-quality graduates and fulfilling socio-economic, political, and cultural objectives, a revised programme is proposed that mandates compulsory English courses for all students. Various investment to enhance the quality of facilities and instructors' coaching are proposed. In fact, higher education has a greater need to be professionalized in universities, so doctoral studies are an important professionalization mechanism.

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