

Rethinking The Foundations: A Policy Analysis Of The Basic Education's Role In Shaping Graduate Attributes For Higher Education In South Africa

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Abstract

Graduate attributes are often discussed within the context of higher education. However, these attributes require a solid foundation that should be established during basic education. In South Africa, a significant mismatch exists between the academic performance standards in secondary education and the expectations of higher education. While basic education allows students to progress with a 40% pass rate in some subjects, higher education institutions require a minimum of 50% for all courses, leading to a disconnect that hampers student success. This paper conducts a policy analysis of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) the analysis explores the extent to which basic education policies foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and other graduate attributes that are essential for university success but often remain underdeveloped at this level. The analysis highlights the need for a more integrated approach that ensures students enter university not only with the required knowledge but also with well-developed graduate attributes. Through a detailed comparison of assessment standards and educational outcomes, this paper identifies key areas where the basic education system falls short in preparing students for higher education. The future implications of maintaining the current educational trajectory are also explored, emphasizing the potential long-term challenges for the South African education system if foundational gaps are not addressed. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy reforms that aim to create a more seamless transition from basic to higher education, ultimately fostering a stronger, more capable cohort of university graduates.

Keywords: Graduate Attributes, Basic Education, Higher Education, Educational Policy, Student Preparedness