

Exploring Students' Views on Factors Affecting Academic Performance in a South African University

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KEYWORDS Feedback. Assessment. Graduation. Module. Education

ABSTRACT The improvement of throughput, graduation and retention rates in South African higher education is a national priority. Student academic performance data in one school at a historically disadvantaged South African university has shown that the pass rates have been declining over the past few years. This decline in pass rates has necessitated the undertaking of this study with the intention of investigating the underlying factors impacting student academic performance in the school. The study adopted a qualitative approach located in the interpretivist paradigm. A case study design was followed, and the data was solicited from a purposive sample of thirty-seven students. Data were collected through focus group interviews, the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, and data was analyzed through content analysis. The study identified some negative factors that are affecting the students' academic performance. The study concluded that steps should be taken to remedy the situation, and recommendations were made as to possible intervention strategies.