

## **Diverging Contours in Access to University Education in South Africa**

**Tatenda Manomano<sup>1</sup>, Perpetua Lum Tanyi<sup>2</sup> and Simon Kang'ethe<sup>3</sup>**

*<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Social Work, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein 9301, South Africa*

*<sup>3</sup>Department of Social Work and Social Development, University of Fort Hare, Box X1314  
King Williamstown, Alice 5700, South Africa*

*E-mail: <sup>1</sup><ManomanoT@ufs.ac.za>, <sup>2</sup><PerpetuaT@ufs.ac.za>, <sup>3</sup><skang'ethe@ufh.ac.za>*

**KEYWORDS** Families. University. Higher Education. Low Socio-economic Status. Deviance. Institutional

**ABSTRACT** The South African government is well respected for its commitment to affordable access to higher education, as it is embedded in the national constitution. Despite this progressive stance, gaining access to university education remains a mirage for many students whose socio-economic circumstances are still precarious, even decades after the advent of democracy. This paper uses a literature review methodology to describe the diverging contours of access to university education, in order to promote debate concerning the relevant policies which can improve the access, which many in South Africa do not have, to university education, despite their academic potential. The relevant literature identifies the challenges which these students face as ranging from institutional challenges, the socio-economic status of their families, deviant behavior, such as crime and violence encountered in universities, to low throughput at the universities as a result of financial constraints. The writers of this paper recommend a pro-active pro-poor policy in terms of funding the students, with a holistic balanced focus, to afford all an equal opportunity to receive university education and programs, to support poor parents and their dependents.