Profiling Disadvantaged Undergraduate Students in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT The focus of this paper is the academic progress of university students who come from disadvantaged schools. While research has been conducted on students' academic progress at higher education institutions, previous studies were generic in that they treated students as a homogenous group. This study differentiates different groups of students using the quintile system and links this to their academic progress.This study was conducted within the sustainable livelihoods approach and sought to explore three aspects of the population under study: namely, livelihood assets, context, and outcomes both before attending university and during their studies. It measured pre-university assets (such as school quintile) against pre-university outcomes (such as matric scores) and then applied these to university outcomes such as grade point average (GPA) and time to graduation. The results show that low quintile students have much lower average matric scores, achieve amuch lower GPA of just 50% and lower, have a much higher dropout rate (of more than 51%) and take longer to achieve a degree (four to seven years for three-year degrees and five to seven years for four-year degrees) than high quintile students.