Expansion of Higher Education in South Africa: Problems and Possibilities

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ABSTRACT The objective of this paper is to examine the expansion of higher education in South Africa, problems associated with it and how it will inform future trends in higher education in the country. To accomplish the objectives of this paper, a qualitative research approach was adopted which allowed for the review of literature that spoke to the title. It was observed that South Africa has been struggling to respond effectively to the expansion of higher education. The expansion of higher education has no doubt affected the quality of education offered, more so, courses offered by higher education institutions seem not to align with market demands, thus increasing the unemployment of graduates. This paper concluded that while greater participation in higher education is welcomed, the country ought to invest in higher education development by constructing new universities and colleges, ensuring more favourable student to staff ratio, and increasing the involvement of the private sector to mitigate the effects of the expansion.

INTRODUCTION

As more students enrol at tertiary institutions, several problems arise such as the lack of funding, decrease in the quality of teaching, and unequal student to staff ratios (Hornsby and Osman 2014). Consequently, the question of quality in the expansion process cannot be ignored. How will higher institutions of learning function and also ensure quality output in the presence of such problems? Lebeau and Oanda (2020) reflect that the rate at which higher education has expanded in developing countries has overwhelmed the available resources to cater for it. Mzangwa and Dede (2019) contend that governments in Africa have been reactive rather than proactive because the signs of increasing demand for higher education have been observable since the 1990s but governments have failed to prepare for this growth. Without proper planning anchored on effective policy development and implementation, the increasing demand for higher education in Africa is bound to affect the quality (The Economist 2019).

In the South African context, the available resources have not been able to cater for the demand for higher education. For Swartz et al. (2019), South Africa's higher education system is not ready for the expansion and growth of higher education. Apart from the challenges above, post-1994 South Africa has witnessed a huge demand for higher education, but a demand which has been met by a limited number of higher institutions of learning (Nukunah et al. 2019). Although the government has argued that access to education is key for socio-economic development, the higher education sector cannot cater for the ever-increasing demand. The authors of this paper argue that the expansion of higher education reflects how successive governments in South Africa have failed to understand the growing demand for higher education in the country (Dyason et al. 2019). The increase in the demand for higher education is a direct result of the government maintaining that higher education is a key to economic development, but then failing to address the challenges associated with the expansion of higher education (Mzangwa and Dede 2019). Therefore, while South Africa is arguing for an increase in higher education enrolment (especially considering apartheid segregation policies), the level of investment in higher education has not been able to keep pace with the increasing demand

(Dhanpat et al. 2019). As a result, those who are fortunate enough to gain access to higher education institutions have to contend with crowded classrooms, insufficient residences and degrading infrastructure. Therefore, with the above premise, this paper seeks to ascertain the problems associated with the expansion of higher education.

METHODOLOGY

To accomplish the objectives of this paper, a qualitative research approach was adopted. Literature relating to the title was reviewed and synthesized to ensure the study can make a meaningful conclusion within the context of higher education expansion in South Africa. This approach was seen as sufficient as it allowed the authors to review and synthesize literature on this highly politicized and debated issue. More importantly, it allowed the authors to understand the extent of the problem and how the South African government has responded. The expansion of higher education in South Africa is not a new phenomenon, rather over the last decade, it has gained significant attention from policymakers and academics alike, hence engaging the literature allowed for the study to have adequate information to ensure a meaningful conclusion. Incorporating the historical debates and narratives around higher education growth in South Africa, this paper was underpinned by the following questions: Has the expansion of higher education in South Africa been positive for the country? How has the government responded to this expansion? Can South Africa absorb the increasing demand for higher education and finally, what is the future for South Africa's higher education sector in the face of this rapid expansion? Thematic content analysis was employed to make sense of the collected data.

Theorising the Expansion of Higher Education

There is no one- size- fits- all theory that explains the reasons behind the expansion of higher education. Rather, there are a plethora of reasons which are closely associated with a country's need for socio-economic development through knowledge generation and one's quest for a better life. The authors, therefore, explain this phenomenon using Human Capital Theory. Higher education represents all forms of structured and systemised learning activities aimed at building students for future engagement outside the learning environment. Higher education and training activities are considered to be beyond the high school level and may include colleges, universities as well as other forms of post-high school education.

Human Capital Theory

For a country to ensure socio-economic development, there is a great need for its people to be productive and knowledgeable. The Human Capital Theory notes that investing in people is key for development and the theory puts education at the centre of this investment (Almendarez 2013). The assumptions of the theory can be traced back to two theorists, Theodore Schultz (1902–1998) and Gary Becker (1930-2014), who were allied with the "Chicago School" of neoliberal thought (Gillies 2011). The theory has two important elements attached to it. Firstly, the theory posits that the difference in income levels in most cases is linked with one's level of education. Secondly, to enhance a workforce, one needs to invest in education (Gillies 2011). The need to rebuild the world economy post World War II placed great emphasises on knowledge generation and educational development. Subsequently, countries around the world began to invest in education, especially higher education, through research and development. Adetiba (2019) concluded that many individuals [in Africa] see higher education as an avenue for one's development and also to ensure one moves up into the upper echelons of society. This perception has been buoyed by the belief that increased educational levels of society will lead to economic returns for both the individual and society as a whole. This is also applicable to governments, who see higher education as a very important instrument for human capital development, sustenance of economic growth, society restructuring, and promotion of national unity. The World Bank explained that for the world to ensure innovation and growth, access to education becomes imperative as educated people tend to earn wages, are likely to be employed and are able to cope with economic uncertainties (World Bank 2017). However, we posit that the holistic adoption of the theory concerning higher education has failed to reflect that this will lead to the expansion of higher education, which some countries will fail to cater for. Despite these observations, governments around the world have

continued to rally young people to enrol for higher education. Because higher education is seen as a key element of Human Capital Theory, countries seek to maximise the socio-economic returns from a society that has acquired education, hence the increased investment in higher education. In turn, society seeking to improve their lives, see their access to higher education as a key to this.

Literature Review

Conceptualising the Massification of Higher Education

The term massification was used by Scott (1995) to describe, within the realms of higher education, the increase in student enrolment in the latter part of the twentieth century (Tlali et al. 2019). Building on Scott's insights, Trow (2000) went further to explain the typology of the term massification. He established the terms 'elite', 'mass' and 'universal' higher education and argued that 'elite' represents a national enrolment ratio of up to 15 percent, 'mass' a ratio of up to 50 percent, and 'universal' a ratio above 50 percent.

The rebuilding process post-WWII resulted in the democratisation of education and the advent of the knowledge economy and globalisation. Subsequently, education was seen as key for development and was moved away from the domain of elitism to that of public benefit (Mok and Jiang 2017). The democratisation of education in the latter part of the twentieth century coincided with the world prioritising economic development through educational development. Mohamedbhai (2008) explained that expansion or massification is the modern-day "revolution" in the higher education sector. The expansion of higher education has brought problems not only in terms of the increase in student enrolments but also in the structure and composition of the university itself and sadly, many governments have not planned for this growth.

In Africa, soon after the periods of decolonisation (the 1950s and early 1960s), the continent realised that it was a latecomer in higher education development. Subsequently, within the context of regional integration, Africa had to come together to enhance its global competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy. Hence governments in Africa have invested in higher education

development, its access and also the alignment of higher education with the developmental needs of the continent. In post-colonial Africa, during the periods of the 1960s until the 1980s, higher education played a considerable role in providing support and high-level man-power in areas of socio-economic development and in promoting research (Mohamedbhai 2008). Towards the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, such attitudes subsequently changed where higher education was now seen by all as an instrument of individual development that can play a major role in socio-economic development, nation-building and the promotion of greater social cohesion.

The Expansion of Higher Education in Africa

The modern [African] University can be traced back to the period between 1930 and 1960 period when the few Afro-western-educated elites used the instrument of European education to fight against colonialism (Mohamedbhai 2008). This meant that whatever the Europeans thought was good for them would also be good for Africans (Assié-Lumumba 2006), hence the demand for higher education, even though most African countries only had a taste of university education after their independence as most of them were affiliated with specific universities in the colonising country. For example, Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone, was a college of the University of Durham (England); the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and the University of Ghana were all affiliated to the University of London.

The end of colonisation in Africa coincided with the need to spur socio-economic development and the integration of Africa into the world economy. Knowledge generation and educational development were thus at the centre of Africa's growth agenda. Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2013) argued that universities in Africa in a post-colonial era were not taken seriously and were observed as an extension of European control and domination, such sentiments can still be observed in Africa today. However, the increase in the demand for higher education in the continent meant African higher education institutions needed to evolve and become agents of knowledge production and dissemination. Building on the above, Mohamedbhai (2008) explained that in the late 1970s and early 1980s

Africa began to witness a steady increase in the demand for higher education, buoyed by an increasing population. Post-colonial Africa witnessed an improvement in the economic and health sectors; which led to a lower mortality rate, and this increased the numbers of pupils enrolling in basic schools and continuing to secondary schools.

The demand for higher education was therefore informed by increased investment in basic education, which resulted in an increasing number of people seeking admission to the tertiary education sector. However, this increase soon became problematic; the demand exceeded the available resources to cater for it. Because of the increasing demand, Ajayi et al. (1996) explained that by the 1980s, African higher education was in a deep crisis. The rate at which the higher education sector was expanding, coupled with infrastructure challenges meant that most countries in the continent were failing able to cope with the demand. Aiming to respond to this demand, Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2013) citing the World Bank (1990), mentioned that public expenditure on education in 39 African countries revealed a double increase of 21.2 percent as compared to the 1970s. On average, Sub-Saharan countries spent 18.2 percent of government budgets on education, 20 percent of which went to higher education in 2000. Between 1999 and 2002, the total enrolment grew by around 170 percent across the continent. Numerically, this signified a rise from 3.53 million students in 1999 to 9.54 million in 2012.

However, the demand for higher education brought with it the question of quality. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the ratio of staff to student is greatly unequal. There are 50 percent more students per lecturer, more than the global average (Iqbal 2015). In East African countries such as Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, more than 50 percent of graduates were reported to be ill-equipped for the workplace. In South Africa, more than 40 percent of students drop out in their first year of study. If the higher education sector seeks to keep pace with the expansion of higher education, reforms are needed, especially in areas such as governance, funding, leadership and more importantly, research and development.

The rise in demand for higher education and the subsequent difficulty in catering for this

demand have seen the emergence and growth of private educational institutions. Private universities grew from 30 to 1000 between 1990 and 2014 while public universities grew from 100 to 500 (Gandhi 2018). This uneven increase risks stifling the development of public universities and has raised fears of brain drain (Mlambo and Adetiba 2019) where private institutions will poach highly skilled personnel from public universities. However, private universities should not be seen as the enemy, rather they should be seen as complementing the efforts of public universities and colleges in their quest to cater to the expansion of higher education. For Mlambo et al. (2020), there are six urgent challenges that need to be addressed with regards to higher education in Africa namely governance, funding, ICT, institutional capacity, demand and internationalisation.

Moreover, challenges such as the failure to integrate graduates into the labour market, limited resources, issues around quality, inadequate funding and transformation, brain drain and degrading infrastructure are compounding Africa's response to the expansion of higher education. Despite the expansion of higher education, in Africa, higher education remains inaccessible for many. It is therefore difficult to see how governments will foster inclusive higher education in terms of access while also mitigating the effects of expansion. The growth in the demand for higher education in Africa is driven by a series of events that have transformed how higher education is perceived, partly also buoyed by governments emphasising higher education as the key to socio-economic development.

Drivers of the Expansion of Higher Education

Many factors are driving the expansion of higher education as, apart from increased investment by countries, society at large views higher education as a key vehicle for people to live better lives. However, we argue that apart from the above, other issues are at play and ought to be taken into consideration. Firstly, the democratisation of higher education ensures education is available for public consumption, this then threatens the traditional position of universities as institutions only for the elite in society (Mohamedbhai 2008). In an attempt to define the concept of democratisation, Blessinger (2015) argues that it is

ensuring that higher education becomes available and is diversified and those who seek to access it should not be denied the opportunity.

This has increased the demand, which has been met with limited resources (Long 2020). Private institutions have therefore established themselves as vehicles to cater for this demand. While higher education is paramount in one's development, when the demand exceeds the supply of resources to cater for it, the democratisation of higher education becomes a contributing factor to the problems associated with the expansion of higher education.

When critical resources such as infrastructure and funding needed to cater for this demand are lacking, higher education institutions miss out on the positive elements associated with the democratisation of higher education. Secondly, there has been an increase in the global population, which has increased the number of those seeking admission into higher education institutions. While the World Bank (2017) agrees that higher education is instrumental for inclusive socio-economic development, we argue that despite the increase in the demand for higher education buoyed by an increasing population, governments will struggle to cater for this demand. Even though the growth of private higher educations might mitigate this problem, the ratio of those seeking admission versus the available resources to cater for the demand remains skewed.

Finally, the phenomenon of globalisation has turned higher education into an export industry and has also created tremendous pressure on higher education institutions to conform to this new norm (Mohamedbhai 2008). The globalisation of higher education implies the mobility of students, institutions, teachers, and programmes crossing national boundaries. For Jongbloed et al. (2008), the higher education sector has moved away from traditional learning methods to organisations engaged in producing and selling education to the global market, very often, for a profit. Competing for global relevance and thinking about the internationalisation of academic talent, Haigh (2014) and Jónasson (2004) identified eight conditions that need to be met: (1) recruiting international students; (2) teaching international students; (3) growing the international enterprise university through the competitive recruitment of international staff and students; (4) compliance with standards set by international

accreditation agencies; (5) 'internationalisation at home, which means internationalisation of the curriculum for local learners; (6) education for global citizenship; (7) connected e-learning; and (8) education for planetary, whole-Earth, consciousness.

Expansion of Higher Education: A South Africa Perspective

MacGregor (2014) wrote that South Africa has done well in terms of increasing the numbers of those enrolling for higher education, however, the true growth and potential of the higher education sector is being hampered by the government's reluctance to involve the private sector. The sharp rise in student numbers indicates a major improvement in access to higher education. Most of the expansion is due to higher enrolment of black students (Tjønneland 2017) This coupled with increasing student debt, student riots and protests and a welfarist neo-socialist model of free university education for the poor, the sector has not reached its full potential. The South African government laid out a series of policies, which were anchored on the constitution, to ensure equal access to higher education and more importantly, to increase the participation of black South Africans in higher education. The institutions of higher learning which had hitherto been established on racial grounds needed transformation and ensure equal representation. One of the biggest challenges that needed urgent attention was the need to ensure that black South Africans were not denied the avenue to participate in higher education. As a result, in 1996, the tertiary education fund of South Africa (TEFSA) was formed. In 1999 it was replaced by the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) which was established by the government to provide funds to qualified and needy students. This has helped to a certain degree to redress racial inequity in access to higher education. Indeed, black students' representation in South Africa's higher education that stood at 32 percent in 1990 jumped to more than 70 percent in 2010 (Machingambi 2011). It also justifies the government's commitment to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to enrol for higher education, regardless of affordability, while appreciating diversity as outlined in the 5th chapter of the higher education Act (No. 101 of 1997). The South African government for its part

has argued that plans are in place to address the expansion of higher education by constructing new universities and colleges and increasing its financial support for higher education.

In 2019 alone, 800 000-plus matriculants passed and had hopes of accessing higher education, but with 26 public universities accommodating nearly one million students and a further 700 000 in TVET colleges – (Technical vocational education training), the competition for spaces is tight and a quick fix to the expansion of higher education will take more than just building new universities and colleges. The increase however is too low when compared to other middle-income developing countries. The government through its National development plan (NDP) aims to rapidly increase university enrolment to 1.5 million by 2030. South African universities should brace for expansion of higher education as first-time graduates battle to find jobs. For the authors, the expansion of higher education has affected the quality of education offered and the curriculum has not aligned with market demands. As a result, young students who have completed their undergraduate degrees return to universities for postgraduate studies not because they had intended to enrol for postgraduate studies but because they could not find employment, thus contributing to the expansion of higher education.

Government Responses to the Expansion of Higher Education in South Africa

Even though the government has admitted to the problem of higher education expansion, higher education institutions in South Africa, particularly those tagged as 'comprehensive' universities, while responding to South Africa's historically disadvantaged populace have always enrolled students over their capacity, resulting in negative consequences for educational quality. Logically, the expansion of higher education ordinarily would have a progressive implication, suggesting an increase in the degree of access to higher education. However, at the institutional level expansion can either have a positive or a negative impact. Mohamedbhai (2014) argued that it would be positive if the institutions, particularly the formerly disadvantaged schools, had the infrastructure and human resources adequate to cope with the rapid increase in enrolment, but negative if these institutions do not.

It, therefore, means that institutions' carrying capacity will be the determining factor for institutional expansion. This, however, can be a complex exercise because most higher institutions in South Africa are used to contact learning. However, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has forced many institutions to adopt a multi-modal learning style, something which has exposed the deficiency of institutions that have never previously used such a system and where they have to quickly organise workshops and other vehicles of training for their teaching staff. Moreover, some still find it quite challenging to engage their students virtually. We posit that to determine whether expansion has been positive or negative in South Africa's higher education institutions, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) needs to establish minimum accreditation standards for its institutions in terms of well-equipped libraries, office space for lecturers, employability of graduates, alignment of the curriculum to the market and the staff/student ratio. Although the increase in enrolment has been focused on addressing the issues of equity, the issue of ensuring equity in success for the enrolled students has, significantly and in the past years, received limited attention, as argued by Mohamedbhai (2008). Without mincing words, the DHET in conjunction with higher education institutions in the country needs to take corrective measures to address this challenge.

But can the previously disadvantaged universities in South Africa rise to this challenge vis-à-vis the globalisation of expansion of higher education? Many historically advantaged institutions (historically white) were well-established institutions as a result of significant resources to devote to quality education during the apartheid era compared to the previously disadvantaged (historically black) institutions. Regarding the situation with the historically black institutions, it was mainly a result of the black education system of the apartheid era. Higher education institutions in South Africa, particularly the previously disadvantaged institutions, are bedevilled by decayed or non-available physical infrastructure to cope with the increase in enrolment of students. This is partly due to a shortage of funds from the government for expansion (Chetty and Pather 2015). The laboratories are inadequately equipped, and both administrative and academic staff are ill-equipped. In some instances, academic staff have

had to share offices. The infrastructure is either inadequate or in bad shape with little or no attention paid to maintenance. Students' residences must now accommodate three or four times the number of students they were designed for. Compounded by lack of maintenance and lack of security, students have at times, gone on the rampage to demand better infrastructure.

Within the context of the expansion of higher education and globalisation, and the state of the previously disadvantaged universities in South Africa, these universities ought to take into consideration the reality of the context of economic and academic trends that have become part of the truth of the 21st century which includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions to cope with the global academic environments (Altbach and Knight 2007: 290). The concern with greater participation in higher education is not new in South Africa and to South Africans; it has become urgent and imperative after the demise of apartheid.

Expansion of Higher Education in South Africa: Future Prospects

The core idea of the expansion of higher education is to allow every qualified individual to access higher education. Baltgailis (2019) and Jermsittiparsert and Sawasdee (2012) had argued that education is the backbone of economic prosperity and plays a fundamental role in the political and social growth of any nation. It is therefore not surprising that participation in higher education, and particularly the success of these participation strategies, have dominated the discourse on the expansion of higher education in South Africa. Massy and Wilger (1998) and Gandhi (2018) submitted that the demand for higher education will continue to grow as people see it as a means to enhance their upward mobility potential as well as promoting social inclusion. However, the growth also comes with its challenges. In almost all the higher education institutions in South Africa, there are visibly negative concerns owing to expansion, including educational quality, staffing, physical infrastructure, student mobility, and graduate employment (Mohamedbhai 2014).

Internationally, to cope with the increased enrolment, higher institutions need to recruit additional academic staff but this too has become challenging, either as a result of a shortage of un-availability of qualified candidates or shortage of funds. What this means is that staff/student ratios will continue being unequal, which may eventually force institutions to resort to using part-time staff who themselves are either inexperienced or unqualified to teach at the level they have been appointed to. Mohamedbhai (2014) argued that this will eventually result in an increase in the teaching load of full-time staff as well as an increase in administrative responsibilities. Consequently, there will be little or no time for research and post-graduate supervision. Institutional expansion occurs mostly in previously disadvantaged higher education institutions in South Africa, thus carrying them beyond their capacity. In South Africa, there is every indication that the output from High schools will continue to increase, with higher education institutions expected to provide access to these school leavers. To cope with this situation, Mohamedbhai (2014: 80) suggests that institutions must be guided by some fundamental principles as they make provision for greater access, higher institutions must ensure equity, with particular reference to gender parity, which has always been a matter of concern for South Africa. Also, higher institutions must take all necessary actions for the adequate success of all the enrolled students, especially those who experience difficulties in adapting to the higher education environment. Quality must not be compromised by South African higher institutions, and they must ensure that their teaching and research are relevant to the needs of the country.

DISCUSSION

Studies and discussions on the expansion of higher education are not new, but in the last two decades, there has been growing literature on how the expansion of higher education can be effectively addressed, especially in developing countries. Socio-economically, education is seen as a key ingredient in the development of a state along with its people. Reinforcing literature findings, studies on the expansion of higher education (Varghese 2006; Mzangwa and Dede 2019; Mohamedbhai 2014) agree that the growth in the demand for higher education has outpaced the response from governments globally. From the literature, it became obvious that

while education can be seen as a key to inclusive development, if the expansion is not met with sufficient resources, it can result in more problems than solutions, as is the case with South Africa (Long 2020) . In Africa, Iqbal (2015) notes that the ratio of students to lecturers is unequal which exerts pressure on available lecturers and increases their workload, which can then result in burnout. From a South African perspective, it was revealed that the demand for higher education post-1994 has grown tremendously. South Africa has 26 public universities with nearly one million students while 700 000 students are registered at the more than 50 higher education training colleges (TVET Colleges – Technical Vocational Education Training). An additional 90 000 students can be found at various private institutions. This reinforces the assumptions of Human Capital Theory that South Africa sees access to higher education as the key for its socio-economic development, hence the government has ensured that those who qualify should not be denied access based on their lack of funds. However, while is it important to ensure access to higher education, especially for the previously disadvantaged groups, the shortcomings of higher education need to be addressed.

Firstly, South Africa's economic growth has been in tatters ever since the global economic crisis of 2008. Tapscott (2017) observes that since the crisis, South Africa has not been able to achieve consistent economic growth, and hence the money available for higher education has also not been consistent. However, regardless of the finances, there has been an increase in the number of students who have been seeking enrolment in higher education. Negatively, this has compounded an already fragile infrastructure network within the higher education sector and has exerted pressure on government finances which are already under pressure from the COVID-19 pandemic. It has also increased the belief that the poorer one is the less likely he/she is to attend university.

Secondly, there are considerable biases towards Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges among students. A university qualification is seen as far superior to that of a college, hence many students prefer to further their studies at universities rather than in the colleges. However, with only 26 public universities in South Africa, they are unable to meet the demand; this signals that the expansion of higher education in South Africa has outpaced the government's investment in the sector. While the stigma towards colleges is not new, the South African government has not invested significantly in changing the mind-sets of students with regards to how they perceive colleges.

Thirdly, In South Africa, the government is the major funder of higher education. While some private funders and companies offer loans, the government remains the biggest funder. However, since the global financial crisis in 2008, government finances have been overstretched. The South African public sector wage bill has become a policy nightmare for the government. Set at a massive R650.4-billion for the 2021/22 financial year, the public sector wage bill has become the largest component of government spending (Mahlaka 2021). Such a huge wage bill means that salaries take up a significant chunk of government revenue, meaning little money is available for other important services such as health, education and welfare. Even though the government has done well in its drive to ensure that those who qualify for higher education can access it, as the biggest funder, it means that when government funds become constrained it is bound to affect the growth and functioning of higher education.

The literature revealed that the problem with higher education funding is not peculiar to South Africa alone, but even countries such as the US and France are challenged with regards to finding an effective mechanism to fund higher education. The literature discovered that while the expansion of higher education in South Africa is not new, the government has failed to put in place effective measures to respond to the increase in demand. Moreover, the increasing public sector wage bill coupled with a slowing economy has led to a reduction in government revenues, thus affecting monies allocated to universities. The expansion of higher education in South Africa has contributed to the increase in graduate unemployment. Statistics South Africa's revealed that results for the first quarter of 2019 showed an unemployment rate of 31 percent among graduates up to the age of 24 (Bangani 2019). When higher education expands in terms of reach and access, it often drifts away from market demands or what the market needs in terms of skills. As a result, universities produce skills that are not in demand, hence contributing to

increasing graduate unemployment. Even though the government has urged students to select science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related qualifications, it has failed to outline how it will address the issue of inadequate funding for higher education.

This paper found that amongst other things, there is a lack of understanding from policymakers as to the effects of the expansion of higher education. While the ANC government long argued that making higher education accessible to the people is key, it failed to consider the expansion of higher education and how it would respond to it, hence today you have an increasing demand for higher education which is underpinned by a lack of resources to cater for it. This has thus created more problems than solutions. Going forward there is a need to invest in higher education development, in terms of infrastructure development, human capital investments and investments in colleges to ensure they can compete with universities and allow for a more diverse higher education environment.

CONCLUSION

The expansion of higher education globally and in South Africa, in particular, has undoubtedly made access to education more possible for many individuals and has become the new norm as more students enter institutions of higher learning. However, this has brought with it other major repercussions encompassing but not limited to lack of funding, a decrease in the quality of education, governance and institutional capacity, and the failure to integrate graduates into the labour market. This is purely drawn from the fact that in a post-apartheid era, there has been immense demand for higher education in South Africa, further stimulated by the increase in population and the limited number of public universities. With the ever-increasing number of individuals wanting to access the higher education arena, the government will undeniably struggle to cater for the demand in student intake.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above, this paper recommends that the government restructure the intake of higher education students to reduce the pressure on universities and academics staff. Secondly, this paper recommends the construction of more

institutions for higher learning to diversify the spatial accessibility of higher education in the country. Thirdly, the government should consolidate its relationship with the private sector and explore whether an increase in private universities and colleges would alleviate the burden associated with the expansion of higher education. Fourthly, there is a need to revitalise TVET colleges and make them more attractive to potential students. This would involve redesigning the curriculum, incentivising those who enrol in TVET colleges and ensuring that the qualifications offered by TVET colleges are on par with their international counterparts. Fifthly, there is a need to re-align the curriculum at higher education institutions in South Africa to ensure it speaks to the needs and demand of the market. Finally, it is recommended that the government should invest in maintenance and support to ensure that the current infrastructure remains effective.

LIMITATIONS

This paper was a review paper; it critically reviewed the literature on the subject matter to examine the challenges associated with the expansion and growth of higher education in South Africa. As it was a review paper it was limited by the lack of primary data collection. Nonetheless, the authors did their best to synthesise the literature to ensure it contributes to answering the objectives of the paper.

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