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FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT A RURAL BASED UNIVERSITY IN EASTERN CAPE OF SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigated factors affecting students' academic performance against the backdrop of underperformance. The paper focused on one campus in one university in South Africa with the aim of informing management about strategies that can be implemented to address the high failure rate. The paper was informed by Archer's social realist theory. Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies with descriptive survey design were used. A stratified random sample of 800 students and purposively selected 30 lecturers participated in the study. Data was gathered through questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews and observations. The validity of the instruments was ensured by a pilot study. Quantitative data were analysed and presented using descriptive statistics and qualitative data used content analysis method and verbatim quotations. Thick descriptions and descriptive statistics were used for qualitative and quantitative data respectively. The paper showed that students lacked proper writing and study skills and that course outlines and study guides were not made available. The paper recommends that the Learning and Teaching Development offers a series of lectures on writing and study skills to all students.

KEYWORDS: Underperforming, education, graduate, professional development, challenges.