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Title

Transformation, stratification and higher education : exploring the absorption into employment of public financial aid beneficiaries across the South African higher education system / Angelique Wildschut ; Michael Rogan ; Bongiwe Mncwango

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Abstract

Improving access to higher education is an important strategy for achieving equity in the labour market. Against the backdrop of the 'massification' of higher education in a number of countries, most notably in the UK during the 1990s, a growing literature on graduate un/employment has aimed to investigate whether the graduate labour market has absorbed the increasing number of university completers. In post-apartheid South Africa, this question assumes an added significance corresponding with the need to redress sharp inequalities in access to higher education inherited from the colonial and apartheid eras. Measuring graduate employment outcomes, however, is notoriously difficult. Graduate employment studies are often ad hoc and focus on graduates from only a handful of universities or degree programmes. Exploring a novel dataset, this paper presents the first analysis of the labour market absorption rates of publicly funded (through the National Student Financial Aid

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Scheme (NSFAS)) graduates from low-income households across all South African universities between 2005 and 2015. While our findings illustrate the expected differences in the probability of employment by race and gender, we also identify a strong and significant association between the type of university from which NSFAS students graduate and the probability of employment and show that this association holds irrespective of race, gender and the field of study in which a degree is obtained. We conclude with a reflection on what a hierarchical higher education system means for the role of higher education in transformation and creating an equitable society. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)