

RESEARCH AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR WORK: PRACTICES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of access to education for work, commonly referred to as technical and vocational education. It then examines developments in research at higher education level. The problem of shortage of skilled manpower and scholarly research is widely acknowledged, especially in developing countries. Three questions guided the study, namely:

- i. What is the status of the education for work?
- ii. How do countries respond to the current situation?
- iii. What research initiatives are possible in the Southern African context?

Three methods were used to collect data, namely, analysis of documents, interviews of stakeholders, and participant observation. Botswana was selected as a case study, on the understanding that findings and interventions could be generalised to countries in Southern Africa. Some of the conclusions were that access tended to be limited to urban than to rural populations; collaboration with industry was minimal, and research initiatives were fragmented. This led to a number of recommendations, including the pursuit of distance education as an alternative to conventional education. This has the advantage of reaching the disadvantaged in rural areas. Also, providers were urged to network so that they share resources, including Open Education Resources, which do not have high cost implications. Finally, countries and institutions should live beyond rhetoric, by making collaborative efforts to further the research agenda.