

UNPACKING THE STATE OF HUMAN CAPITAL IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES – THE CASE OF ZIMBABWE

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In the 21st century knowledge economy where knowledge is the main source of competitive advantage, availability of academics holding doctoral degrees in a university will be the most critical key success factor in determining the academic performance of a university. The quality of any higher education system is determined less by the number of people teaching in it than by the qualifications of its academic staff (Tetty, 2012; Metcalf, Heather, Philip, and Martin, 2015). One significant measure of the capability of the professoriate to provide quality research and instruction is doctoral-level certification. A study carried out by Tetty (2012) revealed that most African universities had relatively fewer doctoral than master's degree holders on their teaching staff. For example, only 19% of staff at the University of Education, Winneba, had doctorate degrees in 2010, while doctoral degree holders constituted only 31% of the total staff complement at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) in 2013. Shortage of academics holding doctoral degrees in African universities has a devastating impact on the goals of universities. If something is not done very soon, there is a real danger that the African universities will not be able to uphold and protect the quality of intellectual life in Africa (Laal, 2011; Vessuri, 2015). This study explores the state of human capital in Zimbabwean universities by determining the numbers of doctoral holders in selected universities in Zimbabwe. A sample of five state universities was chosen. Convenient sampling was adopted whereby the universities were chosen on the basis of availability of quality and completeness of data on the university website. Data was collected on the qualifications of faculty deans and department chairpersons, and lecturing staff from the universities' websites. All in all, the study covered a total of 18 faculties and 77 departments. Preliminary findings reveal that there is a serious shortage of academics in possession of doctoral degrees in the selected universities compared to their counterparts in the developed world. This is having a negative impact on the quality of the universities' academic and economic activities. There is therefore urgent need to put in place measures that will increase the numbers of academics with doctorates without compromising the quality of such academics.

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