

# FROM SCHOOL TO WORK: A GRADUATE'S REFLECTION ON PREPAREDNESS

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## Introduction



# FROM SCHOOL TO WORK: A GRADUATE'S REFLECTION ON PREPAREDNESS

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# MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE



# My school Experience

GROWING UP, FROM ECD LEVEL, I WAS ALWAYS CURIOUS AND EAGER TO LEARN. MY SCHOOL YEARS WERE FILLED WITH BOTH CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES. I REMEMBER THE EXCITEMENT OF MASTERING NEW CONCEPTS AND THE JOY OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS.

HOWEVER, I ALSO RECALL MOMENTS OF DOUBT AND QUESTIONING WHETHER WHAT I WAS LEARNING WOULD PREPARE ME FOR THE REAL WORLD. TO BE HONEST, THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IS DISJOINTED.

FIRSTLY, IN GRADE 11, THAT IS WHEN I WAS EXPOSED TO CAREER EXPOS, WHEREBY I ALREADY HAD CHOSEN MY SUBJECTS IN GRADE 10

I WAS ADVISED TO GO FOR SUBJECTS I AM GOOD AT OR PRODUCE GOOD MARKS IN. THAT SET ME UP, TO MAKE A CAREER CHOICE THAT WAS BEST FOR WHAT I COULD PRODUCE BUT NOT WHAT WAS BEST FOR ME.

AT THIS POINT IN MY LIFE, I AM TRYING TO KNOW MYSELF, I AM IN MY ADOLESCENT YEARS. WHO DO I WANT TO BE? WHAT DO I WANT FROM MY LIFE? YET, I AM PROVIDED WITH POOR CAREER GUIDANCE.

Also, during my Grade 11 and 12 years, I truly began to understand the importance of time management and self-discipline. The pressure of upcoming exams and the desire to succeed pushed me to wake up earlier and stay up later to study, revise, and prepare. This period was transformative for me. I had to develop a strong sense of discipline, become more independent, and build resilience. These qualities were not just essential for passing exams but for life beyond school.

# South Africa's Education System

“Education is the cornerstone of personal advancement, progress, and innovation in our world. Yet, in South Africa, our education system is still rooted in a 20th-century landscape with passive, static teaching methods” Fuchs, S (2023, June 14).

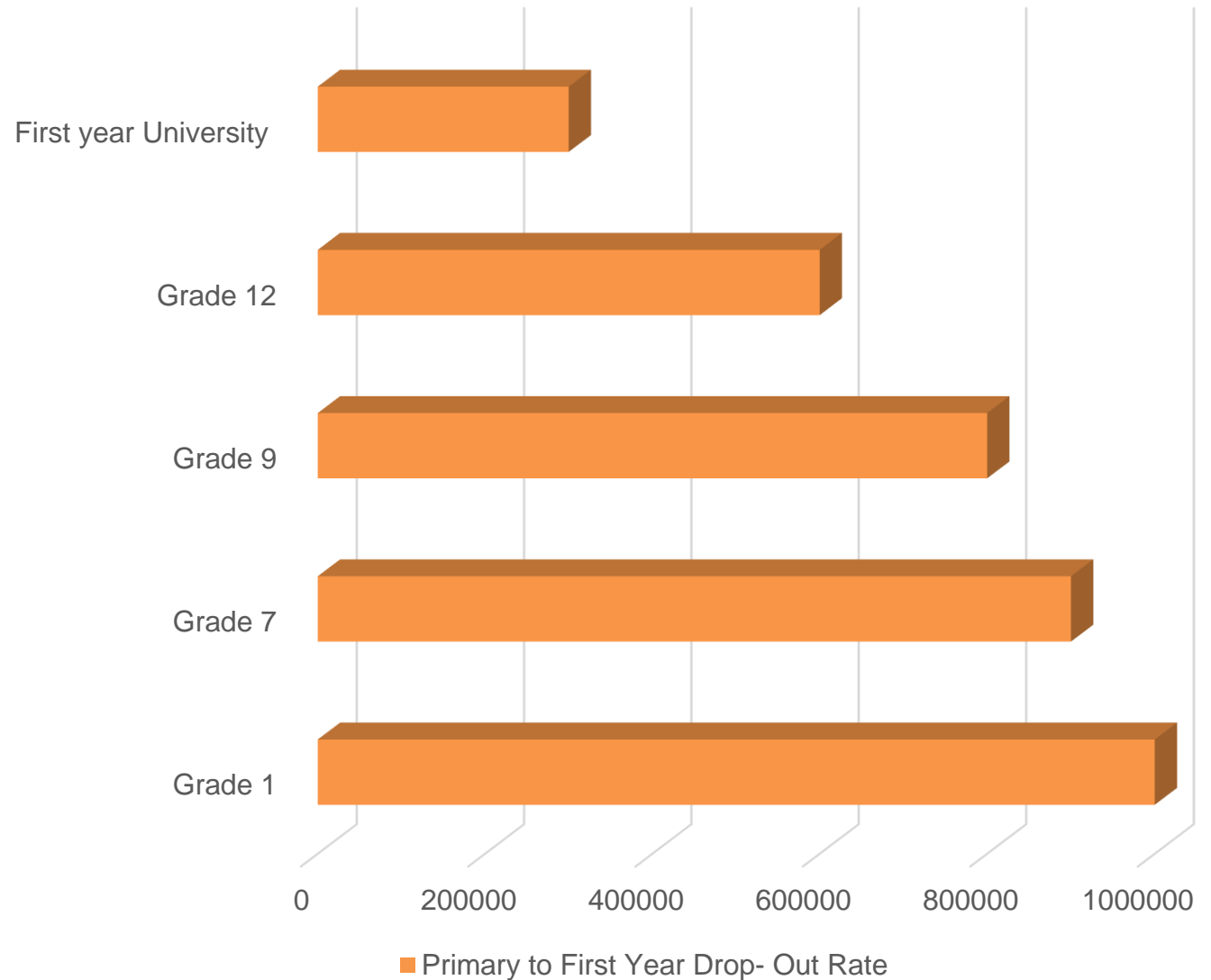
## Few Learners Transition to University

- High School Graduates: Limited
- University Admission: Very few

### Reasons:

- Lack of information
- Insufficient guidance
- Outdated curriculum and insufficient Practical skills

Primary to First Year Drop- Out Rate



# TRANSITION TO TERTIARY



## Transition to Higher Education.

- When I transitioned to a higher education level, the reality of academic life hit me hard. The transition from being a Grade 12 pupil to a University Student, had an emotional and social burden on me. The environment was vastly different from what I had known.
- The pace was faster, expectations were higher, and the need for independence was greater.





# Transition to Higher Education

## Academic Rigor

- My high school education provided a solid foundation in theoretical knowledge. This was beneficial for understanding complex university subjects. However, I often lacked practical application skills for hands-on projects and real-world problem-solving tasks.

## Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

- It was during my postgraduate Honours year that I truly developed critical thinking and soft skills. The coursework required us not just to define and name concepts, but also elaborate, explore and depict on how these concepts applied in the Real Work or in case studies. Making presentations and participating was something new to me, yet I am a postgraduate. It helped me overcome my shyness and improve my interpersonal relations.

## My readiness after graduation.

I felt so lost, after my graduation. I had to internalise that I am now a graduate, now what? What is next for me? I truly realised that I was indeed not prepared for the real work-work environment.

# Entering The Workforce



## Entering the Workforce

Graduating and entering the workforce was another significant transition. The working environment and higher education are two different worlds. The shift from academic life to professional life was both exciting and daunting.



# Entering the Workforce

**Real-World Application:** The theoretical knowledge I had gained was useful, but I often find myself in situations where practical skills are more important.

**Workplace Dynamics:** Navigating the workplace requires a different set of skills- Networking, understanding organizational culture, and managing time effectively. These are areas where I am learning quickly on the job.

**Continuous Learning:** The most significant realisation is that I need continuous learning. The world is rapidly changing, and staying updated with new technologies and methodologies is crucial. Lifelong learning became not just a concept, but a necessity.

# South African Tertiary Education

## Challenges

Lack of competence in curriculum adaptation, deteriorating infrastructure, and high youth unemployment rates

## 02 Graduate Unemployment

A mismatch between educational standards and labour market demands

## 03 Recommendation

Improve teaching and learning, focus on lower grades, and align curriculum with real-world skills.



# REFLECTION AND INSIGHTS



# Questions for reflection

- As we consider these insights, I pose the following questions to our learners and educators
  - How well does the South African education system prepare students for real-world challenges?
  - Do our learners feel equipped with the skills necessary for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
  - What specific areas within our educational framework need improvement to better serve our students?

In conclusion, my journey from school to work has been a learning experience filled with valuable lessons. By understanding our learner's perspectives, we can better prepare them for the future. Today's conversation is not just about identifying gaps but also driving actionable insights and improvements. As we listen to our learner's experiences, let us commit to creating an education system that is not only informative but transformative. One that empowers students to thrive in an ever-changing world.



# Thank you



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