

Towards A Mainstream Curriculum Embedded Student Academic Development Programme in South African Universities**Cosmas Maphosa****University of Venda, South Africa***KEYWORDS** Academic Performance. Teaching. Learning. Student Support. Throughput Rates

ABSTRACT A trace of the history of academic development practices reflect that such programmes have operated for a long time as appendages to the mainstream curriculum. In line with the deficit theory, students in need of academic support have been identified and intervention programmes outside the mainstream curriculum were planned and implemented for such students. Challenges of such conceptualisation and implementation of academic development programmes are numerous. Further, this concept paper advances the argument that academic development programmes should be an integral part of the mainstream academic curriculum in a university. This paper engages in a critical appraisal of the history of academic development practices in universities. The advantages of academic development programmes embedded in the mainstream curriculum are discussed and a model for the conceptualization and implementation of such academic development programmes explained. In this paper the researcher concludes that challenges of student diversity in universities in South Africa call for a re-consideration of academic development practices to make them more responsive to students' needs. The researcher recommends deliberate policies and plans to integrate academic development programmes in mainstream programmes in School/Faculties and departments.