

DOES UCT PRESCRIBE A LIVING WAGE?: EVALUATING THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN'S PRESCRIBED MINIMUM WAGE FOR ITS OUTSOURCED WORKERS

Abstract

This paper evaluates whether the minimum wage prescribed by the University of Cape Town (UCT) for its outsourced workers should be seen as a living wage, and critiques attempts to 'scientifically' or objectively determine a numeric value for the living wage. It concludes that theoretically there is little reason to believe that the UCT-prescribed measure is a living wage, and that practically this wage is indeed insufficient to be described as such. The paper argues that there is no conceptually sound method of determining a 'scientific' or objective standard of a living wage, and that attempts to set a living wage must incorporate workers' demands. It also adds to the living wage discourse by discussing whether a living wage should be discounted for the potential presence of co-resident wage-earners in a given household.