

## How are institutions developing the next generation of university teachers?

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### Abstract

South Africa's higher education system requires systemic mechanisms to respond to the urgent, complex, and often competing urgent calls to transform. The New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) is an example of a systemic response to the challenges related to the composition and capacity of academic staff to adequately respond to the competing demands placed on higher education. The programme is designed to support public institutions' recruitment, development and retention of early career academics (DHET, 2016). The programme allows appointees who have limited formal teaching experience access into an academic career. Questions have arisen, though, regarding the development of nGAP appointees as teachers that can contribute to institutional changes in pedagogical approaches and to curriculum development more generally. This study investigates how dominant discursive constructions of teaching, emerging from induction programmes in four institutions, may contribute to shaping a new generation of university teachers.

**Keywords:** early-career, induction practices, nGAP, new generation of academics, teaching development

### Introduction

South Africa's higher education transformation agenda is broad with multiple demands pulling it in various directions, at the centre of which is an urgent call for change in institutional culture. The required changes in the South African public institutional landscape are closely related to the complexities in staff and student demographics (Badat, 2007, 2010; Cloete et al., 1997; Portnoi, 2009).

A particular need, identified in 2012 by the National Planning Commission, involves recruiting, developing, and retaining black and women academics. This is necessary not only because of the institutional changes needed, identified in calls for transformation, but also because of the phenomenon of the 'ageing professoriate'. The impending crisis of the ageing academic population is not confined to the South African Higher Education (SAHE) sector but is one experienced by many institutions within the African continent (Altbach,



2007). The challenge of the ageing professoriate and the need for a more representative staff body is compounded by the insufficient number of academics recruited into the system to cope with the increased student enrolments. Since 1994, student numbers have doubled with significant effects on staff-student ratios<sup>1</sup>.

The realisation of the grave risk placed on the SAHE by the glacial rate at which exiting academics are replaced, and the inadequate creation of newly established full-time equivalent (FTE) posts, has led to demands for a systemic response. The Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUF) is a structural response to the challenge of 'size, composition and capacity of academic staff' (DHET, 2016). The SSAUF comprises three core<sup>2</sup> programmes supported by the Staffing South Africa's Universities Development Programme (SSAU-DP). The New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) features prominently and is positioned as a central vehicle in supporting early-career academics in the SSAUF.

Broadly defined, early-career academics include staff who are new to academic roles and those who are undertaking doctoral studies (Mann et al., 2007). The nGAP is a generic structural mechanism designed to address the attraction and retention of early-career academics. Given the underrepresentation (see DHET, 2015: 7) of black and women academics in the SAHE system, nGAP posts are earmarked to address the imbalance in the 26 public universities. SAHE has a differentiated system categorising the 26 universities into three institutional types: research-intensive university (RIU), comprehensive university (CU), and university of technology (UoT). The institutional types indicate differentiation of institutional purposes, structures, and cultures. However, the SAHE system also contends with the resource imbalances created by the legacy of apartheid (Bunting, 2002; CHET, 2000; CHE, 2017) dividing universities into historically advantaged institutions (HAI) and historically disadvantaged institutions (HDI) adding to the complexities experienced in the system. The combination of type and resourcing can have a profound impact on the implementation of the nGAP as a systemic intervention. This study has a specific focus on the impact of complex institutional cultures on teaching induction practice.

Studies examining initiatives intended to support early-career academics tend to focus primarily on research trajectories as a measurement of success, with peripheral attention paid to teaching indicators (see Austin, 2002; Archer, L. 2008; Sutherland et al., 2010; Gale, 2011; Hemming et al., 2013; Matthews et al., 2014; Sutherland, 2015; Adcroft and Taylor, 2016). However, in the South African context, there has been a recent surge of studies examining the impact of induction provisions on teaching roles of early-career academics (Osman and Hornsby, 2016; Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2016; Reddy et al., 2016; Subbay and Dhunpath, 2016; Teferra, 2016). These studies provide insights into the induction

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<sup>1</sup>According to DHET (2015, 2016), the projected staff-student ratio average needs to change from 1:28 to 1:26.8 by 2019.

<sup>2</sup>The three core programmes featured on the SSAUF are: Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme (NESP), New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP), and the Existing Academics Capacity Enhancement Programme (EACEP).

experiences of early-career academics primarily in research-intensive university contexts. This study extends the focus by focusing on teaching induction, rather than research development of early-career academics. The study has an additional contribution to make by incorporating a broader representation of SAHE with; two comprehensive universities (one classified as CU HDI and the other CU HAI), a university of technology classified as UoT HDI, and a research-intensive university RIU HAI participating.

The paper begins with an examination of the assumptions underpinning the nGAP before moving on to the research design. The findings of the study show that nGAP lecturers' induction into teaching is framed by three dominant emergent discourses. The paper concludes with recommendations on how universities can better support nGAP appointees to become effective teachers, as well as how the marginalisation of teaching within the nGAP can be addressed.

### **A systemic intervention**

'The slow pace of transformation, the ageing workforce, the relatively under-qualified academic staff workforce' (DHET, 2016: 3) is the impetus for implementing the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP), a six-year induction and developmental programme for newly appointed lecturers embarking on an academic career. The DHET has positioned this programme as an additional mechanism for the sector to meet the projected growth of the SAHE system, which requires the creation of 3 683 additional new academic posts by 2019 (DHET, 2016). The injection of 125 nGAP posts per annum does not solve the sectorial annual shortfall of 504 posts (DHET, 2016). Although these new posts are a fraction of what is needed, they are important in addressing the need for the sector to attract and retain cohorts of new academics, specifically black and women academics.

By submitting proposals for nGAP posts, institutions commit to employing these early-career academics in permanent posts, which has cost implications. Institutions have two options to absorb the cost of permanent posts. The first option entails growing academic departments by increasing student numbers; thus, necessitating an additional permanent post/s. The second option is to offset the cost of an entry level nGAP post with senior impending retirements. With public institutions experiencing austerity constraints, the latter is opted for more often. However attractive the latter option might be, though, it relies on careful financial planning and reliable statistical data of the retirement and retention balance within academic departments. Therefore, the nGAP does not, in fact, create 'additional' posts; rather it is a national mechanism to attract early-career academics from under-represented demographics into the sector.

Institutions receive earmarked funding allocated for each post over the six-year period, with the salaries drawn from the nGAP funds for the first three years. In the fourth year, the institution and the programme split salary costs and thereafter the institution takes full remuneration responsibility. This process presupposes that SAHE is an equal playing field, meaning that all public institutions have uninterrupted, functional, and effective operating systems as well as knowledgeable personal to ensure seamless integration of the

Programme within existing and often challenging institutional practices. Moyo's thesis (2018) unequivocally illustrates the constraints of national interventions like the Teaching Development Grants from achieving system-wide gains. A core factor mentioned in Moyo's (2018) work is the impact of the historical imbalances in the resourcing of institutions, affecting the system-wide gain. This research has similar concerns regarding the implementation of nGAP as a systemic intervention in a differentiated and unequally resourced system.

The intent of the first three years of the programme (see Table 1) is for the incumbent to take full advantage of developmental opportunities as well as creating space to pursue a postgraduate qualification. This is accomplished by reducing the role and responsibilities of an academic workload to 20%. The nGAP documentation presents the 20% - 80% workload split as fait accompli of institutions having a shared conception and common practices around workload models. However, given the significant variations in institutional expertise, and practices around teaching and research (see Moyo, 2018) contributes to the implementation of a 20% workload differing across institutions. Although the focus of this paper is not on equitable workload allocation for academics (see Burgess, 1996; Houston et al., 2006; Bitzer, 2007), it is worth noting that all four institutions in this study used module allocation to quantify the 20%, excluding the time taken up by the associated curriculum development, assessment, and administration of each module.

**Table 1:** The New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP)

\*Adapted from nGAP terms and conditions document (DHET, 2016)

	Stage 1 Developmental Programme			Stage 2 Induction and early career development		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
<b>Employment</b>	✓ [reduced workload <sup>3</sup> - 20%]	✓ [reduced workload- 20%]	✓ [reduced workload- 20%]	✓ [increased workload- 50%]	✓ [full work- load]	✓ [full work- load]
<b>Master's/Doctoral/Post- Doctoral Study</b>	✓	✓	✓	PhD (possibly still completing)		
<b>Mentoring</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Participation on the SSAU-DP</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Research Study Equipment</b>	Contributions towards the lecturer' research study costs					
<b>International mobility</b>	The intention is to support one international mobility opportunity, to take place at a point where it will have maximum benefit for the development of the nGAP lecturer					

<sup>3</sup>The workload for the nGAP lecturer who already holds a doctoral degree and who may embark on post-doctoral studies should be negotiated. Workload includes the overall work done by a lecturer (i.e. preparation for lecturers, research, marking, and administrative work).

The reduced workload is to make the attainment of the postgrad qualification possible, but an unintended consequence of this is a privileging of research over teaching. Thus, skewing the programme towards a research-centred model, with a focus on research development at the expense of other developmental opportunities, particularly teaching development. This paper thus questions the extent to which the nGAP fulfils the role of 'transforming' the academy if teaching development is overshadowed. This may compromise the development of these lecturers as teachers who can contribute to more widespread change in pedagogical approaches and curriculum development, which is imperative in the South African higher education sector.

### **Conceptions of teaching**

Teaching in higher education is broadly defined as encompassing course design, delivery, assessment, evaluation, and the scholarship of teaching and learning (CHE, 2017). Higher education scholars, particularly those who work in the field of Academic Development, have argued convincingly against dominant common-sense understandings of teaching (see Boughey, 2007; Boud and Brew, 2013, Moyo, 2018) whereby teaching is seen intuitive. The idea that teaching in higher education is something that 'comes naturally' can be seen to account for the practice of expecting academics to teach without adequate induction or ongoing development. The nGAP provides generic structural affordances signalling the significance of induction and development of new academics. Lecturers are afforded the opportunity to participate in a range of teaching and learning related activities such as registering for modules in formal accredited qualifications such as the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education offered either in-house or by other South African institutions. Participation in the Cape Higher Education Consortium regional staff development programme, as well as in-house teaching and learning related workshops, seminars, and short courses. These affordances rub against existing institutional structures and cultural constraints, limiting the opportunities for lecturers engaging in quality teaching development.

There is extensive evidence that in South Africa's historically and typologically differentiated higher education system, the institutional context has a significant impact on teaching and learning (see Boughey, 2009, 2010; Boughey and McKenna, 2011a, 2011b). This paper takes that premise into account and focuses on induction practices emerging from the four institutions to ask the following question:

What does the teaching induction of nGAP lecturers tell us about how teaching is discursively constructed?

### **Research design**

Critical Discourse Analysis provides an analytical framework to examine and provide plausible explanations for the existing models of induction experienced by the lecturers on the nGAP in the four universities. Discourses provide insights into ideological positions and

excavate the mechanisms that have power over how the world is experienced (Fairclough et al., 2002). Emergent discourses in the data sets offer partial explanations for events and experiences (Fairclough, 2005). Discourses are considered powerful demonstrations of what is valued within a context, emerging from the intersection of structures and accompanying practices. This study examines discourses emerging from the interplay between the nGAP Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), the enculturation of the lecturers into the values of the institution through teaching induction strategies, and the lecturers' descriptions of their own teaching practices. The identified discourses provide an indication of how within and across institutions, a new generation of higher education teachers are shaped by inadequate and flawed teaching induction practices.

The data collection occurred in the second year that the nGAP was implemented within the higher education system. (i.e., 2017) I anticipated that it would be unlikely that all 26 public institutions<sup>4</sup> would be in a position to participate in the study and that this would, therefore, require careful sampling. Purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to target institutions that were available and willing to participate. A representative sample of four<sup>5</sup> universities participated, comprising of a university of technology, two comprehensive universities (one in a rural<sup>6</sup> setting), and a research-intensive university. The importance of teaching is foregrounded in all four institutions; however, that is relative to the elevated status and privileging of research activities. This impacts on the status and valuing of teaching and the resourcing of teaching development within each institution. The institutional type plays a significant role in how teaching is conceived and valued. In the (UoT) context, the combination of constructing teaching and learning as providing solutions to perceived problems (Boughey, 2010) and the high teaching workload (Winberg, 2001) seems to promote teaching development opportunities as optional and therefore taken up on a voluntary basis (Boughey, 2010). UoTs tend to privilege strong industry experience over postgraduate academic qualifications, therefore simultaneously focus on high teaching workload, as well as peruse academic qualifications (see Boughey, 2010) relegating developing teaching opportunities future down the priority list.

The creation of institutional policies related to probation and promotion, teaching awards, teaching and learning projects, as well the establishment and resourcing of the teaching and learning centre indicates a commitment to resourcing the initiatives that contribute to the increasing status of teaching and learning in relation research promotion in

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<sup>4</sup>Studies and reports (see CHET, 2000; Boughey, 2013; Moyo, 2018) indicate that uptake of systemic programs, especially in the early years of implementation, is often uneven in SAHE's differentiated and imbalanced context. Informal conversations with colleagues tasked with the coordination of these programs at the institutional level indicate that a number of institutions struggled to fill the posts within the dates stipulated by the DHET, thereby limiting the number of institutions willing to be part of the study at the early implementation stages.

<sup>5</sup>In the original proposal five institutions were identified and approached, however, one institution declined participation on the grounds that it was far too early in the programme for any significant findings.

<sup>6</sup>A rural setting is characterised by sparse population, with high levels of social deprivation that link to the lack of amenities and infrastructure due to the distance from urban centres. Institutions in these settings have particular challenges affecting teaching and learning (see Leibowitz et al., 2015; Mgqwashu, 2016; Ndebele et al., 2016).

a research-intensive institution (CHE, 2018). However, this increasing credence in teaching and learning is undermined by the understanding the highly regarded status of the institution translates to a level of academic 'excellence' that is almost beyond reproach in the RIU, which makes regulation and professionalisation of teaching difficult to readily accept (McKenna and Boughey, 2014).

Comprehensive universities offer a mix of traditional and vocationally oriented qualifications and therefore teaching in these institutions is focused on facilitating mass higher education (Leibowitz et al., 2015). The valuing of teaching development is impacted by available recourses. In the CU HAI, a range of formally accredited and non-formal teaching development activities are available, indicating a higher premium placed on teaching (CHE, 2017; Moyo, 2018). While in the CU HDI the limited resourcing restricts provision to non-accredited and ad hoc teaching development opportunities (CHE, 2017, Moyo, 2018). Academics in the CUs are under equal pressure to their UoT counterparts to upgrade their academic qualifications at the expense of engaging in professional teaching development (Ndeble et al., 2016).

My position as nGAP co-ordinator for one of the participating institutions has made me acutely aware of the complex ethical and methodological challenges of 'researching my own backyard' (Williams, 2009). This has heightened my vigilance in acknowledging my privileged insights into the inception of the Programme, based on the prominent role my home institution played in that process, as well as potential biases and sets of assumptions I hold regarding the implementation of nGAP in various contexts. The rigorous ethical approval processes provided opportunities for me to examine and be conscious of my position as an insider and as a researcher. The first ethical approval was granted by my home institution, followed by separate ethical approvals from all participating institutions.

Subsequent to ethical approvals, I emailed invitations to nGAP coordinator counterparts detailing the research aims, accompanied with a clear indication of my position as nGAP coordinator in my home institution. The email requested the nGAP coordinator to identify all Phase 1<sup>7</sup> nGAP lecturers in the institution, inviting them to participate in the study. According to the schedule outlined in Table 1, these lecturers would be in Year 2 of the Programme and the assumption was that they would share a frame of reference of the induction process they had experienced thus far. Collectively, there were fourteen Phase 1 nGAP lecturers spread across the four institutions, and all agreed to participate in the study. They represent the following departments: Accounting, Biochemistry, Civil Engineering, Entomology, Environmental Science, Fashion and Textile, Geography, Geology, Hydrology and Water Recourses, Information Systems, Law, Mathematics (pure and applied), Philosophy, and Strategic Communication.

Semi-structured focus group interviews were adopted as a mechanism to gain rich descriptions of the lecturers' personal experiences (Powell and Single, 1996) of induction,

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<sup>7</sup>The data collection period was March 2017, institutions would have had both Phase 1 and Phase 2 cohorts. However, it would have been premature to interview Phase 2 lecturers who would have been appointed January 2017.

with particular emphasis on teaching development opportunities. I introduced myself to the lecturers by reiterating my position as nGAP coordinator in my home institution, thus opening up the opportunity for them to ask how the Programme had been implemented in this context. Participants in one of the institutions opted to share their induction experiences in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. Both interview strategies aimed to provide rich and complex data extracted from the lecturers' individual accounts. The interview data provided insights into the teaching discourses dominant in the universities, which could indicate the factors influencing practices adopted at faculty and departmental level. These practices were evident in the identifiable discourses expressed as statements, indicating the meanings and values (Kress, 1989) attached to teaching.

## **Discussion and analysis**

What follows is a descriptive account of the induction processes experienced by the fourteen lecturers within the fifteen months of the Programme they had been through at the stage of the interviews. This provides a context for the analysis of the emergent discourses.

### *Institutional positioning of nGAP*

The official communication channel between the DHET and institutions is through the offices of the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Institutions then position the coordination of the Programme, which opposite to being a neutral decision is indicative of the institutions' interpretation of the Programme. To some extent, the 'project' terminology used in the SSAUF (DHET, 2015), as well as nGAP policies and processes (DHET, 2015), may point to an administrative focus. All but one university in the study entrusted the Programme to Executive Directors or senior Human Resources managers and in these institutions the nGAP forms part of existing academic recruitment strategies with an emphasis on ensuring appropriate administration of the funding. Interpreting nGAP purely as an external structure requiring integration into existing structures may negate the institutional cultural practices shaping early career academics. This study found that an administrative management focus left lecturers vulnerable to inadequate departmental induction processes, which insufficiently socialised them into cultures valuing educationally sound teaching practice (Subbaye and Dhunpath, 2016). The institution that positioned the coordination of the nGAP in the academic staff development centre interpreted the Programme as a mechanism for the holistic academic career development of novice lecturers.

### *Induction processes*

Lecturers' experiences of institutionalised induction programmes were fairly consistent within the universities; however, experiences differed between departments where disciplinary specific conceptions of teaching and learning practices had more influence. In a differentiated system, it is not surprising that the difference in induction experiences is stark



between institutions. The quality of institutionalised induction programmes included the following:

- virtually non-existent "...the university has an induction program for all staff members including administrators. And then they break us [academics] out for one day...they were telling us how the university functions...we haven't really attended a teaching and learning workshop" (CU HDI, lecturer 8)
- a comprehensive schedule of on-going professional development "We get the [academic development] centres' schedule of all the workshops and then it's up to you if you want to book or not...in our department two teaching and learning workshops are compulsory per year" (CU HAI, lecturer 5)
- formal teaching qualification "This other [teaching and learning] course I am doing just opened up my mind to what I want to achieve from my students and how I must structure my material and also my assessment" (RIU HAI, lecturer 13).

The three experiences illustrate how the lecturers in the RIU HAI and to a lesser extent the CU HAI are exposed to an established culture of promoting teaching development, which is lacking in the CU HDI. This emerges from a history of research intensives being well-resourced and thus able to attract qualified and experienced academic staff (Moyo, 2018; Boughey, 2009; 2010; Boughey and McKenna, 2011a, 2011b), Further, they have the ability and competence to offer formal accredited and non-accredited teaching development programmes. Additional benefits for lecturers participating in formal teaching induction is that the courses and workshops introduce newly appointed lecturers to communities of practice (Barrett and Brown, 2014) designed to sustain teaching development input.

This brief examination of induction processes provides an overview of how the nGAP as a structure intersection with existing institutional cultural conditions. I draw on this overview to provide plausible explanations and signal the significance of the emergent discourse. I now turn to examine the dominant discourses related to the lecturer's experiences of teaching induction, which emerge from responses the nGAP lecturers provided to the interview questions.

### **Emergent discourses**

Three discourses emerged from the lecturers' accounts of the teaching induction processes, and participation in additional (or lack of) teaching development opportunities. The discourses emerged from the responses to interview questions that explored the following: lecturers' induction experience, exposure to ongoing teaching development opportunities, understanding of their responsibilities as a teacher in higher education, and identifying indicators that teaching is prioritised in their context.

### *Teaching is intuitive*

In my case, I was given a course outline and a textbook I must use. From there I looked at the topics particularly the relevant ones. I told my students this topic is not relevant you will never find this in practice, forget about it and focus on what I know for sure you will meet on a daily basis. I started from there and at the end of the semester, I handed my notes to my supervisor who said my notes are actually very good. (CU HDI, Lecturer 9)

The extract is from a lecturer arriving fresh from industry practice into the CU context responding to the interview question *what do you draw on to make decisions on what you teach and how you teach?* The experience captures the essence of the 'teaching is intuitive' discourse. The lecturer is based in a context with virtually non-existent teaching induction. It is therefore not surprising that the departmental culture conceptualises teaching ability as inherent, and therefore requiring only hands-off supervision of new lecturers. In this context, the assumption is that lecturer does not require mentorship into theoretically sound teaching practices, as it is a common-sense activity (McKenna and Boughey, 2014). The result is that Lecturer 9 relies on unexamined industry experiences to make curriculum decisions. At no point does the lecturer critically engage with what seems to be a misalignment between what is ascribed in the textbook and what occurs in practice. Theoretical and critical bases of curriculum development are overlooked and subsequently undervalued. Teaching, the curriculum, and disciplinary knowledge are treated as neutral with no acknowledgement of either the politics underpinning pedagogic decisions or the theoretical basis of curriculum development.

Given that the nGAP purposefully targets early career academics who have limited teaching experience (DHET, 2016), the exposure to limited teaching development opportunities constrains the capacity of the nGAP as a transformative mechanism in the academy. Teaching responsibilities are allocated to lecturers on the Programme, however in contexts where 'teaching is intuitive' is a dominant discourse, teaching development is given low credence thus constraining the development of a critical conception of teaching in higher education. The risk of limited teaching development is a cohort of new university lectures ill-equipped to cope with the demands of teaching in higher education experiencing complex and competing calls for curriculum transformation and responsiveness.

### *Teaching development is a skill set*

At first, I didn't pay much attention when they were teaching it [induction] but it turned out to be one of the most important because they introduced Blackboard...It is a powerful teaching tool and had I not attended that I wouldn't have got that knowledge. (UoT HAI, Lecturer 10)

This extract is from an interview with a lecturer arriving into the UoT context with industry experience as well as part-time lecturing experience in an institution with a range of ongoing professional development initiatives. She was responding to the question: *what kind/s of teaching courses/programme/events have you participated in that have helped induct you into teaching in your discipline?* In this discourse, teaching is viewed as more than intuitive, as requiring a set of neutral skills derived from ‘tips for teachers’, which are generic in nature and applicable independent of context.

This discourse was prevalent in the UoT HAI unable to offer in-house formal accredited teaching qualifications, making the induction programme the principal mechanism for teaching development. The induction program and subsequent teaching development workshops featured sessions introducing lecturers to the idea of drawing from legitimated systemic knowledge (Edward and Daniels, 2012) to make educationally sound curriculum decisions. But even where such conversations were included in induction, those sessions seem to have had a limited impact against the dominant ‘teaching as a set of skills’ discourses, emergent from nGAP lecturers coming into the academy with the limited teaching experience thus expecting sessions focused on practical tools. For example, UoT HAI, Lecturer 11 indicated that ‘I thought coming into the first year we would be put through two weeks or two months course on how to actually prepare lectures, what is expected when you give the lectures, how I prepare material for students’.

This expectation is common in a context where the culture is to primarily recruit practitioners with a strong professional identity as opposed to strong academic expertise (Winberg, 2005). The lecturers arriving with a professional identity experienced culture shock when faced with participating in induction programmes that endorsed a culture of theorised processes to teaching development as opposed to atheoretical practical training workshops (for example Beijaard et al., 2004; Quinn and Vorster, 2014). Departmental cultural practices rooted in common-sense understandings of teaching further entrench oversimplified notions that teaching and curriculum development is a set of skills requiring lecturers to look no further than the academic calendar and discipline textbook for curriculum development practices. As indicated by CU HDI Lecturer 8, ‘I was given the school calendar ...which is quite informative it gives you topics...I took those and the recommended textbook and developed slides from there’.

In contexts with very high teaching loads, lecturers are constrained from participating in additional teaching development opportunities beyond induction: “Not that there are no other [teaching development] programs she [nGAP manager] highlights those and sends to us...but except umphati (HoD) expects you to work 8-4pm and the workload is high” (UoT HAI, Lecturer 10). In this context, the structural affordances of additional teaching development that the nGAP manager introduces are constrained by the strong compliance culture in the department. The departmental culture seems to suggest that once-off induction programmes are sufficient to sustain a lecturer’s capacity as a teacher in a complex and ever-changing higher education context.

### *Research is more important*

What I liked about the nGAP is, well I don't want to say it forces you to research, but because it is a requirement you keep it in your head. It drives you to do research, there is time because you have a reduced load. (CU HAI, Lecturer 2).

Lecturer 2 was responding to the interview question, *what helps or hinders your development as a teacher in higher education?* The context is a comprehensive university that places emphasis on research productivity. The 'research is paramount' culture aligns with the workload structure of the first four years of nGAP, which creates a privileged space for attaining a postgraduate qualification. This alignment contributes significantly to the 'research is more important' discourse. The challenges emerging from a clash between workload specified in the nGAP SoPs and the realities and workload pressures in departments requires a more nuanced discussion that is beyond the focus of this paper. What is of interest here is a departmental culture that accounts for the interpretation that 80% in the first three years and 50% in the fourth year is almost exclusively dedicated to research:

They [department] really got an understanding of how important research is for an nGAP. They have granted me an opportunity to sit and research and appointed an assistant lecturer so that I could have a reduced load and have time to finish my Masters. (CU HAI, Lecturer 3).

But, the department also values teaching development:

Our department is very good with sending out emails. We get a schedule at the beginning of the year of all the teaching and learning workshops offered on all campuses. In our faculty, it is compulsory to do at least two a year. (CU HAI, Lecturer 2)

However, this is overshadowed by the alignment between the structured nGAP workload and the dominant research culture, thus contributing to undervaluing teaching development (CHE, 2017: 67). In this university context, the notion that institutions strive to balance the three pillars of research, teaching, and community engagement (Hlengwa, 2013) is eroded by the higher status bestowed on research activities. The substantial rewarding of research outputs within the National Funding Framework (see Bunting, 2002; Hlengwa, 2013; Moyo, 2018) becomes a powerful mechanism entrenching the elevated status of research in universities. This incentivisation is propelled by the positioning of increasing research output as a legitimate form of garnering much-needed revenue required by universities in an

economically depressed climate (see Wangege-Ouma and Carpentier, 2018; Wangege-Ouma and Cloete, 2008; Wangege-Ouma, 2010).

Furthermore, some institutions offer financial incentives to individual researchers to increase lucrative research output. A favoured way to maximise funding benefits is to link publications to performance targets and promotions criteria. Although the research output initially increases, unintended consequences of these strategies creep in (see Vaughan, 2008). There is strong evidence that incentivising research output in this way results in an increase in the poor quality of research output (for example, see Mouton and Valentine, 2017; McKenna, 2017).

Although research productivity is an important indicator of quality in a higher education system, the South African public sector has to contend with the need for the system to increase student enrolment targets in undergraduate qualifications<sup>8</sup>. The desired outcome of increasing student enrolments is an increase in completion and graduation rates. Crucial to achieving increased graduation rates is quality undergraduate teaching facilitated by academics who can draw from sound theoretical foundations to meet the multiple challenges of a complex higher education system.

## **Conclusion**

The nGAP has the potential to contribute towards the transformation of the higher education system. This paper has positioned teaching development as central to achieving that aim. The aim of attracting and retaining early career academics must have a strong focus on developing effective university teachers. However, three dominant discourses constrain teaching development in the nGAP. I offer the following recommendations on how the marginalisation of teaching within the nGAP can be addressed.

## **Recommendations**

The nGAP is a well-resourced structural intervention negated by the stronger existing institutional cultures subverting teaching induction practices. In order for generic systemic interventions to succeed, institutions must reconfigure the structure and develop strategies that subvert counterproductive departmental teaching practices.

The nGAP targets lecturers who have limited experience of the roles and responsibilities of an academic and therefore it is the responsibility of the institution to provide the support that demystifies the unfamiliar cultures of the academy (Jones and Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). This requires an interpretation of the nGAP as an academic endeavour located within academic development centres with expertise in facilitating developmental opportunities that consider the full spectrum of academic responsibilities, avoiding skewed emphasis on some roles at the expense of others.

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<sup>8</sup>National targeted growth in full-time equivalent student enrolment from 665 313 to 737 347 by 2019 (DHET, 2015).

Conceptions of teaching underpin how teaching development is framed and valued within institutions. Induction programs featured in all four institutions as a teaching development strategy, however in line with other studies (Subbaye and Dhunpath, 2016; CHE, 2017), there were variances in the consistency and quality of what is offered. It is dangerous to entrust sole responsibility of inducting nGAP lecturers to departmental or faculty members. Institutional induction programmes are central in supplementing what occurs at the departmental level, ensuring that nGAP lecturers are exposed to contextualised, theorised conceptions of curriculum development processes.

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## Author Biography

Amanda Hlengwa is a senior lecturer in the Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning at Rhodes University. As an academic developer, her research interest includes curriculum development and more recently she has developed a strong interest work in the early-career development space.

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