Early-career academic support at the University of KwaZulu-Natal: towards a scholarship of teaching

Reshma Subbaye & Rubby Dhunpath

Published online: 14 Sep 2016.

Submit your article to this journal ⬚

View related articles ⬚

View Crossmark data ⬚

Early-career academic support at the University of KwaZulu-Natal: towards a scholarship of teaching

Reshma Subbaye* 🅳 and Rubby Dhunpath 🅳

University Teaching and Learning Office, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

As the demand for, and access to, higher education increases rapidly around the globe and exponentially on the African Continent, higher education institutions are under immense pressure to recruit skilled professionals who are equally proficient in disciplinary knowledge and pedagogic skills. Institutions also have an obligation to provide professional development opportunities to enhance teaching capacity. This article, based on a survey of early-career academics (ECAs) at a South African university, examines the induction experiences of a group of new recruits to gain insights into their teaching capabilities and professional development experiences. The article finds that, consistent with international trends, at least half of the population sampled are 2nd career academics with an average age of 37. Notwithstanding their relative unfamiliarity with academic organisational culture, most respondents reported medium to high levels of confidence in their own teaching capabilities. This confidence signals the prevalence of the apprenticeship of observation as the dominant model of professional development. We argue that if the support for ECAs is to be meaningful and effective, support programmes must serve to adequately socialise academics into the prevalent organisational culture while simultaneously disrupting rituals of academic performance through a scholarship of teaching.

Keywords: ECA; early-career academics; teaching skills; professional development

Introduction

Higher education in Africa in the twenty-first century can be characterised by substantial changes in the demographic profiles of staff and students, primarily as a result of escalating growth in enrolments (Teferra 2014) and, in part, due to increased access being offered to marginal and non-conventional beneficiaries of higher education. Universities are experiencing increasing diversity in terms of students' backgrounds, expectations, needs, and motivations (Austin 2002; Heward, Taylor, and Vickers 1997; Sanderson 2011).

While this expansion is laudable, the same cannot be said for the quality of massified higher education and its delivery, prompting considerable concern and contestation for a myriad of reasons. Among these are that the exponential increases in enrolments have not been supported by corresponding enhancements in infrastructure and

---

*Corresponding author. Email: subbaye@ukzn.ac.za

resourcing. Consequently, to mitigate these incongruities, we are witnessing increasing fiscal austerity and declining monetary allocations from governments coupled with declining capacity to attract and retain skilled academics or to adequately train new professionals. In Sub-Saharan Africa, qualified human capital remains scarce and overshadowed by the continent's other development needs (Mohamedbhai 2014). In many contexts, academics on the continent are ageing, and staff are increasingly demoralised (Altbach 2007). Equally demoralising is spiralling student debt, the challenges associated with 'increasing diversity of students, the possibilities and challenges raised by technology-mediated instruction, and the trend towards emphasising learning outcomes over teaching techniques, all of which require that new academics develop knowledge and skills as effective teachers' (Austin 2002, 122). A recent Higher Education of South Africa (HESA) report (2014, 8) cautions that 'A failure to invest in and cultivate the next generations of high quality academics will have far-reaching consequences.' This exhortation to accelerate the preparation of the next generation of academic staff is echoed by analysts in both developed and developing nations (Matthews, Lodge, and Bosanquet 2014; Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin 2000).

In a book where authors contemplate the sources of 'under-preparedness' in higher education, Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) identify the direct relationship between approaches to pedagogy and the attitudes of academic staff and the skills of academic staff in teaching and assessment practices. This is exacerbated by pressures on the time and energy of academic staff aggravated by staff preoccupation with changes in university cultures.

The problem of academics' under-preparedness is further explored by Giroux in his book, *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education* (2014, 1). He contends that as 'universities turn toward corporate management models, they increasingly use and exploit cheap faculty labour while expanding the ranks of their managerial class'. He adds that many new academics occupy the status of 'indentured servants who are overworked, lack benefits, and receive little or no administrative support' (2014, 1).

The concern with job security and the casualisation of academic labour is compounded by the historical disjuncture between the value of teaching and the value of research and concerns among many ECAs about decisions related to career trajectory and the role of research in their career success (Hemmings, Hill, and Sharp 2013; Mouton 2011). Despite the fact that teaching is likely to take up a large proportion of their time as ECAs, little attention is paid to teaching (Haas 1996) and there is a discrepancy between the teaching work and research output expectations (Austin 2002; Jepsen, Varhegyi, and Edwards 2012; Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin 2000).

The above discussion portrays a somewhat cynical picture of higher education and its failure to provide adequate support to mitigate student failure, by providing requisite professional development for ECAs. However, there are notable exceptions of institutions that have recognised the inextricable link between student success and staff competence. It is against this background that this article, based on a small-scale empirical study, explores ECAs at a South African university. It focuses on how they are conducted to the academic profession as teachers; and the extent of requisite tools, support, and incentives that the university makes available to them in their preparation for teaching and learning their craft. It considers ECAs' conceptions of their academic preparedness as university teachers, their attitudes to professional development, and their experiences of professional development initiatives. Using selected theoretical lenses, the authors explore the contradiction between ECAs' espoused

conceptions of their professional competence and their declared grievances against the lack of adequate professional development support.

Early-career professional development: the global context

Globally, most ECAs receive their research training in the course of pursuing doctoral programmes, but few receive equivalent training to enhance their higher education teaching capacity. On the contrary, in many contexts, disciplinary competence and research productivity are regarded as sufficient for effective teaching performance. The obsession with obtaining doctorates as a precondition for tenure is based largely on academic credentialing – often driven by the pressures of university rankings rather than the inherent value-add of qualifications to teaching competence (Jepsen, Varhegyi, and Edwards 2012; McAlpine and Turner 2012). Similarly, in South Africa, graduate programmes at master's and doctoral levels are designed to train competent researchers, with little or no room for training competent teachers for the academy. Noting this gap, Nerad (2012) argues for doctoral programmes which ensure that doctoral candidates acquire the necessary professional skills they will require as ECAs such as working in interdisciplinary teams, learning team teaching techniques, among others.

Many studies (Haas 1996; Heward, Taylor, and Vickers 1997; Korhonen and Törmä 2014; Sutherland, Wilson, and Williams 2010) report that there are few courses designed to prepare ECAs for teaching. Even those institutions that do offer training often make these offerings available on an *ad hoc* basis. Hence, ECAs are not known to receive systematic teaching training (Austin 2002; Jepsen, Varhegyi, and Edwards 2012; Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin 2000). Hemmings, Hill, and Sharp (2013) contended that these once-off generic types of training have limited scope and potential to improve teaching skills and should be complemented with well-designed mentoring opportunities and communities of practise for lasting impact (Barrett and Brown 2014). This contention is supported by studies which show the benefits of mentoring ECAs particularly with regard to their teaching responsibilities (Remmik et al. 2011; Stes and Van Petegem 2011).

Early-career professional development: the local context

In South Africa, academics, until recently, were expected to acquire competence in the context of their practice. Fortuitously, since around 2010, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has earmarked funding for teaching development in the form of a Teaching Development Grant (TDG), the focus of which is to improve staff teaching competence in order to improve student success rates, throughput rates, and graduation rates (DHET 2013). More recently, the configuration of the TDG has changed and as of 2017, the new University Development Grant will replace the earmarked teaching and research development grants (DHET 2015). Notwithstanding this future change to the TDG, the Grant has provided a much needed funding stimulus among higher education institutions to support and sustain the quality of teaching as an identified need, given the poor performance of the sector. The TDG has also enabled national institutions such as the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to prioritise continuous professional development and quality enhancement as a national imperative (CHE 2014). In its response, the University of

KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) has adopted what might be considered a progressive approach to the development of ECAs.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal context

UKZN is one of the larger research-led universities in the country and provides a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in multiple disciplines and fields including architecture, arts, agriculture, engineering, social sciences, education, health-sciences, medicine, commerce, law, and natural sciences. The university claims a strong ongoing commitment to attracting and retaining staff by creating an intellectual environment that fosters and stimulates academic life.

Policies and professional development for the enhancement of teaching

UKZN has developed a range of no fewer than 20 policies that are designed to promote professional practice and enhance the productivity of its staff. This includes its Integrated Talent Management Policy which comprises a mandatory Continuing Professional Development component; The Teaching & Learning Policy; Assessment Policy; A Framework for Teaching Workloads together with several Quality Promotions and Assurance policies. In addition, and through its Teaching and Learning Office (UTLO), the university offers its staff teaching enhancement opportunities, including a range of short courses, seminars, and workshops. The majority of these courses are available at no cost to staff. UTLO offers an integrated professional development programme which provides a continuous loop of professional development opportunities at an institutional level. These include support for grant proposal development, funding for research projects and teaching innovation; various dissemination fora for pedagogic-research findings; support for writing of academic articles; and rewards for teaching excellence (Vithal 2016).

Induction into teaching

UKZN also offers a University Education Induction Programme (UEIP) (The UEIP is discussed in a dedicated chapter elsewhere in the issue). All new and existing academic staff are required to complete the UEIP (or equivalent) which is of 80 hours' duration and is coordinated by the Higher Education Training & Development (HETD) unit in the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Teaching & Learning Portfolio as part of the University's support for teaching and learning.

The programme comprises the following four modules aimed at developing and improving professional knowledge and skills in teaching praxis: teaching and learning in higher education; assessing teaching and learning in higher education; designing and evaluating curricular in higher education; and research supervision in higher education.

The Department of Human Resources Development recommends candidates for this programme which is linked to the university's Performance Management Agreements and Personal Development Plans. Senior academics offer leadership to what, on the face of it, might be said to be a comprehensive continuous professional development and support programme. The research question that impelled this paper is that: is the support effective in meeting the peculiar needs of early-career academics?

ECAs' teaching responsibilities: A generic job description

At UKZN, the rank of lecturer is the entry-level rank to an academic career and according to the Department of Human Resources which develops generic job descriptions for all staff; the teaching responsibilities of academics at lecturer level are categorised as:

(1) Developing teaching and learning materials such as course content and assessment instruments;
(2) Using different teaching methodologies to facilitate learning;
(3) Assessing student performance;
(4) Planning, implementing, and evaluating the offering of modules and programmes;
(5) Providing opportunities for individual student interaction and dealing with student concerns, problems, and challenges;
(6) Reflecting on own teaching practice, teaching-design, and delivery; and
(7) Be involved in continuing professional development.

(Source: Adapted from UKZN [2014] – Generic job description for Lecturers)

Through its job description, the university is clear about its expectations of ECAs with regard to teaching roles and responsibilities. The limitation, however, is that, while the job description document offers general descriptions of how some of the criteria in these categories can be met, it does not do so for all criteria and in particular, there is no information on how to pursue continuing professional development for teaching.

Continuous professional development: a theoretical glimpse

In the absence of relevant policy and appropriate teacher development programmes, teachers acquire seemingly indelible imprints from their own experiences as students. They rely on memories of their own instruction gained through their 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie 2002) which then function as *de facto* professional templates.

Lortie (2002) argues that unless academics are exposed to alternative pedagogies that interrupt their ritualised practices, they continue to teach in the same way they were taught by their undergraduate teachers. As teaching behaviours are largely unanalysed, they remain what Lortie (2002) describes as 'folkways of "intuitive and imitative"-"ready-made recipes" for action and interpretation that do not require testing or analysis while promising familiar, safe results'. This model provides academics with 'default options', a set of tried and tested strategies which they can revert to in times of indecision or uncertainty – especially in the absence of alternative pedagogic strategies (see Sternberg 2014).

UKZN's Integrated Talent Management Policy (UKZN 2011) does not make explicit the theoretical underpinnings of its professional development programmes, (UKZN 2011) and the authors of this article argue that there are implicit theoretical drivers that render the policy potentially liberating, particularly for ECAs with limited prior teaching experience. But, the policy can be simultaneously limiting, because the 'just enough' pedagogy informing the design of the induction programmes is not sufficient to liberate ECAs from what Sternberg (2014) calls 'murky environments' that typify the

academy. Sternberg describes a murky environment as one that is 'unclear, obscure, confused, or otherwise obfuscated' (Sternberg 2014, 1). He notes that murky environments pose serious career challenges because academics often feel like they should understand a particular environment or believe that they do understand it. But they do not.

Orientation and induction programmes do mitigate some of the murkiness, but this is often mediated by participants' expectations to engage in teaching and learning approaches that resonate with their own pedagogic schemas and frames of reference. Hence, disruptive pedagogies can and do have a destabilising impact on novice academics and their capacities to embrace change.

The question we explore in the rest of this article is how these theoretical glimpses find resonance at UKZN, focusing in particular on ECAs' epistemological predispositions and their experiences with professional development programmes.

Methods

A cross-sectional research approach comprising an on-line survey was used to explore early-career academics' notions of teaching in a university context. The research instrument, containing closed and open-ended questions, was piloted among seven academics (senior lecturers) who gave comments on the layout of the questionnaire, its ease of use, and their understanding of the questions and the clarity of instructions that were provided. The research instrument was adjusted based on the feedback received and subsequently put on-line at www.surveymonkey.com. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was granted by the university's Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

The study sample comprised ECAs employed on long-term/permanent contracts, commencing between January 2009 and February 2014 (inclusive), who were new to academic roles, that is, they had been working as academics for no more than five years as at 2014. A database of contact information for 198 academics who met these criteria was generated by the university's human-resources division. An email requesting respondents to participate in the survey was sent to all 198 ECAs.

The on-line survey was open for 3 weeks between 18 March 2014 and 13 April 2014. During this period, weekly reminders were sent to potential respondents (who had not participated at each stage), requesting them to participate. There was a 39% response rate. Of the 78 responses received, 13 responses were ineligible for further analysis because more than 60% of the response categories (>20/34) were empty. The final analysis included a sample population of $n = 65$. Descriptive statistics on the closed questions and quotes are reported.

Results, analysis, and discussion

Figure 1 shows the number of respondents from each College. Most study participants joined UKZN at the rank of lecturer (Figure 2), were employed on a permanent basis (Figure 3), had less than 3 years of work experience at the university (Figure 4) and started their academic careers at an average age of 37 years (Table 1). This pattern is consistent with international trends, where an increasing number of 2nd career academics are technically ECAs. 'There is now a revolving door between industry and university research jobs' (Dietz and Bozeman 2005, 365).
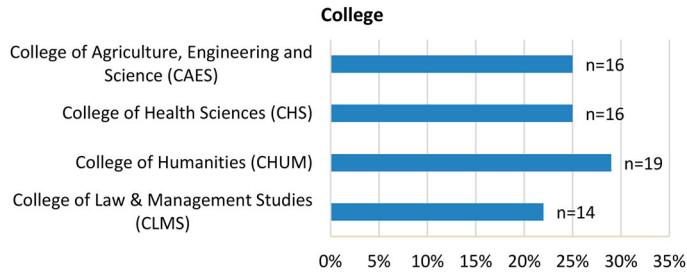
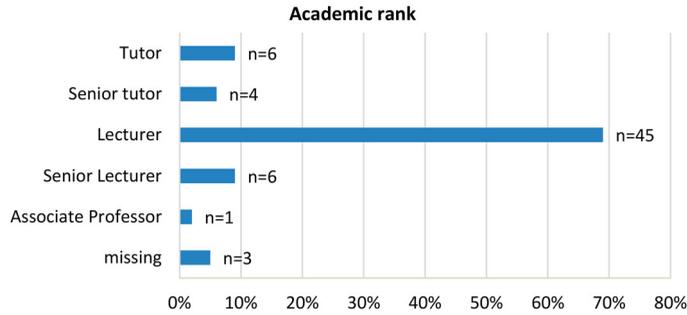Figure 1.   Number of respondents by College.

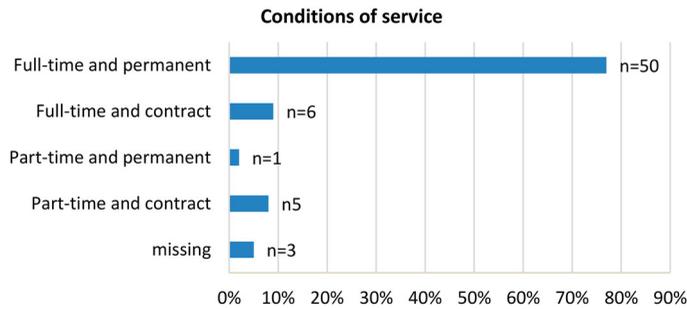Figure 2.   Number of respondents by academic rank level.

Figure 3.   Number of respondents per conditions of service at the university.
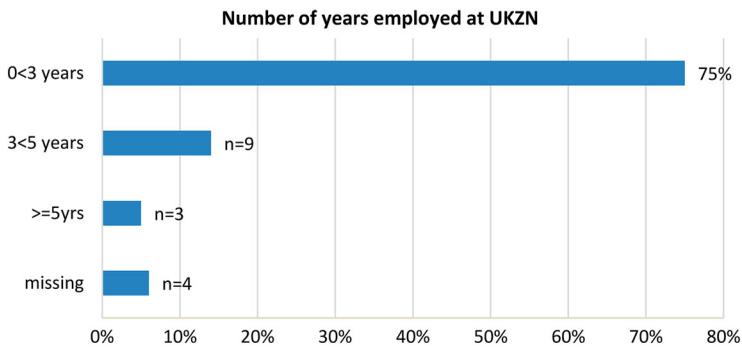

Figure 4.   Number of respondents by years of employment.

Table 1.   Respondents' demographic details.

	n	*%*
Gender		
Female	34	52
Male	31	48
Age		
25–29	11	17
30–39	32	49
40–49	16	25
50–53	5	8
Missing	1	2
Nationality		
South African	51	78
Foreign National	14	22
Race		
African	29	45
Coloured	1	2
Indian	16	25
White	11	17
Other	8	12
Highest academic qualification		
Doctorate	21	32
Master's	29	45
Honours	7	11
Bachelor's	8	12

The fact that the 2nd career group constitutes almost half of the respondents is noteworthy on a number of fronts. Tierney (1997, 13), in analysing the phenomenon of 2nd career academics, found that the 'grand markers that conveyed institutional meaning were absent, as were explicit, consistent messages on a more intimate level about what really mattered' particularly in understanding how their university operates as an organisation. While it is a truism that mature academics are imbued with valuable ontologies which include potentially innovative and disruptive practical knowledge and skills which they bring to bear on their second careers in the academy, they face the challenge of competing demands, including but not confined to teaching, research, and community engagement, as they negotiate unfamiliar organisational cultures and (often) highly competitive and (sometimes) alienating environments which are increasingly characterised by corporatisation and managerialism. Furthermore, like their younger, first career academic counterparts, they face the challenge of internalising the multifarious university structures, decoding enigmatic financial systems, understanding statutory and disciplinary programme requirements together with an unquantifiable myriad of other navigation skills and compentences (LaRocco and Bruns 2006).

Given the inherent challenges of joining the academy, what motivates academics to enter the profession? Typically, choices are inspired by intrinsic motivation (doing things because they are inherently interesting and valuable) and extrinsic motivation (doing things because it leads to a reward/punishment outcome) (Ryan and Deci 2000). At UKZN, the majority (73%) of ECAs were motivated by intrinsic factors to work at the university (Table 2). More specifically, they were largely driven by the motivation to work in an environment that afforded them intellectual space (65%).

Table 2.   Motivating factors for joining higher education.

Motivators	%
Extrinsic factors	27.4
Benefit options	9.7
Career development	8.1
Job availability	3.2
Lifestyle	4.8
New Challenge	1.6
Intrinsic factors	72.6
Contribute to society	3.2
Intellectual space	64.5
Opportunity to teach	3.2
Academic space	1.6
Total	100.0

This is gratifying given that universities are supposed to be the bastions of a society's intellectual health.

At UKZN, the key responsibility areas for academic staff are defined and quantified (in terms of time allocation) within the human-resources institutional generic job profiles for each rank. Table 3 shows that on average ECAs report spending most of their time on teaching activities (55%), followed by research (35%) and community engagement (10%); an indication, that for many ECAs at this university, their teaching role is their major function. When comparing the institutional expectation of teaching workload (UKZN 2014) with those reported by the ECAs, we recognise a misalignment.

ECAs spend up to 10% more on teaching-related activities than the prescribed guidelines documented in the generic job descriptions for those at the rank of lecturer (proxy for ECA). The impact of this increased teaching workload is illustrated in the following quote:

> Adjusting to the academy is not easy and the work load is too much, whilst the salary is very disappointing. The expected workload must be reviewed because we mostly don't get time for research. Although we are entitled to one day per week but this is mostly impossible or we sit at home and not do research but are trying to meet the deadlines that come with a teaching load … . (Lecturer 58, CHUM)

Table 3.   ECA Workloads at UKZN.

Academic rank	Teaching (%)	Research (%)	Community Engagement & Administration (%)
Tutor	60.8	21.7	17.5
Senior tutor	52.5	40.0	7.5
Lecturer	55.5	35.3	9.2
Senior lecturer	51.7	39.5	8.8
Associate professor	50.0	40.0	10.0
Sample average	**55.3**	**34.8**	**9.9**
Institutional expectation[a]	**45.0**	**40.0**	**15.0**

[a]As prescribed in the UKZN human-resources generic job profiles for academic staff at the rank of lecturer.

The concern about lack of time and the inability to effectively balance teaching and research roles is well documented in the literature as a consistent source of stress for ECAs (Adcroft and Taylor 2013; Fitzmaurice 2013; Korhonen and Törmä 2014; Matthews, Lodge, and Bosanquet 2014; Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin 2000; Vajoczki et al. 2011). These formative conceptions of research and teaching as competing areas of work often reinforce the notion that 'time spent on teaching responsibilities is time taken away from something more important, such as one's research and writing' (Korhonen and Törmä 2014, 2). Thus the demands of teaching are also likely to deflect from the goal-reflection required in quality teaching practice (Korhonen and Törmä 2014, 2). One way around this challenge of balancing research and teaching workloads is for ECAs to tailor their research around their teaching responsibilities (Hemmings, Hill, and Sharp 2013), that is, to embrace the foundational principles of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL), which harmonises the competing demands of research and teaching while simultaneously making these more accessible to public scrutiny.

Additional comments regarding research-related duties are worthwhile reporting as they provide some indication that the teaching workloads are associated with a lack of time to engage in research activities and are perceived to hamper career progression.

> I find that really little emphasis is placed on the importance of teaching because research is considered more important. (Lecturer 53, CLMS)

> These [UEIP] requirements take valuable time away from research, and there is zero compensation (and little to no other gain) for that lost time. (Lecturer 28, CAES)

> … too much emphasis is placed on career progression via research versus teaching. This needs to change … . (Lecturer 49, CLMS)

The criteria that are considered for their retention and promotion play an influential role in the experiences of ECAs (Vajoczki et al. 2011). Matthews, Lodge, and Bosanquet (2014) also reported that the perception of ECAs suggests research is the key to career success despite the existence of policies which articulate the pivotal role teaching plays in mobility and success. In principle, at UKZN, both teaching and research are considered for promotion.

Many studies (Adcroft and Taylor 2013; Hemmings, Hill, and Sharp 2013; Heward, Taylor, and Vickers 1997; Jepsen, Varhegyi, and Edwards 2012; McAlpine and Turner 2012) show that ECAs are often preoccupied with teaching when they start their academic careers, with limited scope for research-related activities in the initial years. However, this may be discipline specific because in some instances, for example law, teaching is seen as the spur for research opportunities which lead to publications (Heward, Taylor, and Vickers 1997).

Support for teaching

Academics reported limited training and mentoring in teaching and often feel overwhelmed by the class sizes.

> … the class sizes in my school (for example my class has 400 students), means that formative assessment is near to impossible to do properly. (Lecturer 53, CLMS)

Reduction of class sizes; material support; no work overload to be able to concentrate on preparation for teaching and to set assessment which is up to standards and not to set multiple choice questions to cater for large numbers … to be in a position to mark and give feedback to students on time. This compromises assessment standards and the quality of teaching & learning. (Lecturer 8, CHS)

Moreover, those teaching postgraduate courses or supervising master's and doctoral students reported frustration with the lack of support.

Within one year of my first full-time academic post I am expected to teach 1st year, 3rd year, Honours, masters and supervise a minimum of 6 students. As one of those with a PhD I have 5 PhDs and 4 MA alongside my teaching in the classroom. New staff must learn by doing. I was given no induction, no training and then 1 year in told there is mandatory training – yet no relief to be able to take the courses. (Lecturer 27, CHS)

Most ECAs ($n = 36$, 55%) received no guidance prior to teaching in the academy and some ECAs expressed a strong desire to be mentored in their teaching:

I would have loved to have a mentor because sometimes when you keep asking colleagues about things some of them start to look at you like you are lazy or stupid while all what you need is to understand how things are done. (Lecturer 34, CHS)

We are not mentored or shown the ropes by anyone and have to fumble our way around finding our feet. Nothing is made easy and we aren't told what we need to do … . (Lecturer 48, CLMS)

Similar to a study by Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin (2000), UKZN's ECAs were troubled by the unclear expectations with regard to their responsibilities. They were motivated to perform effectively, but expressed frustration at the absence of clear expectations and support or direction on what constituted effective performance.

When someone just tells you, you will co-ordinate the module when you are not even sure what is required of you as a coordinator, it is not fair. Also involve us in these committees so that we will learn; for example colleagues were developing the modules for 2015 and certain people did it but I have no idea what that entails but if I am still here sometime I will be expected to develop one so how will I learn if I do not observe and work with the people you know. (Lecturer 34, CHS)

Those who did receive some kind of peer support (1 out of 4 ECAs) revealed their consternation regarding the lack of information about the administrative requirements of the university, as it relates to teaching. Specifically, the importance of re-socialising new academics into institutional norms and routines appeared to be undervalued by the university as academics unlearn old norms and embrace new identities (Barrett and Brown 2014).

University education induction programme

57.4% of academics ($n = 54$) reported that they had attended the UEIP.

We are expected to publish and supervise postgraduate students without having gone through the necessary training. The UEIP programme should be completed before commencing full-time lecturing. Personally I have become a better academic after attending these valuable UEIP modules. (Lecturer 22, CHS)

However, not all academics found the induction course useful:

> I think the UEIP requirements are a tremendous waste of time and resources. Academics are supposedly 'taught' how to teach and do research by people who are completely outside of their fields. (Lecturer 28, CAES)

Sixty-three per cent of those who reported teaching workloads >50% had attended the UEIP. This may be an extrinsic motivating factor to attend the course. Furthermore, UKZN's Integrated Talent Management policy (2011) stipulates that it is mandatory for all new academics and those at lecturer level and below to attend the UEIP.

In addition, some ECAs reported that regular forms of teaching support would be useful:

> Continuous guidance as to new teaching techniques, new assessment methods in one's fields as opposed to once off training at the beginning would be great to ensure continuous learning as academics and teachers. (Senior lecturer 31, CAES)

> Closely monitored growth of early-career academics is necessary to ensure that they grow as quickly as possible. This can be done by continuously helping them bridge gaps identified as lacking on their teaching skills. (Lecturer 71, CHUM)

Hemmings, Hill and Sharp (2013) also argues that providing generic once-off approaches to training in tertiary teaching, assessment, and administration may fail to meet the learning needs of ECAs. This can be counterbalanced by the provision of ongoing access to a suite of training programmes. This view of continuous support over time is also reinforced by Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin (2000).

Where attempts are made by the ECA to be part of and influence teaching in their discipline, a perceived lack of responsiveness to attempts at disseminating and embedding individual teaching initiatives may lead to feelings of disillusionment. Gale (2011) defines these episodes as critical incidents which influence career success in the long term.

> I have found that in my department I have been the only person interested in any training on new teaching techniques. I have attended two such workshops/trainings. When I come back to my department with ideas based on these trainings there is little or no interest and I am not permitted to move forward with something new on my own. (Lecturer 69, CHS)

ECA notions of teaching

On average ECAs rated their content knowledge, pedagogy, and use of more than two assessment strategies as high (Table 4).

It is not unusual that competence in content knowledge was rated highly given the ECAs' qualifications and their research interests. This self-confidence in their academic ability at the early stage of their careers is important because as evidence from the Heward, Taylor, and Vickers (1997) study indicates, it lays the foundations for future success in the academic profession especially in terms of rank progression. Nonetheless, content knowledge alone does not naturally produce expertise in teaching.

Therefore, the high self-ratings for teaching methods and assessment is somewhat surprising, given the length of ECAs' teaching experience and not many had been trained as teachers. This finding is consonant with Lortie's (2002) assertion that teachers' conceptions of what constitutes good teaching often derives from their own apprenticeship of observation.

Table 4. ECA self-rating of teaching.

	Rating		
	Low (%)	Medium (%)	High (%)
Content knowledge	0.0	19.3	80.7
Knowledge of teaching methods	5.3	36.8	57.9
Assessment strategies	5.3	29.8	64.9
Average rating	3.5	28.7	67.8

While inadequate administrative support for teaching is indeed a universal problem, it is noteworthy that one-third of ECAs at UKZN reported that they would prefer logistical and material support while only 6% preferred support for building their teaching capacity. This is a further indicator of the disjuncture between ECAs' levels of self-confidence and their *de facto* performance as borne-out by student evaluations and student performance data.

9% of ECAs requested additional support especially in the form of mentorship and teaching capacity development. This small percentage is consistent with Matthews, Lodge, and Bosanquet's (2014) study which showed that nearly 40% of ECAs chose not to undergo professional development in teaching (Matthews, Lodge, and Bosanquet 2014).

> Young academics need good mentors under which they can seek help and guidance. General courses are a waste of time when most young academics are so short of time to do all the things they need to get done. Working side by side with senior lecturers is the best succession plan. (Senior lecturer 31, CAES)

Vajoczki et al. (2011) recommended that department heads assist ECAs to succeed by designing and implementing mentoring programmes that benefit both the mentor and the mentee. They argued further that if these mentorship programmes were well-designed, they could increase the retention of academics.

The most common suggestions for improving teaching support were that the profile of teaching should be raised through promotion/recognition criteria (40%), and that there should be mandatory policies for teaching (31%) (Table 5). The former recommendation is ironic given that in a longitudinal survey examining promotion

Table 5. Advice for teaching improvement.

Advice to UKZN to improve teaching support	%
Raising the profile of teaching through academic promotion/recognition	39.7
Mandatory policies on support for teaching	31.0
Emphasising the importance of teaching through financial incentives/rewards	13.8
Have mentorship programmes	5.2
Conduct more workshops and training for teaching	3.4
No advice	3.4
Ensure reasonable teaching workloads to enable staff to take advantage of teacher training	1.7
Ensure that appropriately qualified lecturers are teaching students	1.7
Total	100.0

outcomes, it was found that most staff at entry-level positions at UKZN are promoted to the next rank on teaching criteria (Vithal, Subbaye, and North 2013).

The latter suggestion is also ironic, given our earlier declaration that there are no fewer than 20 policies developed especially in the last five years at UKZN related to teaching and learning and professional development. However, this points to another perennial dilemma around the tension between policy, policy dialogue, and policy implementation. These three components are rarely coherent. There is a misguided assumption that the policy development process is inclusive and consultative and that policies, once sanctioned by Senate (the highest academic forum at a university), are communicated equally at all levels at the university. Hence the recommendation from ECAs for teaching and learning policies indicates that while many policies are available, they are not necessarily accessible or successfully communicated to ECAs.

To a lesser extent, ECAs suggested that there should be financial incentives/rewards for teaching. This recommendation is expected, given that research productivity, at the university, is rewarded with financial incentives, with no equivalent incentive for teaching. It may be argued that teaching is in fact the core business for which s/he is primarily remunerated, but teaching as a rewarding and adequately rewarded obligation will continue to be regarded as marginal to research as long as institutions continue to propagate (implicitly or explicitly) the artificial (dichotomy) between research and teaching. A vigorous discourse on the different notions of scholarship as it pertains to academic work could engender a broad and authentic meaning of scholarship, and its four allied components of discovery, integration, application, and teaching (Boyer 1991).

Concluding comments

In this study, we found that while ECAs' induction as teachers is mandatory in terms of institutional policy, their development as competent teachers over time is not systematic and continuous, at least as reported by the sample surveyed.

While intrinsic factors motivate ECAs to work at universities, they report the harsh reality of heavy teaching workloads and lack of support, which are a source of demotivation. This is consistent with Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin's (2000) conclusion that what ECAs hope for and want from their jobs does not often match with what they experience in the academy. Moreover, the negative perception that that teaching workloads may hamper their career progression (which is perceived to depend on research productivity) can be mitigated if ECAs are taught how to align their research interests with their teaching and to conduct pedagogic research. In this regard, an institutional campaign on the value of embracing the SOTL as advocated by Boyer (1991) and those after him would serve to elevate the status of teaching and research as mutually dependent and complementary.

Since ECAs in this study were more likely to have entered the academy with a variety of professional experiences, it was expected that they would also have the aptitude and potential to challenge and disrupt the existing ritualised practises in the academy. This was not the case. The lack of support for teaching was compounded by the absence of formal mentoring opportunities, which suggested that ECAs relied on an apprenticeship of observation model of teaching. The implication here is that our ECAs experience a novice period without any pedagogical training and limited support from their peers. It is quite apparent that their first experiences in the classroom are more likely to be teacher-centred and content-oriented rather than interactive.

Moreover, these early university-teaching experiences are likely to be based on ECAs' memories of their instruction gained through their own experiences as students.

ECAs are often unfamiliar with the culture of the academy which, if made explicit, could acclimatise them to their roles and responsibilities as academics (Jones and Osborne-Lampkin 2013). In addition, Austin (2002) recommends that there should be institutionalised mentorship programmes which enable ECAs and more experienced academics to share their individual experiences through critical conversations. Currently, the UEIP serves the primary function of initiating ECAs into the academy. However, this brief exposure into the academy is by no means a sufficient condition to adequately socialise academics into organisational cultures and the conditions that promote academic excellence. Continuous professional development programmes at discipline level through mentoring and communities of practice should be designed to disrupt ritualised practices in safe and supportive environments that value innovation and eschew teaching rituals that perpetuate conservative pedagogies.

ORCiD

Reshma Subbaye http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6903-0927
Rubby Dhunpath http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8900-5024

References

Adcroft, Andy, and David Taylor. 2013. "Support for New Career Academics: An Integrated Model for Research Intensive University Business and Management Schools." *Studies in Higher Education* 38 (6): 827–40. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.599378.

Altbach, Philip. 2007. *Global Perspectives on Higher Education. Tradition and Transition: The International Imperative in Higher Education*. Rotterdam: Sense.

Austin, Anne. 2002. "Creating a Bridge to the Future: Preparing New Faculty to Face Changing Expectations in a Shifting Context." *Review of Higher Education* 26 (2): 119–44.

Barrett, Joe, and Hillary Brown. 2014. "From Learning Comes Meaning: Informal Co-mentorship and the Second-career Academic in Education." *The Qualitative Report* 19 (73): 1–15.

Boyer, Ernest L. 1991. "The Scholarship of Teaching from: Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate." *College Teaching* 39 (1): 11–13. doi:10.1080/87567555.1991.10532213.

CHE (Council on Higher Education). 2014. *Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement in the Second Period of Quality Assurance*. Pretoria, South Africa: CHE, Institutional Audits Directorate.

DHET (Department of Higher Education and Training). 2013. *Draft Policy Statement on the Management and Utilisation of the Teaching Development Grant in the 2014/2015 to 2016/2017 Funding Cycle*. Pretoria, South Africa, DHET.

DHET (Department of Higher Education and Training). 2015. *Ministerial Statement on University Funding: 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, November*. Pretoria, South Africa: DHET.

Dhunpath, Rubby, and Renuka Vithal, ed. 2012. *Alternative Access to Higher Education: Underprepared Students or Underprepared Institutions*. Cape Town: Pearson Education SA.

Dietz, James S., and Barry Bozeman. 2005. "Academic Careers, Patents, and Productivity: Industry Experience as Scientific and Technical Human Capital." *Research Policy* 34 (3): 349–67.

Fitzmaurice, Marian. 2013. "Constructing Professional Identity as a New Academic: A Moral Endeavour." *Studies in Higher Education* 38 (4): 613–22. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.594501.

Gale, Helen. 2011. "The Reluctant Academic: Early-career Academics in a Teaching-orientated University." *International Journal for Academic Development* 16 (3): 215–27. doi:10.1080/1360144X.2011.596705.

Giroux, Henry. 2014. *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Haas, Eugene. 1996. "The US Academic Profession. In International Academic Profession: Portraits of 14 Countries." In *A Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*, edited by Philip Altbach, 333–88. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation.

Hemmings, Brian, Doug Hill, and John G. Sharp. 2013. "Critical Interactions Shaping Early Academic Career Development in Two Higher Education Institutions." *Issues in Educational Research* 23 (1): 35–51.

Heward, Christine, Paul Taylor, and Rhiannon Vickers. 1997. "Gender, Race and Career Success in the Academic Profession." *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 21 (2): 205–18. doi:10.1080/0309877970210206.

HESA (Higher Education South Africa). 2014. "South African Higher Education in the 20th Year of Democracy: Context, Achievements and Key Challenges." HESA presentation to the Ministerial Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training. Cape Town, March 5.

Jepsen, Denise M., Melinda M. Varhegyi, and Daniel Edwards. 2012. "Academics' Attitudes Towards PhD Students' Teaching: Preparing Research Higher Degree Students for an Academic Career." *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 34 (6): 629–45.

Jones, Tamara, and La'Tara Osborne-Lampkin. 2013. "Black Female Faculty Success and Early Career Professional Development." *The Negro Educational Review* 64 (1–4): 59–75.

Korhonen, Vesa, and Sirpa Törmä. 2014. "Engagement with a Teaching Career – How a Group of Finnish University Teachers Experience Teacher Identity and Professional Growth." *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. doi:10.1080/0309877X.2014.895301.

LaRocco, Diana, and Deborah A. Bruns. 2006. "Practitioner to Professor: An Examination of Second Career Academics' Entry into Academia." *Education* 126 (4): 626–39.

Lortie, Dan. 2002. *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Matthews, Kelly, Jason M. Lodge, and Agnes Bosanquet. 2014. "Early Career Academic Perceptions, Attitudes and Professional Development Activities: Questioning the Teaching and Research Gap to Further Academic Development." *International Journal for Academic Development* 19 (2): 112–24. doi:10.1080/1360144X.2012.724421.

McAlpine, Lynn, and Gill Turner. 2012. "Imagined and Emerging Career Patterns: Perceptions of Doctoral Students and Research Staff." *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 36 (4): 535–48. doi:10.1080/0309877X.2011.643777.

Mohamedbhai, Goolam. 2014. "Massification in Higher Education Institutions in Africa: Causes, Consequences and Responses." *International Journal of African Higher Education* 1 (1): 59–84.

Mouton, Johann. 2011. "Doctoral Production in South Africa: Statistics, Challenges and Responses." *Perspectives in Education: The Changing Face of Doctoral Education in South Africa: Special Issue* 3 (29): 13–29.

Nerad, Maresi. 2012. "Conceptual Approaches to Doctoral Education: A Community of Practice." *Alternation* 19 (2): 57–72.

Remmik, Marvi, Mari Karm, Anu Haamer, and Liina Lepp. 2011. "Early-career Academics' Learning in Academic Communities." *International Journal for Academic Development* 16 (3): 187–99. doi:10.1080/1360144X.2011.596702.

Rice, Eugene R., Mary Deane Sorcinelli, and Ann E. Austin. 2000. *Heeding New Voices: Academic Careers for a New Generation. New Pathways: Faculty Careers and Employment for the 21st Century Series* (Inquiry No. 7). Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.

Ryan, Richard, and Edward Deci. 2000. "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions." *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25: 54–67. doi:10.1006/ceps.1999.1020.

Sanderson, Gavin. 2011. "Internationalisation and Teaching in Higher Education." *Higher Education Research and Development* 30 (5): 661–76. doi:10.1080/07294360.2011.598455.

Sternberg, Robert. 2014. *Murky-environments-in-academe*. The Chronicle of Higher Education. http://www.chroniclecareers.com/article//147057/#sthash.CcPPXf0f.dpuf.

Stes, Ann, and Peter Van Petegem. 2011. "Instructional Development for Early Career Academics: An Overview of Impact." *Educational Research* 53 (4): 459–74. doi:10.1080/00131881.2011.625156.

Sutherland, Kathryn, Marc Wilson, and Pamela Williams. 2010. *Success in Academia? The Experiences of Early Career Academics in New Zealand*. Wellington: Ako Aotearoa National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence.

Teferra, Damtew. 2014. "Charting African Higher Education – Perspectives at a Glance." *International Journal of African Higher Education* 1 (1): 9–21.

Tierney, William. 1997. "Organisational Socialization in Higher Education." *Journal of Higher Education* 68 (1): 2–21.

UKZN (University of KwaZulu-Natal). 2011. "Integrated Talent Management Policy and Guidelines." Ref: CO/04/0512/11 Human Resources Division.

UKZN (University of KwaZulu-Natal). 2014. "Generic Job Profiles for Academic Staff-lecturer." Human Resources Division.

Vajoczki, Susan, Tamara C. Biegas, Melody Crenshaw, Ruth L. Healey, Tolulope Osayomi, Michael Bradford, and Janice Monk. 2011. "Professional Development in Teaching and Learning for Early Career Academic Geographers: Contexts, Practices and Tensions." *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 35 (3): 395–408. doi:10.1080/03098265.2011.563380.

Vithal, Renuka. 2016. "Growing a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Institutionally." *Studies in Higher Education*. doi:10.1080/03075079.2016.1180350.

Vithal, Renuka, Reshma Subbaye, and Delia North. 2013. "Valuing Teaching in University Academic Promotions." *Alternation* 9: 318–42.