

**Learning to play the game:
Exploring the experiences of early career academics in negotiating
their belonging at a South African university**



COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

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By

Nkululeko Vusumuzi Gift Majozi

213510100

Supervisor:

Prof Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo

Date of submission:

May 2022

DECLARATION

I, **Nkululeko Vusumuzi Gift Majozi** declare that:

The work reported in this thesis is my own original work, and that this body of work has not been submitted and/or accepted for examination for any other degree in any other institution of higher learning.

Other peoples' ideas or sources that were used or quoted in this thesis have been acknowledged through in text citations, and referenced accordingly.

Signature _____
Nkululeko Majozi
(213510100)

Date: 30 April 2022

STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

As the candidates' supervisor I agree X/ do not agree to the submission of this thesis is submitted with X/without my approval.

Signature _____

Dr Mlamuli N. Hlatshwayo

Date 5th May 2022

ABSTRACT

This research study contributes to the increasing body of knowledge that explores the experiences of early career academics working in and around institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Using a qualitative approach, academics new to the academic landscape recounted and shared their academic experiences in relation to their professional transition, and how they negotiated their belonging within the institution of higher learning where they are employed. An interpretive case study, focusing on eight sampled early career academics as participants from the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood campus, was used to capture their experiences. The early career academics who were purposively sampled reflected on, and shared their experiences. These were theorized and broken down into five main themes, namely; academic development, publications and funding, academic responsibility and community engagement, prioritizing student-centred teaching and learning, and the visibility of line managers and supervisors. Through the semi-structured interviews, participants provided detailed and valuable responses about their lived experiences of what transitioning into academia feels like for an early career academic in a South African institution of higher learning. This data generation method was seen as an appropriate tool to use to generate data that offers unique insights in this study.

This study revealed that the experiences by early career academics as they transitioned into higher education were multi-faceted. Early career academics appeared overwhelmed, tired, frustrated and even angry at the occupational conditions that are intensified by their professional world of work. Furthermore, it revealed that the difficulties that these academics were often exposed to resulted in their early departure from academia, with no intention of returning. This left the institutions in dire situations when they left.

This study therefore, recommends that more scholarly work focusing on the experiences of ECAs when transitioning into higher education be done. Whilst a great deal of recommendations to mitigate some of these negative experiences have been explored in this body of work, neglecting the need for further research into this phenomenon can have a long term adverse impact on the development of new academics, and that of the higher education sector at large. Further exploring and understanding how early academics negotiate their belonging when transitioning into the academic landscape will enable institutions of higher learning to device new initiatives and modern programmes to lessen the pressure and negative experiences. Moreover, while there was some form of support extended in these institutions through formal and informal mentorship opportunities from supervisors and fellow colleagues, this study further recommends formalising and institutionalising such programmes for

the development of ECAs within the system, their well-being and the survival of the academic profession.

Keywords: Early career academics, higher education, teaching and learning, phenomenology.

DEDICATION

To myself.

“It was a scary thing, climbing this mountain. But even scarier never knowing what might have been on the other side.”

F.E. Marie

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAO:	Central Applications Office
COVID:	Coronavirus Disease
DUT:	Durban University of Technology
ECA:	Early Career Academics
HE:	Higher Education
HEI:	Higher Education Institution
HESA:	Higher Education South Africa
NGO:	Non-governmental Organization
NCCC:	National Coronavirus Command Council
NPO:	Nonprofit Organization
PGCE:	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PhD:	Doctor of Philosophy
UEIP:	The University Education Induction Programme
UKZN:	University of KwaZulu-Natal
WHO:	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Dissertation

1.1 Introduction

Research on professional development and experiences of academics has been growing over the years (Akerlind as cited in Yusop & Kamarulzaman, 2016; Herman, Jose, Katiya, Kemp, Le Roux, Swart-Jansen van Vuuren & van der Merwe, 2021). Scholars have explored, theorized and produced scholarly work drawing from academics' experiences and their attempt to negotiate their belonging within institutions of higher learning. However, the growing body of scholarly research seems to have neglected a vast majority of the complex experiences of early career academics in the South African higher education teaching space. This study therefore, sought to contribute to research on the experiences of early career academics (Yusop & Kamarulzaman, 2016). In this chapter, I present the title and focus of the study, rationale, summary of the literature review, research questions and objectives, research and data generation methods, data analysis, limitations, sampling and ethical issues that were addressed.

1.2 Title

The title of this research project is:

- Learning to play the game: Exploring the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university.

1.3 Focus and purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore early career academics' experiences in negotiating their belonging at a South African university.

1.4 Location of the study

This study was conducted at Edgewood campus of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, located in Pinetown, west of Durban. The university of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Edgewood campus was chosen for its convenience to me as the researcher, and for the eight purposively sampled early career academics residing in and around Edgewood campus. The study explored eight early career academics' experiences in negotiating their belonging within this institution of higher learning. The study further sought to understand how and why these academics experienced

negotiation of their belonging in this institution the way they did. In this study, the experiences of these ECAs were instrumental for understanding the research focus.

1.5 Rationale of the study

This study explored the experiences of early career academics as they negotiated their belonging at a South African university. The motivation for conducting this study was the limited research on the experiences and challenges experienced by these academics with a South African university. Further motivation stemmed from my personal university experience as both an undergraduate and a post-graduate student, where I conversed with close friends who were early career academics. From our engagement, they often expressed negative feelings about their experiences as early career academics; and how overwhelmed, tired and frustrated they were by the demands of their working space. The informal conversations shed some light on the cocktail of issues they were often confronted with as they negotiated their belonging. I therefore, conduct this research to explore early career academics experiences in negotiating their belonging at a South African university.

Furthermore, since the dawn of democracy in 1994, the South African higher education system saw a strong call for transformation where a more open, relevant and non-discriminating education system in institutions of higher learning was needed as part of its transformation agenda to address the imbalances of the past (Fourie, 1999). However, scholars such as Peters (2013) note that the shift in the South African higher education system has focused more and more on administration and policy over the years, and placed less emphasis on effective teaching and learning. However, even though some of the aforementioned policies that have been put in the last decade have been geared towards reversing some of the inequalities and imbalances that have been put forth by the apartheid government; it is also important to note that the implementation of some of these legislative policies has been experiences some turbulences since its implementation. Moreover, in the wake of these institutions attempts to transform and start anew, there has been a plethora of emergent inefficiencies on changes in staffing at these universities and the adoption of the neoliberal managerial style. In the wake of the new managerial staffing style used in these institutions, a shift towards a management focused institution where quantifiable output measures and performance targets has been seen to be more of a priority; doing this at the expense of effective teaching and learning. This neglect on effective teaching and learning tends to have a detrimental effect on those who are

taught and the education sector in general (Peters, 2013). Although there is an expectancy for these institutions to increase and broaden the participation of all those who access these institutions, and promote equal access and fair chances to those who were marginalised in the past; such expectations “has led to dissatisfaction, on a number of levels, experienced by academics (Pienaar & Bester as cited in Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021).

Research further shows that most HEIs in the southern hemisphere tend to experience a phenomenon known as “brain drain” where they loss a substantial loss of talented staff and experts to better paying universities in and around Africa, to private sector businesses which offer attractive salary packages (Mapesela & Strydom, 2005). However, this increased turnover of these academics tend to set these institutions aback and hinder on a number of things, such as research outputs, attainment of departmental targets and on successful quality academic teaching (Mapesela & Strydom, 2005). As a result, strategies such as sound recruitment and selection processes, training and up skilling of ECAs, performance, appraisal and compensation system and modern academic retain plans that will form the basis in curbing these high academic turnovers in higher education institutions. Moreover, these retainership strategies are important to implement, as they tend to play an important role in solidifying culture of these institutions, as employee turnover tend to have an adverse impact on key academic staff in the end (Allui & Sahni, 2016).

1.6 Literature review

Scholarly research by Geber (2004) highlights that early career academics in South Africa join a higher education system rooted along historical lines of discrimination and apartheid. However, they often receive scant attention and minimal assistance in form of professional development in teaching (Geber, 2004). This evident lack of support prevalent in some South African universities often contributes negatively towards early career academics experience, which often results in high levels of anxiety about many aspects of their academic work from the onset (Geber, 2004).

The meanings connected with becoming or being an academic are constantly shifting, on account of diverse forces that act on universities (Pithouse-Morgan, Masinga, Naicker, Hlao & Pillay, 2016). As a result, “experiences of career development recounted by early career

academics vary widely, ranging from enthusiasm to more cautious and neutral accounts, to those telling of complete isolation from colleagues” (Geber, 2004, p. 1).

Teferra (2016) observes that institutions of higher learning in Africa are under immense pressure to recruit skilled professionals, as they are experiencing escalating growth in enrolments owing to the substantial changes in the demographic profiles of students. Therefore, experiences encountered by ECAs vary, and some normally struggle for acknowledgement in the various university departments they work in. Others often experience sabotage of their work and disappointment about the university system, as they attempt to find their feet and get used to the system, amid the pressure exerted upon them (Geber, 2004).

Recent scholarly work shows that the transition from being a postgrad student to a university novice academic is fraught with challenging experiences, and that there is a need to explore and unpack these experiences from the academics’ perspectives; and devise ways to assist novice academics navigate them smoothly (McPherson, Punch & Graham, 2018). Despite the cocktail of challenges, ECAs are invaluable future academic assets of HEIs as many experienced and seasoned academics are at their exit stage (Warhurst, 2008).

A number of scholarly work reveal a mismatch between the expectations of the early career academics by the host institution and the reality of what they can deliver (Adams 2002). Adams (2002, p. 5) says “while staff may view research as the core of their work, institutions have a much more rounded view of academic work, which also involves teaching and academic life in general”. These discrepancies hinder the ability of the new academics to quickly familiarize themselves with their host universities and their line of work. The workload placed on them, and the need to identify, understand, and follow a set of unwritten as well as written rules, is often incongruent (Adams, 2002).

In a changing world, a new generation of academics finds it difficult to compete with senior academics who are established (Bazeley, 2003). Sutherland (2017) further notes that in institutions of higher learning, expectations centred around success often leave early career academics with conflicting messages about what they should concentrate on to achieve promotion. Little attention has been afforded to early career academics in higher education institutions (Teferra, 2016; Monk & McKay, 2017). Teferra (2016) opines that most early academics are not trained to teach and are often expected to catch up on the job. Teferra (2016)

goes further to say the state of affairs in some institutions of higher learning is daunting, as the number of students in a typical university classroom is fast growing, while the preparation and basic skills of these early career academics are lacking. In some universities, there is little or no induction of early career academics into the profession.

In as much as some universities have shifted towards the adoption of policies and practices that seek to demonstrate the importance of inducting early career academics into the profession, like the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal through its University Education Induction Programme (UEIP), “the professional development of novice staff at some universities still requires considerable improvement” (Iglesias-Martínez, Lozano-Cabezas, and Martinez-Ruiz, 2014, p. 170).

Scholars highlight that institutions of higher learning are finding it difficult to attract and retain skilled academics (Lesenyeho, Barkhuizen & Schutte, 2018; Mokgojwa, Barkhuizen, & Schutte, 2017; The South African Council on Higher Education, 2014). Onah and Anikwe (2016) and Makondo (2014) opine that HEIs need to address the challenges experienced by novice academics in their early career phase to mitigate against challenges such as early tenure of these academics and failure to attract younger academics into the HE system (Lesenyeho, Barkhuizen & Schutte, 2018). It is disheartening to learn that despite the challenges faced by ECAs, they are still expected to perform to the best of their ability (Marengo & Chinyamurindi, 2018).

The “significant challenges to attract and retain quality early career academics” into the system (Lesenyeho, Barkhuizen & Schutte, 2018, p.1) over the years, is attributed to ECAs or novice academics not being adequately compensated by HEIs (Onah & Anikwe, 2016). A study conducted by Higher Education South Africa (2014) confirms that ECAs employed in institutions of higher learning are generally compensated less than their counterparts in the public sector. A study by Erasmus, Grobler, and Van Niekerk (2015) makes the same observation as the reason why ECAs leave the system for better rewards and benefits.

1.7 Objectives

The objectives guiding this research project were as follows:

- To explore the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university.
- To understand how early career academics experience negotiating their belonging at a South African university.
- To understand why early career academics experience negotiating their belonging in the way that they do.

1.8 Research questions

The critical research questions that this research project intended to answer were:

- What are the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university?
- How do early career academics experience negotiating their belonging at a South African university?
- Why do early career academics experience negotiating their belonging in the way that they do?

1.9 Research design

A research design is “a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 74). Babbie and Mouton (2001) state that a research design is the way in which a research study is structured by the researcher in order to successfully arrive at the desired outcome. This infers that, research design as a plan on how to find what a researcher is looking for; it is a systematic way of finding evidence that responds to the research questions posed in the study (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014). De Vaus (2001) notes that a research design is an all encompassing umbrella. It is the overall way one will conduct the study, from generating the data, the type of data to be generated to eventually analyzing the data generated.

1.9.1 The qualitative approach

The research employed the qualitative research approach to explore novice academics' experiences of supervising research in South African higher education. Ormston, Spencer, Barnard and Snape (2013) argue that qualitative research is about inspecting a particular

experience or reality from the outlook of people's understandings. The qualitative methods and techniques were used in this research to explore and understand the experiences of the new academics.

1.9.2 Selection of participants

Participants in this study were eight early career academics from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, School of Education in Pinetown. The participants were from different disciplines such as Science and Technology Education, Languages and Arts Education and Education Studies.

The procedure for the selection of participants was purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a method where participants are chosen specifically by the researcher for the purpose a researcher has. The participants should have the potential to provide the data that can help the researcher achieve their research purpose (Tongco, 2007). The researcher makes a well-informed decision on what has to be essentially known and takes an initiative to find participants who are experienced and well informed on the topic of interest. In using purposive sampling, subjectivity surfaces (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

I used a smaller and more manageable sample to do my research in greater depth. As indicated above, in order to probe aspects of this study that may offer unique insights into the research questions, the study used eight participants that were purposively sampled from the UKZN staff database on the basis that they were willing to partake in this study and that they were early career academics at the time of data generation.

The sample purposively constructed included diversity with respect to gender, language, and discipline to ensure rich data was generated. One criterion was to select academics that are new in the field and have recently been appointed by the university.

1.9.3 Data generation tools: Semi-structured interviews

Qualitative research involves using a variety of data generation methods. To have data responding to a particular topic of a study, one has to use tools out of the various tools that exist for the generation of data. Data generation methods refer to the tools and used to generate data for a study (Luna-Reyes and Andersen, 2003). Creswell (2012) explains that the qualitative study uses data generation methods such as interviews, document analysis,

reflections, and observations. The data generation tools that were used in this study are semi-structured interviews.

Interviews are frequently utilized in generating data for research, and the semi structured interviews are the most used interview method in research of a qualitative nature (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). The frequent use of semi structured interviews in qualitative research denote that they bring success in generating data. Wahyuni (2012) states that semi-structured interviews involve the researcher asking participants questions in order for them to share their insights on a specific social phenomenon.

According to Cohen et al. (2011), interviews are among the most popular methods of data generation for interpretive qualitative case studies like in this study. Creswell (2014) explains an interview as a set of key open-ended questions based on interview guides that list broader questions to be covered during the interview. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews offers the qualitative researcher the advantage of being able to modify their line of inquiry, to follow up interesting responses, and to investigate underlying motives; ensuring in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were regarded as an appropriate instrument to use for a small sample, such as that selected in this study. This type of interview allowed me to remain in control of the discussion, while allowing the participants to freely give subjective responses, as suggested by Cohen, et al. (2011). Furthermore, the usage of semi-structured interviews in this research study allowed me to get into the professional spaces of these academics, capture their experiences and describe their networks, and try and make sense of them and the role that the academic setting they are in influence their daily professional life.

Interviews were conducted online via Zoom and WhatsApp video call, with all participating academics. Interviews were conducted regarding academics' biographies, and the methods they used in teaching. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to give a more accurate reflection of the findings. Field notes were also taken.

1.10 Data analysis

After the researcher generated data during the field work, it needs to be analysed so that findings will be derived. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2004) data analysis means a close or systematic study or the separation of a whole into its parts, for the purpose of the study. Given (2002) adds that data analysis as a body of methods that helps to describe facts, detects

patterns, develop explanations and test hypothesis. There are many ways a researcher can employ to analyze data. In analyzing the data, qualitative data analysis methods were used, and thematic analysis was employed to discover trends in a data set (Landsheer & Boejie, 2010). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A theme captures something important about data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. This forms the basis from which the set of data is analyzed. Thematic analysis organizes and describes data sets in detail, and goes beyond simply counting phrases or words in a text to identifying implicit and explicit ideas within the data. These aid the researcher in developing the key facets within the mental space that forms and shapes supervisors' perspectives.

Firstly, I played and replayed the tape to ensure clarity of the responses. I then analyzed data from the interviews, reflective writing, and field notes. Data generated was organized to facilitate analysis. Data was coded according to themes as mentioned. After the semi-structured interviews, I constructed the different themes that answered the research questions of the study. Perceptions and understandings were analyzed to get a sense of what it was like to be a novice academic. Interpretive phenomenological approach was employed to analyze data generated. The research endeavours to understand what a group of people felt within a phenomenon.

In this study, phenomenology is a powerful research strategy to inquiry (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019), and a theory that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the viewpoint of those who have experienced it (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Varpio, as cited in Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019). Both good and bad experiences encountered by novice academics in HEIs were explored. As such, through phenomenology, novice academics lived experiences will be explored and used to answer the research questions.

1.11 Ethical considerations

Researchers are guided by certain ethics when carrying out studies. Ethics exemplify individual and communal codes of conduct that require adherence to some principles (Biggs & Coleman, 2007). Ethics offer rules and behavioural expectations about appropriate conduct towards participants. The following ethical aspects were taken into consideration in the process of

conducting this study. Since all interviews were conducted using online platforms, the participants' rights were read out to them at the beginning of the interview process.

1.12 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness has to be explained in this research study in terms of what it is, what is included in it and how it is going to be ensured. Trustworthiness is a connection between the data generated and how the data generated truly reflects what is captured in the study (Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utrianen & Kyngas, 2014). Furthermore, trustworthiness is referred to as the extent to which the study can be trusted. Trustworthiness is synonymous with standards of truth and value in the work presented. According to Guba and Lincoln (2003), the criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative study are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. The reason behind working with trustworthiness in a qualitative study is to support the views of the research and show to what extent they can be trusted and relied on. Trustworthiness is the relationship between generating data and the manner in which the data generated is recorded accurately.

1.13 Limitations

According to Marshal and Rossman (2006, p.42) "there is no proposed research project that does not have limitation and none is perfectly done". This study was only carried out in one of the five UKZN campuses in KwaZulu Natal. Therefore, the data generated cannot be transferred nor generalized to another study in other campuses. However, focusing on one case study is important in that it enables the researcher to understand the experiences of novice academics. ~~In order to minimize this limitation, validity of the data collected through interviews will be ensured, by ensuring that the data generation method is solely used in pursuit of answering the research questions and that the researcher is not bias when analysing and interpreting the participant's responses. In other words, the researcher tried to minimize this anticipated problem by ensuring that the reliability/accuracy of the findings by is not diluted when analysing the data collected. Moreover, the expertise of the research supervisor that I have been assigned to will be used to minimise the identified limitation.~~

The research participants were novice academics who had busy schedules, hence there were time constraints affecting their availability for the interview. To avoid unexpected time delays and minimize this anticipated limitation, I selected a suitable time that accommodated them. I

did not try to pressurise the participants, so to ensure that they are relaxed enough to provide an authentic picture into their academic life.

Another limitation to this study was that the participating academics were from one university and a lot of valuable information could have been obtained from other novice academics in other institutions of higher learning. The study provides assurance that the data collected reflected solely the views of the academics who participated in this project, whilst avoiding bias.

There was a risk of participants being reluctant to participate in face to face interviews owing to the COVID-19 scare and the university of Kwa-Zulu Natal's stricter ethical principles of research (Padala, Jendro, Gauss, Orr, Dean, Wilson, & Padala, 2020). However, to mitigate against this, the researcher ensured that all measures to protect participants were taken and that health precautions are adhered to. In this regard, the researcher conducted interviews remotely through platforms such as Skype, Zoom, telephone and WhatsApp (Adom, Osei, & Adu-Agyem, 2020).

The study was further limited by many academics refusing to take part in the study. To help mitigate this limitation, I negotiated with all selected participants to build healthier relations so that they all positively contribute to the needs and success of this study. Good negotiation means leaving each participant satisfied and willing to engage with each other in future, therefore my approach will be to show the mutual benefits of this study to the selected participants.

1.14 Chapter overview

1.14.1 *Chapter one: overview, context and objectives*

This first chapter provided an overview of the study. The title, focus and purpose, research objectives and questions that underpinned this study and the location of this study were outlined. Furthermore, this chapter also outlined the rationale of the study, and highlighted the researcher's personal experiences for conducting this research project, literature review, the objectives of this study, key research questions and the layout/overview of the research project.

1.14.2 *Chapter two: literature review*

This chapter provides the review of literature on key areas of concern related to this research study, such as: conceptualisation of ECAs, challenges faced by ECAs, importance of an induction, to name a few.

1.14.3 *Chapter three: Theoretical framings*

This chapter provides an explanation of the theoretical framework used, and how this theory relates to early career academics experiences in negotiating their belonging at a South African higher education.

1.14.4 *Chapter four: the research design and methodology*

This chapter explains the research design and methodology used by the researcher in this study, and the reasons that motivated the researcher to position the study within the interpretive paradigm using qualitative research. This chapter further provides an explanation of the usage of a desktop study. The chapter then discusses a case study as a data generation method used by the researcher to substantiate his research argument. This is done by explaining what a case study is and why it is relevant in this study. The researcher also discusses how data used in this study was sampled and analyzed. Ethical issues and limitations that were prevalent when conducting this research study are discussed.

1.14.5 *Chapter five: data presentation and findings*

This chapter presents the first chapter of two that focuses on the analysis and discussion of the findings emanating from the semi structured interviews. The results of the semi-structured interviews are categorized thematically and used in this chapter to present and support the research findings. The categorization of the data was to allow the data to speak for itself.

1.14.6 *Chapter six: theorising the findings*

This is the second chapter of two that attempts to provide the discussion and analysis of the findings. The theoretical discussion of the participant's life world, noema-noesis and bracketing of any preconceived knowledge that might influence the outcomes of this study was presented.

1.14.7 *Chapter seven: summary, major findings, recommendations and conclusion*

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings of the research project, recommendations emerging from the analysed data, and the study conclusion.

1.15 *Chapter summary*

This chapter provided the background to the study. The study's title, focus, research objectives and research questions, as well as the location of the study were outlined.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

According to Johnson and Christensen (2004), a literature review is a detailed explanation of the theoretical scholarly work that underpins a research study. This view is supported by Bruce (as cited in Arshed & Danson, 2015, p. 31) who says that a literature review provides the “background to and justification for the research” undertaken by the researcher. This indicates that the literature reviewed by the researcher is carefully selected to enable the researcher to unpack, summarize and analyze the scholarly work collected, concerning the phenomenon under scrutiny. Furthermore, scholars such as Gay (1992, p. 38) note that, the literature collected by a researcher for the review chapter of a thesis or dissertation would normally include, “periodicals, abstracts, reviews, books, and other research materials”.

Creswell (1994) and Gay (1992) highlight that understandings of what a literature review is are more concerned with determining what is available in published research in the field. What McMillan and Schumacher (2006) observe is in accordance with the aforementioned understanding, and further highlight that reviewing related literature has a tendency of enabling the reader to gain insight from the study. It is important to note that the literature review enables the researcher to have a deep understanding of the literature related to the proposed research topic, while illuminating the related literature in the field studied.

Johnson and Christensen (2004) maintain that literature review is important because it performs a number of functions, such as a critical discussion and summary of literature related to the topic of study, while demonstrating an understanding of the current state of knowledge about the proposed research. Seen in this light, a literature review is critical in a researcher’s study as it documents a number of academic requirements, and communicates the researcher’s thoughts in terms of a wide range of issues, particularly in theory and methodology, relating to the proposed research topic studied. A review of the literature relevant to early career academics’ experiences in South African higher education is offered.

This chapter also sought to provide a broad overview of literature around early career academics’ experiences in South African higher education institutions. Before a broad

overview of literature on early career academics in South African institutions of higher learning was made, I first provided a conceptual definition and explanation of the term ‘early career academics’ as put forth by different scholars both internationally and locally. This was followed by a broad overview of literature around early career academics’ experiences in higher education institutions in and around South Africa. This literature review also explored relevant topics, the synthesis of scholarly articles, theoretical gaps, and hypotheses of the scholarly articles related to this research topic, with the aim of developing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under exploration, both locally and internationally. This chapter concludes by mapping the gaps in the field where this study seeks to make a contribution.

2.2 Conceptualizing Early Career Academics.

The term *early career academic* has been variously used, defined and understood in many ways. Despite the many definitions of early career academics in the literature, there is still no consensus on a specific definition of an early career academic (Bazeley, 2009; Sutherland & Taylor, 2011). Lewin (2019) points out that current scholarly work indicates that, though attempts have been made to define what constitutes the early part of being an academic, there is still no universal definition. According to Garbett and Tynan’s (2010, p.175) widely-accepted understanding definition, an early career academic can be understood as one in “the first five years of completing your PhD”. This then indicates that early career academics are those individuals who have been recently accepted into the field of academia and are still in need of a proper induction into how the world of work in the profession works. Unfortunately, the meanings connected with becoming or being an academic are constantly shifting on account of diverse forces that act on universities (Pithouse-Morgan, Masinga, Naicker, Hlao & Pillay, 2016). As a result, “experiences of career development recounted by early career academics vary widely, ranging from enthusiasm to more cautious and neutral accounts, to those telling of complete isolation from colleagues” (Geber, 2004, p. 1).

A study by Hemmings, Hill and Sharp (2013) expand this understanding of early career academic to include staff members who are new to academic roles, and who are undertaking a doctorate. Hemmings (2012) and Antoniadou (2020) further concur that ECAs are academics within their first five years as members of staff in HEIs under a sessional, part-time, or full-time load. Price, Coffey and Nethery (2015) understand ECAs as reflecting the characteristics and identities of those who have limited experience in academia. From the foregoing, the most

common understanding of early academics is that of academics who are still concerned with their research trajectory and are still learning to adapt to the demands of academia. The aforementioned descriptions of early career academics create a picture of the calibre and stature of professionals who either have not yet obtained a doctoral qualification, or who are within their first five years of completing their PhD, and are learning to adapt (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012; Hemming, 2012).

2.3 Challenges faced by Early Career Academics

For most early career academics, the experience in the university space is one of fear and uncertainty, as the traditional outlook on teaching and learning is still used (Iglesias-Martínez, Lozano-Cabezas, & Martinez-Ruiz, 2014). This paints a gloomy picture of the lived experiences of some academics in institutions of higher learning, as early academics are often left to figure out how the system works on their own without any professional assistance given to them upon assumption of their academic roles. The evident lack of support prevalent to early career academics in some institutions of higher learning in and around South Africa, negatively contribute towards early career academics' experiences. The negative experiences result in high levels of anxiety about many aspects of their academic work at assumption of duty and in the future as they progress as academics (Geber, 2004).

Given the importance of the new academic staff to the profession and institutions of higher learning as a whole, an understanding of the experiences and support needed by early career academics is of paramount importance. Scholarly research by Geber (2004) highlights that early career academics in South African institutions of higher learning, enter a higher education system rooted along the lines of historical discrimination and apartheid. Taking into account the political context in South Africa, creating a higher education system that moves away from the traumatic past imposed by the apartheid system is crucial (Hoadley, 2015). Early career academics are central in the transformation process of institutions of higher learning, and therefore, transformation endeavours in these institutions should be designed with them in mind, as they possess new and modern ways of doing things. Geber (2004) notes that early career academics often receive scant attention and minimal assistance with professional development, which leads to a negative outlook towards their future in academia, resulting in a high number of early academics leaving the system.

Hemming (as cited in Mifsud, 2015, p. 5) and the Higher Education South Africa (2014), are in agreement with Geber's view, and further note that ECAs in some institutions "experience a feeling of being left to sink or swim with little support in their new academic environments". As a result, experiences of academics who are still new to the academic landscape often lead to a short-lived academic tenure, as an increased number of academics leave the system; more especially when "ECAs are uncertain about their own roles, identities, and careers" (Rienties & Hosein, 2020, p. 2). Furthermore, Miller (2014, p. 19) further confirm that senior faculty members in some institutions of higher learning "believe that the ECA period is about testing whether the new academic can 'survive' the expectations on their own". However, it is through such misconceptions that ECAs are often neglected and not provided with all the support they might need to transition smoothly from the role of being a student to that of being an academic or faculty member. The neglect leads to academic alienating, isolation and loneliness. Sutherland and Taylor (2011, p. 183) affirm that "ECAs around the world find the first few years of their academic appointment confusing, anxiety-inducing, and full of conflicting messages", and the pressure exerted upon them is, at times, overwhelming.

Hollywood, McCarthy, Spencely and Winstone (2020) note that the amount of workload strain exerted upon ECAs is disturbingly problematic. Bosanquet, Mailey, Matthews, and Lodge (2017) further note that many ECAs' experiences in their institutions derive from the pressure and uneven treatment subjected upon them, leaving them shattered, suffering, worn out, swamped and stressed. The ECAs in institutions of higher learning often face multi-faceted challenges in the academic environment. Mifsud (2015, p. 3) observes that ECAs "are expected to flourish at teaching, successfully engage in funded research, and provide service through committee and administrative appointments within the institution, with relatively little preparation for these responsibilities". It is therefore, clear from literature that ECAs experience a significant number of hurdles when they enter the higher education system, as they attempt to navigate their professional expectations as academics (Mifsud, 2015).

From the negative experiences of ECAs in higher education institutions, Teferra (2004) observes that institutions of higher learning in Africa are under immense pressure to recruit skilled professionals, as they are experience escalation in enrolments owing to the substantial changes in the demographic profiles of students entering these institutions. The experiences encountered by ECAs vary, and some even struggle for acknowledgement in the various university departments they work in.

The transition from being a postgraduate student to a university early career academic is fraught with challenging experiences, and there is a need to explore these experiences from the academics' perspectives, to assist them navigate the transition smoothly (McPherson, Punch & Graham, 2018). While ECAs have to deal with the complexities that come with transitioning into higher education, it is contested that they are invaluable future academic assets of HEIs because many experienced academics are at their exit stage (Warhurst, 2008).

To understand how ECAs are often treated by higher education institutions that employed them, scholars posit a mismatch between what is often expected of early career academics and the expectations of their host institutions (Adams 2002). For instance, Adams (2002, p. 5) says “while staff may view research as the core of their work, institutions have a much more rounded view of academic work, which also involves teaching and academic life in general”. These prevalent discrepancies negatively hinder the academics from quickly familiarising and integrating themselves within their host universities. What worsens the situation is the workload demands placed on them and the need to identify, understand, and follow a set of unwritten and written policies, which is often incongruent and confusing (Adams, 2002).

The above understandings imply that, in a changing world, a new generation of academics find it difficult to compete with senior academics who have long since established their credentials and are familiar with how the system works (Bazeley, 2003). Sutherland (2017) notes that, in academia, expectations centred around success often leave early career academics with conflicting messages about what they should concentrate on to achieve promotion and gain professional success.

Scholars such as Oatley and Johnson-Laird (as cited in Marembo & Chinyamurindi, 2018, p.1) affirm that, “every profession has its challenges that may cause psychological stress and upset the professionals' emotional balance”. Scholarly work reveals that the transition of ECAs into academia has a great impact on their development as new staff members in the field and the institution (Solem & Foote, as cited in Reddy, Lester & Teferra, 2016). Marembo and Chinyamurindi (2018) state that, not only can this negatively affect ECAs as they seek to develop their academic career in these institutions of higher learning, but also impact their personal growth. The pressures exerted upon ECAs when entering the academic field impact negatively on their emotional intelligence and subsequently, their overall performance in the work environment (Marembo & Chinyamurindi, 2018). Serrat (2017) defines emotional

intelligence as a state that enables an individual to accomplish the set goals by managing their behaviour and those around them. According to Marembo and Chinyamurindi (2018), emotional intelligence focuses on one's cognitive ability to be sensitive towards their emotions and others. The ECAs, not only have to contend with competitive work environments and unfair workloads, but also have to be cognisant of their behavior and that of those around them. Reddy, Lester and Teferra (2016) indicate that an unwelcoming transition of ECAs into academia impacts them negatively, which might result in their early termination of their tenure in the field.

2.4 Importance of an induction programme

Literature suggests that little attention has been accorded to early career academics in higher education institutions (Teferra, 2016; Monk & McKay, 2017). This view is supported by a number of scholars (Bosanquet, Mailey, Matthews & Lodge, 2017; Geber, 2004; Hollywood, McCarthy, Spencely & Winstone, 2020). Teferra (2016) says that most early academics are not trained to teach, and are often expected to catch up on the job. This often exposes ECAs to making mistakes and to stress inducing pressures, as they often have no clear directive of what is expected from them, yet are expected to produce the intended outputs and outcomes. Teferra (2016) goes further to say that, in some institutions, the student numbers is fast growing, while the basic skills of these early career academics are increasingly lacking. Despite that, it is still business as usual in some universities, as little or no induction of early career academics into the profession is witnessed.

It is imperative that when early career academics begin their university life, supportive mechanisms are put in place to help them mitigate against the daunting experiences of a new job (Kensington-Miller, 2017). The call for induction programmes centres around the understanding that many ECAs are not provided with the fundamental support on how the university operates and what is expected of them in their roles (Kensington-Miller, 2017). Research has shown that an academic induction programme “enables recruits to understand and perform their role within an HEI” (King, Roed & Wilson, 2018, p.3). This is because, a formalized induction programme organized, not only contributes towards staff retention and support to the new recruits, but also enable them to familiarize with the ethos, rules and regulations, training and development needs, and systems of the institution (Mullins as cited in King Roed & Wilson, 2018). Meizlish, Wright, Howard, Kaplan, Dominguez-Whitehead and Moosa (as cited in King Roed & Wilson, 2018, p. 3) note that, “reports of successful academic

staff induction are notably scarce.” This leaves ECAs exposed to harsh and unfamiliar realities making it difficult for them to understand the acceptable “norms on upon entering academia”. Furthermore, Kensington-Miller (2017, p. 2) says “the need to support new academics” has become increasingly important as “there are many new academics coming from overseas facing a new culture and the local way of life”, making the transition into academia challenging and needing support and reassurance.

In as much as some universities have shifted towards the adoption of policies and practices that seek to demonstrate an increasing realization of the importance of inducting early career academics into the profession (like the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal through its University Education Induction Programme), “the professional development of novice staff at other universities still requires considerable improvement” (Iglesias-Martínez, Lozano-Cabezas & Martinez-Ruiz, 2014, p. 170).

2.5 Why induction programmes in some HEIs need improvement.

Literature reveals that a properly organized induction programme assists both the early career academic and the university, as early career academics are able to immediately immerse themselves within the institution (Mabaso, 2012). Similarly, Grobler, Wamich, Carrelli, Elbert and Hartfield (as cited in Mabaso, 2012, p.21) observe that an induction programme, not only assists early career academics feel part of the institution, but also reduces problems and “create[s] a sense of security, confidence and belonging”. Improvement in induction programmes in these institutions of higher learning bridges the gap between early career academics’ unfamiliarity with the new institution and the employer’s expectations. Teferra (2016) says the modern university is fast growing in terms of the number of students within a single lecture room, and thus, early career academics basic skills and is called into question. Teferra’s (2016, p.1739) study revealed that induction programmes enhance “the calibre of teaching of ECAs” and improve their profession both locally and internationally.

Reddy, Shawa and Teferra (2016) highlight that in a changing and complex higher education teaching environment, it is imperative that the development of ECAs be supported to enable their development. Scholars highlight that institutions of higher learning are finding it difficult to attract and retain skilled academics, and that this can be further attributed to the lack of younger academics entering the system and the lack of academic staff induction to support new academics (Lesenyeh, Barkhuizen & Schutte, 2018; Mokgojwa, Barkhuizen, & Schutte,

2017; The South African Council on Higher Education, 2014; Kensington-Miller, 2017). Furthermore, Onah and Anikwe (2016) and Makondo, (2014) say HEIs now need to ensure that they address the challenges experienced by early career academics in their early career phase. Addressing some administrative challenges ECAs are faced with enables the institutions of HE to address the “failure of the academic workplace to meet individuals’ expectations and individual’s perception that their particular needs are not being acknowledged or met” (Lesenyeho, Barkhuizen & Schutte, 2018; King, Roed & Wilson, 2018, p. 5). However, despite the challenges faced by ECAs, they are still expected to perform like the rest (Marengo & Chinyamurindi, 2018).

It is not just the lack of younger academics entering the South African education system nor the “significant challenges to attract and retain quality early career academics” into the system, over the years, that plagues the HEIs. Evidence suggests that ECAs are not adequately compensated by HEIs (Lesenyeho, Barkhuizen & Schutte, 2018, p.1; Onah & Anikwe, 2016). A study conducted by Higher Education South Africa (2014) confirms that, ECAs employed in institutions of higher learning as junior lecturers and lecturers are often compensated moderately less than their counterparts in the public sector. A study made by Erasmus, Grobler, and Van Niekerk, (2015) supports the view that the younger generation are still paid moderately less than other academics in the higher education system and as a result are bound to leave the system for better rewards and benefits.

2.6 Why underpaying ECAs contributes towards their early departure from HEIs.

~~Although patterns have been previously studied and presented in a range of scholarly work, their analysis shed some light on the negative contributions of underpaying ECAs in institutions of higher learning.~~ According to Luczaj (2020, p.1), in Portland, ECAs, particularly those who emanate from foreign nationals, are often expected to contribute positively towards ‘Polish academia’, whereas “low wages and underfinanced universities often make their work very difficult”. Moreover, underpaying ECAs because of their limited level of expertise contributes negatively on the high turnover of young academic staff, and limited supply of highly skilled academic personnel (Robyn & Du Preez, 2013). In as much as senior academics in institutions of higher learning are important sources of support to new academics, ECAs also play a pivotal role towards imparting new and modern knowledge to existing staff members; such as ‘technical know-how’, as technology is becoming more complex. As a result, the onus is on

these academic institutions to offer better rewards to these new entrants “so they will have low levels of intent to leave” (Simons & Buitendach as cited in ChaaCha, 2017, p. 38).

The literature on early career academics has revealed that “socialization into academia is a complex, long-term process that begins with a role reversal: students, who were just recently being taught and introduced to research through their courses, become doctoral researchers who do their own research as well as teach undergraduates” (Hillbrink & Jucks, 2019, p. 290). However, scholars such as Pather and Remenyi (2019) and Sutherland (2017) highlight that, in order for ECAs to survive and succeed in the life of being an academic, they must be able to withstand the pressure exerted upon them as expectations around success in academia are often coupled with conflicting messages on what they should focus on to achieve promotion. Pather and Remenyi (2019) notes that obtaining a Doctoral degree does not automatically prepare an early career academic for what lies ahead in academia.

According to Kensington-Miller (2017, p.1), “the academic world of universities can be both exciting and formidable”. Therefore, properly inducting new academics affords them an opportunity to adjust to the new culture and realize tangible benefits in their academic journey. One cannot rule out the fact that the initial years of the academic profession are challenging as the academic landscape has evolved dramatically over the years (McKay & Monk, 2017). Hollywood, McCarthy, Spencely and Winstone (2020) and Sutherland (2017) note that the HEI system is rapidly changing as ECAs who enter the academic profession arena are faced with multiple demands and expectations, leaving them with conflicting messages. Because of that, we often find ECAs dampened, resulting in diminished productivity (Kensington-Miller, 2017).

2.7 What the University of KwaZulu Natal is doing to accommodate ECAs.

ChaaCha (2017, p. 38) highlights that “the future of academic institutions rests on preparing adequate talent to sustain these institutions as academic job roles are no longer limited to teaching, research and community involvement and therefore needs to be maintained”. For that reason, the University of KwaZulu Natal has developed a number of professional policies and programmes to speedily accommodate and integrate new academics into academia, while addressing the possible challenges that might ensue, such as research supervision. The institution offers a UEIP, coordinated by the Higher Education Training & Development and facilitated by the University Extending Learning of the UKZN (Teferra, 2016; Subbaye &

Dhunpath, 2016). This mandatory academic development programme is designed to develop and improve ECAs' knowledge and skills in teaching praxis through specialized modules (Subbaye & Dhunpath, 2016). Such progressive approaches to the development of ECAs assists them mitigate against the challenges caused by demands of institutions (Subbaye & Dhunpath, 2016).

A study conducted by Rawat and Meena (2014, p.56) and McCormick and Barnes (as cited in Kreber, 2010) on the experiences of early career academics, indicate that the pressure towards early career academics has significantly increased as they are often expected to perform tasks, which supersede teaching, such as supervising postgraduate students and other administrative duties. Moreover, “understanding the processes and policies for academic performance review; establishing meaningful and constructive mentoring relationships; creating a sustainable research agenda; and fostering the writing attitudes and strategies that promote turning research projects into publications” are some of the expectations. Irrespective of the number of roles expected to be performed by ECAs when starting their academic careers whilst simultaneously attaining set departmental performance targets in their respective institutions, some hidden expectations and overwhelming tasks that ECAs find themselves in an academic setting are not accommodative of their new entry into academia (McKay & Monk, 2017; Hollywood, McCarthy, Spencely & Winstone, 2019).

Maher and Anfres (2016) say research has shown that a significant number of academics enter the academic field through obtaining a doctoral degree. The doctoral degree qualifications have not been met with a commensurate increase in the number of academic posts available in the system, thus creating more challenges within the HEIs (Maher & Anfres 2016). Powell (2015) and Hollywood, McCarthy, Spencely and Winstone (2019, p. 1) also note that a high number of ECAs enter the HE system on a “fixed term-contract basis with limited opportunities for full time posts”. According to Olsen and Sorcinelli, Hardwick, Austin, Sorcinelli, and McDaniels (as cited in Hollywood, McCarthy, Spencely & Winstone, 2019), such entry into the HE system often comes with a series of negative impacts on ECAs, such an increased levels of stress, anxiety, limited academic support and mentoring, and high workloads. Higher education contributes to the present and future academics, and compromised entry into the HE system creates challenges that hamper ECAs' career progression and their teaching and research (Subbaye & Dhunpath, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative that ECAs are scaffolded and

provided with all the necessary assistance to help them keep up with the increasing demands HEIs.

Literature persistently shows that insufficient support and inadequate preparation of early career academics can often lead to numerous challenges, such as ineffective support for postgraduate students, “students dropping out or failing to complete their studies within the stipulated time”, leaving students to feel frustrated by the relationship they have with their supervisors (Naim & Dhanapal 2015; Cekiso, Tshotsho, Masha & Saziwa, 2019, p.9). Such occurrences are, not only happening in institutions of higher learning in South Africa, but also in international institutions of higher learning, owing to their inability to successfully integrate ECAs into the system and portray the academic field as an attractive professional career (Moosa, 2020). Moosa’s (2020) view on the challenges faced by ECAs is in accordance with Cekiso, Tshotsho, Masha and Saziwa’s (2019), understanding where it alluded to the fact that, if ECAs are overburdened by their own personal problems in and outside research, the attention given to their required roles will tend to vary, leading to a long term impact on their academic identity.

Moosa (2020) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (2015), further confirm that within South Africa field of HIEs, projections show that the few academics employed fall below the projected need. This points to the need to induct ECAs to mitigate against challenges such as teaching overload, isolation, and anxiety. At an early stage in their career, ECAs must not have competing professional demands but should be afforded an opportunity to grow into the new academic, while developing “an academic profile, in teaching, research and administration” (Moosa, 2020, p. 75). The challenges that ECAs are facing may lead to psychological stress. As they seek to grow and develop themselves in their respective institution of higher learning, ECAs may be faced with higher amounts of stress that negatively impact their productivity and performance as they “enter into academia at a time that the profession is experiencing dramatic changes that are complicating the requirements and standards of entry” (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, as cited in Marembo, & Chinyamurindi, 2018, p. 1).

2.8 Casualization and ECAs

Bryson (as cited in Brown, Goodman & Yasukawa, 2010) argues that currently, the casualization of labour in institutions of higher learning is no longer in the form of apprenticeships, but merely serves to regulate and control labour, without any possibility of career development. Kimber (2003) opines that casualization of jobs has moved away from being apprenticeships, but merely serve to commodify labour, without any possibility of career development.

According to O'Malley (2020), the casualization of academic staff, particularly those who are still new in the academic setting, often leads to deprivation of academic freedom and subjection to second-class treatment, where they are often unable to choose their own research paths and plan what to teach in their respective departments. Abbas and McLean (2001) affirm that in these institutions, early career academics are deskilled and oppressed, and this in turn compromises the image of institutions of higher learning as reputable public institutions. The casualization of academic staff, not only denies them academic freedom, but also subjects them to exploitation by full-time staff.

O'Malley (2020) says academics are deeply motivated people and are attracted into the academic field by wanting to make a difference through their scholarly publications and teaching. However, the exploitation experienced by early career academics at the hands of their employers and other academic staff within these institutions, slowly push them to the brink, leaving them feeling stressed, exploited and dehumanised (O'Malley, 2020). The academic landscape is extremely casualized, and this affects the lived experiences of ECAs. Scholarly work on ECAs reveals the plight ECAs undergo in modern universities, as they navigate and familiarize themselves with the academic way of work (Bosanquet, Mailey, Matthews & Lodge, 2016).

2.9 Conclusion

This literature review chapter explored the challenges and experiences of early career academics within institutions of higher learning. While higher education is a fast changing environment, this review showed that the growing body of scholarly work available on the experiences of ECAs across different local and international contexts is limited in terms of research focusing particularly on experiences faced by these academics when negotiating their

belonging at a South African university. Furthermore, while the academic setting may appear to be a rapidly changing sector across the world, the challenges often experienced by early career academics are multifaceted and call for more literature on the challenges these academics often go through. It is clear that the academic environment, as a competitive setting, stresses out these new academics still trying to balance both work and life responsibilities, and as they transition from student life to being a well-rounded researcher within the first few years of employment. The debates and dialogues on early career academics in higher education in and around South Africa show that little to no attention has been accorded to the experiences these academics undergo when negotiating their belonging at a South African university. However, experiences of ECAs upon entry into the academic environment are critical to the growth of institutions; and careful attention must be put to ensure that they are able to make positive contributions to their respective departments and institutions. Early career academics need to be empowered to address the issues they encounter when starting their academic careers. Therefore, a study of early career academics negotiating their belonging at a South African university contributes to the body of work on ECAs. Thus, further research needs to be conducted where numerous challenges related to early career academics' negotiation of their belonging in institutions of higher learning, and the impact these experiences have on the success of both the institutions and the new academics. Therefore, this chapter's premise is that a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under exploration needs to be established, while identifying gaps in the field where this study seeks to make a contribution. In the next chapter, I discuss the theory of phenomenology, chosen as a guide for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMINGS

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed, in detail, some of the scholarly work that emerged under early career academics in and around the South African higher education system. This chapter engages with the theory of phenomenology, chosen as a guide for this study. In academic discourse, the concept *theoretical framework* consists of three words, namely; *theory*, *theoretical* and *framework*. It is therefore, appropriate to begin by defining what theory, theoretical and framework are. This helps to develop a well-articulated theoretical framework chapter, and to highlight its importance when conducting research. The definitions are followed by an explanation of phenomenology; its background, how it relates to this study, and the role of the researcher throughout this project. The third part of the chapter explores phenomenology as a theory that foregrounds this research project, and how it relates to early career academics' experiences in higher education in detail. The applicability of this theory within the context of early career academics negotiating their belonging at a South African university is explored. This chapter concludes by providing a brief summary of the framework used as a guide, and the reasons that informed the researchers' selection of this theoretical framework. A brief indication of the subsequent chapter is provided, noting the research design and methodology employed in this research project.

3.2 Theory

According to Tavallaei and Abu Talib (2010, p. 573), a theory is “defined in a variety of ways, depending on the field of study, the ground of science and even the era it was recognised to be a vital device in the process of knowledge throughout history”. However, for the purpose of this study, a theory is understood as an explanatory proposition formulated to explain, predict and understand a set of ideas and principles on a particular phenomenon, and on why it exists (Hornby, 2010). The author further highlights that ‘theory’ is a well-established set of interconnected ideas developed to form a logical view of occurrences, while explaining why something happens. It shows the reader the knowledge the researcher used to understand the phenomenon (Neumann, as cited in Dare, 2019). It is important to note that scholars such as Nilsen (2015) and Imenda (2014) concur with the above understanding of theory and its importance when explaining phenomena of a research project. They state that a theory provides

a clear explanation of how and why specific events and/or predictions about the occurrence of certain events lead to specified relationships or vice versa.

Kitchel and Ball (2014) see a theory as a model for understanding, explain and predict the phenomenon a research project is based on by framing *what we look at, how we think, and why a particular phenomenon occurred*. Imenda (2014) concurs with Kitchel and Ball's view, and argues that a theory increases the researcher's ability to connect the research findings to the broader knowledge other researchers have contributed. Udo-Akang (2012, p.89) further note that "the importance of utilizing a theory in research cannot be underestimated, as research requires a sound theoretical basis and strong methodology" for a research study. The different authors agree on what a theory is and its importance (or why it is used) when conducting a research project. Braun, McCoy and Finkbeiner (2014, p.1-2) identify six significant benefits of theories as follows:

- increases the likelihood that intended outcomes will be achieved;
- provides the rationale for how the programme is strategically structured and delivered;
- offers the basis for assessment of the programme's degree of success in achieving intended outcomes;
- enables programme planners to combine their experience and insight with evidence-based explanations of behaviour change;
- contains key concepts and variables that define how the concepts will be measured for evaluation of a theory-driven program; and
- provides a rationale for what educational programme designers do or did, and what the result.

Imenda (2014, p. 187) sees theory as a 'blueprint' that provides a guiding principle on a particular project. It has three central characteristics; "it is a set of interrelated propositions, concepts and definitions that presents a systematic point of view, it specifies relationships between/among concepts and it explains predictions about the occurrence of events, based on the specified relationships". Nilsen (2015, p.2) says "a good theory provides a clear explanation of how and why specific relationships lead to specific events".

I concur with Braun et al. (2014) and Imenda (2014) that a theory helps the researcher to present data in a systematic structure to ensure that the intended research outcomes are achieved. Braun et al. (2014) affirms that this enables the researcher to gain an insight on key concepts and

variables that define the research project, and how they will be measured and evaluated. Theory was used to provide a sound theoretical basis until a study reaches its completion.

3.3 Framework

According to Svinicki (2010), the word “framework” refers to a set of ideas, observations, concepts, knowledge or interpretations that is used to serve as a basis for understanding and/or making judgements as the basis on the correlation of patterns. Hornby (2010, p. 594) states that a framework is usually used to make judgements or decisions. A framework serves as a basis for indicating the structure and/or an outline that consist of a range of descriptive categories i.e. concepts “and the relations between them that are presumed to account for a phenomenon”. However, Nilsen (2015) sees a framework as one that does not seek to just provide an explanation, but rather one that can be used to clearly understand a phenomenon by subjecting it to a set of categories. A framework is used to describe phenomenon the study seeks to explore.

3.4 Theoretical framework

This section considers the definitions of the term theoretical framework. Hornby (2010, p. 594) defines theoretical framework as a “set of beliefs, ideas, or rules used to make decisions and drawing of conclusion”. Caltendo and Kyle (as cited in Muhumuza, Sanders & Balkwill, 2013) say theoretical frameworks have a number of roles to play in the educational field, which result in an improved quality research. According to Phakisi (2008), a theoretical framework can be understood as an important research tool used to drive the manner in which a researcher conducts appropriate research as it provides the theoretical foundation. Tavallaei and Abu Talib as cited in Msimanga (2017) says a theoretical framework refers to the theory that a researcher consciously chooses to guide their research whilst providing valuable opportunity to see what could seem familiar through a new and distinct perspective. A theoretical framework in a research study seeks to locate the study in the broader theoretical context, whilst ensuring an understanding of how the present study relates to other studies from a theoretical point of view (Selela, 2015).

Eisenhart (as cited in Ahmad, Shah, Latada & Wahab, 2019) sees a theoretical framework as a structure used by a researcher to construct a coherent explanation of a phenomenon under scrutiny. Ahmad, Shah, Latada and Wahab (2019, p.2) further notes that a framework in a dissertation “offers a grounding base for supporting and structuring a study’s rationale as well

as an underlying thread permeating all dissertation components as they serve as an anchor for data analysis, discussion and conclusion of a thesis”. Nilsen (2015), Ahmad, Shah, Latada and Wahab, (2019), Svinicki (2010) and Hornby (2010) understand a theoretical framework to be a foundational guiding tool that can be used by a researcher to better understanding of a phenomenon. Without a theoretical framework, researchers are unable to construct a proper foundation for their research project, resulting in the researchers’ deviation “from the confines of the accepted theories to make his/her final contribution scholarly and academic” (Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018, p.438).

A theoretical framework presents a variety of benefits to the research work. Lysaght and Grant and Osanloo (as cited in Ahmad, Shah, Latada & Wahab, 2019) say a theoretical framework in a research study reflects the researcher’s personal beliefs, understanding, and how discovered knowledge relates with the researchers own work phenomenon. Scholars such as Miller (2007), Symth (2004) and Herek (1995) believe that, theoretical frameworks assist in bridging the gap between the research and the existing literature in the respective field of study. They further allude to the fact that, through theoretical framework, researchers are guided in the selection of appropriate data collection methods, and the research questions. Abd-El Khalick and Akerson (2007) posits that the usage of a theoretical framework in a study allows the researcher to make sound assumptions and analyze the results of research based on existing literature, since research is theory driven.

Theoretical framework in research seeks to locate the study being pursued in the broader theoretical context. The aim is to understand how the present study relates to other studies from a theoretical point of view. In other words, the theoretical framework enables the researcher to establish the extent to which the study can be linked to the existing body of knowledge. It enables us to identify the themes present in the current literature on the topic under exploration, and the gaps in our understanding of how we teach, and how students learn (Earley, 2014). Through a carefully constructed theoretical framework, the researcher is able to justify the their work, whether it is quantitative, qualitative or mixed method (Lederman & Lederman, 2015). Scholars look at a theoretical framework as one used to make the “research findings more meaningful, acceptable to the theoretical constructs in the research field and ensures generalizability” (Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018, p. 438). Grant and Osanloo (as cited in Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018) say the theoretical framework, as a ‘*blueprint*’ for a research project, is used by the researcher to build his/her research inquiry whilst reflecting the

hypothesis of a study. As a result, a theoretical framework cannot be ignored by the researcher when conducting research (Brondizio, Leemans, and Solecki, 2014). Imenda (2014) further posits that, without the theoretical framework, the researcher is unable to appropriately position the phenomenon under investigation within the body of work and scholarly discussions available. Without a theoretical framework, the structure and vision for a study can become unclear and unorganized (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

Scholars, such as Grant and Osanloo (2014), say a theoretical framework is the foundation from which a research project can be based, and from which knowledge for a research project can be constructed. Grant and Osanloo (2014) further state that a theoretical framework also serves as a basis from which the rationale for the research study, problem statement, the purpose and importance can be formulated. Troudi (2014, p. 2) allude to the fact that, in an academic discourse, “a theoretical framework reflects where you stand intellectually vis-à-vis your research questions and the way you are going to look at the data”. Casanave and Li (2015), Agherdien (2007) and Imenda (2014) say theoretical frameworks are formulated to frame a study in a position that can assist the researcher to understand and extend the existing knowledge on a particular phenomenon or research problem under study. A theoretical framework, not only extends the researchers knowledge of the phenomena, but also presents the researcher with concepts that are relevant to the topic of study (Heywood, 2004).

In a research study, a theoretical framework seeks to provide the foundational support and/or structure upon which researchers can do research work (Ocholla & Le Roux, 2011). These scholars further note that a theoretical framework, not only supports a researcher’s study, but also serves as lens to closely examine a particular field and investigate how the research problem can be attached to the data accrued from the investigation (Ocholla & Le Roux, 2011; Imenda, 2014). It is therefore, evident that a theoretical framework seeks to ensure that valuable and predominant standpoints are provided to the researcher to ensure that the research problem investigated is approached from a distinct and informed perspective.

The selection and application of an appropriate theoretical framework helps the researcher to ensure order and strengthen the structure of the study. In exploring the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university, it is important for me as the researcher to choose an appropriate theoretical framework. The theoretical framework supported by relevant scholarly literature for this study is phenomenology. The

chosen theoretical framework is appropriate for this study because the researcher aims to provide vivid descriptions and exploration of the lived experiences of early career academics when negotiating their belonging at a South African university.

3.5 Phenomenology as a theoretical framework

According to Qutoshi (2018) and Yüksel and Yıldırım (2015), there is no single definition of phenomenology as it is used in many ways. Qutoshi (2018) further notes that this can be attributed to the diverse styles of phenomenologists arguments presented since the 1900s. According to Husserl and Eagleton (as cited in Koopman, 2018, p. 27), “phenomenology originated when he saw Europe lying in ruins at the end of World War II” soon after witnessing and reflecting upon the European crisis and damage caused by natural sciences to nature and our human nature. Phenomenology, as a movement in the field of philosophical history, positions the nature of human existence at the centre of rigorous scrutiny (Koopman, 2018). That is the focal point of phenomenology. Koopman (2018, p. 3) says Husserl’s work alluded to the fact that “mathematics and the natural sciences were elevated to a much higher level than lived experience, a phenomenon which was firmly rejected by Husserl, underscored the repudiation of the absurdness of science.” This framed societal knowledge around mathematics and natural science as the authoritative positions, as opposed to the lived human experience. In Husserl’s view, making lived experience the essence of human lived experience necessitated the reconstitution of human existence (Koopman, 2018). As a result, the shift towards human consciousness gave birth to the phenomenological movement. Phenomenology was used to provide insight into the experiences of early career academics in this research project, where human behaviour was used as direct object of human consciousness (Koopman, 2018). Departing from the historic understanding of what a phenomenology is, we enter into the definitions of phenomenology.

Qutoshi (2018, p. 215) says phenomenology is a “philosophy and a method of inquiry used to understand the lived world of human beings at a conscious level”. Simply put, “phenomenology is both a philosophy and a research methodology” (Barrow, 2017, p. 24). As an intellectual engagement in interpretations in meaning making, this philosophy is used to give a broader meaning to the lived experiences of the phenomenon studied. Finlay (2012) and Qutoshi (2018) note that phenomenology can be used as a guide to a researcher’s understanding of a phenomenon at the level of subjective reality. Phenomenology, as a powerful research tool, is often used to explore and understand human beings at a deeper level in terms of both what was

experienced and how it was experienced (Tuffour, 2017). Importantly, this philosophical framework offers a flexible and key role towards understanding the participant's "particular phenomenon relating to his/her life" (Qutoshi, 2018, p. 215).

The central focus of phenomenology is closely looking at a phenomenon in order to explore the complexities of the participants' lived experiences from their perspective. This implies that, it is concerned with seeking vivid descriptions of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived (Sloan, Bowe & Brian, 2014). Qutoshi (2018) says in doing so, a researcher is able to explore the event at a deeper level of consciousness, whilst bringing transformation at an attentive and personal level. Therefore, the use phenomenology in this study to frame and understand the participants' experiences, is ideal. Through its lenses, the researcher questioned and critiqued the body of knowledge in the field of study, to arrive at a change of an emancipatory nature in South African higher education. The researcher sought to uncover the experiences early career academics often undergo in institutions of higher learning when negotiating their belonging at a South African university. To make people clearly understand this phenomenon, I provided an approach on how to understand the lived experiences of early career academics negotiating their belonging at a South African university. Phenomenology emphasized the truth as it is experienced by early career academics (Barrow, 2017).

3.5.1 The origin of Phenomenology

The need to understand the formulation of phenomenology helps shape the research study. As mentioned above, the study aimed at exploring the experiences of early career academics when negotiating their belonging at a South African university. ~~The development of a theory assists in finding out the meaning of phenomenology.~~ Phenomenology was used to guide this present study and explain the lived behaviours of participants from whom data for this study was solicited. Phenomenology emerges from the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Max Scheler (1874-1928), Edith Stein (1891-1942), Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), among others. El-Sherif, (2017) note that, whilst Edmund Hursel is regarded as the father of phenomenology owing to his prominence in his publication 'Logical Investigations', it is believed that his work influenced these other phenomenological scholars whose publications are used to ascertain and define the phenomenon under investigation. Unearthing and making explicit the lived experiences of participants was the central focus of these phenomenological scholars in the first half of the 20th century. As the study of "phenomena", the historical movement of

phenomenology can be traced back to the 20th century, a time preoccupied with the structures of consciousness (Woodruff, 2018).

The root meaning of phenomenology as the study of appearances instead of reality emerged from Plato's cave allegory. However, it was only until the 20th century that the discipline started to blossom and understood by contemporary philosophers of the time (Woodruff, 2018). Fochtmann; Wojnar and Swanson (as cited in Qutoshi 2018, p. 216) notes that Husserl's work during the first decade of the 20th century established "phenomenology as an approach to study lived experiences of human beings at the conscious level of understanding". As indicated earlier, phenomenology as we know it today, was introduced by Edmund Husserl in his *Logical Investigations* publication in the early 1900's (Woodruff, 2018). In that publication, Husserl attempted to study 'objective ideas', including propositions in contrast to 'subjective ideas' as it was the central focus of psychology at the time (Woodruff, 2018). From a philosophical standpoint, "phenomenology is a complex, comprehensive and intricate philosophy that thematizes consciousness and its functions" (Giorgi, Giorgi & Moreley, 2017, p. 177). This means that, Husserl wanted to use phenomenology as a tool to provide insight into the mental processes of participants, particularly on 'how they think' (Koopman, 2018). Koopman (2018) further notes that, what Husserl calls 'the eidetic residuums' in his 1970 scholarly writing, can be accessed by allowing participants to share their lived experiences with the researcher and other members of the data collection team.

The *father of phenomenology*, Husserl, is more centred on participants' consciousness than on universal abstracts (Koopman, 2018). His school of thought (philosophical perspective) saw phenomenology as a tool that can be used by the researcher to suspend judgement, to ensure objectivity during data collection process and analysis (Sepety & Spitsya, 2014). Sepety and Spitsya (2014) further note that, this method of 'suspension of judgement' during a research project is known as epoche, a word derived from an ancient Greek term, which is slightly different from other various schools of Hellenistic philosophy. As a mechanism of phenomenology, the suspension of judgment is one of the most important steps in the process of critical thinking as it allows the researcher to ensure subjectivity during data collection.

3.5.2 Types of Phenomenology

According to Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio (2019, p.91), “there are different kinds of phenomenology, each kind is rooted in different ways of conceiving the *what* and *how* of human experience”. In simple terms, this can translate to understanding of different schools of thought each phenomenological approach is rooted in (Neubauer et al., 2019). Research has shown that there are many phenomenological approaches such i.e. transcendental constitutive phenomenology, naturalistic constitutive phenomenology, existential phenomenology, generative historicist phenomenology, genetic phenomenology, hermeneutical phenomenology and realistic phenomenology (Woodruff, 2018; Neubauer et al., 2019). However, the most common approaches identified and reflected upon in this study are the hermeneutic (interpretive) and transcendental (descriptive) varieties of phenomenology. El-Sherif (2017) notes that, transcendental phenomenology in psychology was developed by Edmund Husserl and the hermeneutic phenomenology by Martin Heidegger.

Table 1: Comparing transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 91-92):

A comparison of transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology is provided, followed by a descriptive overview of each approach. The table below compares these two phenomenological approaches.

	Transcendental (descriptive) phenomenology	Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology
Philosophical origins	Husserl	Heidegger Gadamer
Ontological assumptions	Reality is internal to the knower; what appears in their consciousness	Lived experience is an interpretive process situated in an individual’s lifeworld
Epistemological assumptions	Observer must separate himself/herself from the world including his/her own physical being to reach the state of the transcendental I; bias-free; understanding	Observer is part of the world and not bias free; understands phenomenon by interpretive means

	phenomena by descriptive means	
Researcher role in data collection	Bracket researcher subjectivity during data collection and analysis	Reflecton essential themes of participant experience with the phenomenon while simultaneously reflection on own experience
Researcher role in data analysis/writing	Consider phenomena from different perspectives, identify units of meaning and cluster into themes to form textural description (the what of the phenomenon). Use imaginative variation to create structural (the how) description. Combine these descriptions to form the essence of the phenomenon	Iterative cycles of capturing and writing reflections towards a robust and nuanced analysis; consider how the data (or parts) contributed to evolving understanding of the phenomena (whole).
Methodological texts	Polkinghorne [28] Moustakas [18] Giorgi [27]	Van Manen [12]
Examples	Takavol [32]	Bynum [2]

The above table seeks to provide a brief a summary comparing the approaches used in phenomenology in order to accurately describe them and how each type of phenomenology is understood and was adopted from Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio, (2019) scholarly work, titled '*How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others*'. To better understand these two approaches to phenomenology, a detailed description is provided under each type of phenomenology below.

3.5.2.1 Transcendental (descriptive) phenomenology

According to Neubauer et al. (2019), Husserl provided the foundational understanding of what phenomenology is, which gave academic insight into the transcendental approach to phenomenology. Since phenomenology can be traced back to the Edmund Husserl's philosophical thoughts, an understanding of his academic history can provide insight to those who engage with this work into his transcendental approach to phenomenology (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Transcendental phenomenology, which is also known as descriptive phenomenology, is one of Husserl's contributions to philosophy and science school of thought, where the focus was to ensure that researchers are able "to suspend the natural attitude as well as the naïve understanding of what we call the human mind and to disclose the realm of transcendental subjectivity as a new field of inquiry" (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 93). In this philosophical approach, the researcher's goal is to achieve descriptive subjectivity, a state where the phenomenon under scrutiny is constantly assessed, and any researcher's biases and preconceptions about the phenomenon are neutralized, to ensure that they do not influence the object of study and/or its outcomes (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) note that transcendental phenomenology uses the technique of 'bracketing off' to get the lived experiences of participants around the phenomena. The usage of this technique allows the researcher to "stand apart, and not allow his/her subjectivity to inform the descriptions offered by the participants" (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 93). In the state of transcendental phenomenology, the general focus of the researcher is to gain access to the participants' lived experiences whilst ensuring that past presuppositions and past knowledge is put aside (Neubauer et al., 2019; Lavery, 2004). In other words, in this approach, the researcher does not bring any expectations, assumptions or definitions – but assumes a state of an individual born without any built-in mental content, and uses the participants' experiences to rigorously explore, interpret and understand the essence of a phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019; Smith et al, 2009). The transcendental phenomenology allows the researcher to access the experiences of the participants' phenomenon 'pre-reflectively' – without obscuring the categorization and preconceptions on conceptualization (Neubauer et al., 2019; Giorgi, 2012).

Furthermore, Neubauer et al., (2019) argue that transcendental stage in a research discourse can be achieved via a series of reductions, namely; *transcendental reduction*, *transcendental-*

phenomenological reduction and the *imaginative variation reduction*. According to Neubauer et al. (2019), the first reduction requires the researcher to transcend past knowledge and understanding about the phenomenon, in order to subjectively analyze and interpret the collected data. This phenomenological process is called ‘bracketing (Ashworth as cited in Neubauer et al., 2019). The aforementioned past knowledge and understandings that the researcher must be able to set aside through the ‘process of bracketing’ include a variety of sources such as “scientific theories, knowledge, or explanation; truth or falsity of claims made by participants; and personal views and experiences of the researcher” during the process of data generation, presentation and interpretation (Ashworth as cited in Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 93).

In the second reduction, referred to as the transcendental-phenomenological reduction, the researcher individually considers the participants’ experience in order to construct a new description of the phenomenon (Moustakas as cited in Neubauer et al., 2019). The imaginative variation reduction is the reduction through which the researcher uses his/her intuition and the process of free variation to distil the phenomenon’s multiple variations in order to arrive at the essences of the phenomenon (Gill as cited in Neubauer et al., 2019). Neubauer et al. (2019, p. 93) further maintain that, “these essences become the foundation for all knowledge about the phenomenon”. In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher is able to suspend his/her own preconceptions about the phenomenon in order to engage rigorously, and focus on the participant’s experiences whilst ensuring that they do not influence the processes of reductions (Neubauer et al., 2019; Smith et al, 2009). Thus, Neubauer et al. (2019) highlight that assumptions should not inform transcendental phenomenology when trying to identify the essences of the phenomenon.

3.5.2.2 Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenology, which is also known as interpretive phenomenology, is a phenomenological approach that originated from the publication of *Being and Time* by Martin Heidegger (Neubauer et al., 2019; Shahbazian, 2015). In Heidegger’s masterpiece, this method is introduced and explained as one that has its roots from Greek, Scholastic and Modern German schools of thought (Shahbazian, 2015). Heidegger began as a theologian, but later on moved to philosophy as an academic, where he sought to challenge some of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology (Neubauer et al., 2019).

While Heidegger's philosophical inquiry started off by aligning itself with Husserl's epistemological focus, Heidegger later on criticised Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and began an inquiry "in the nature of being and temporality (i.e. *an ontological focus*)" (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 93; Reiners, 2012). In contrast to Husserl's epistemological focus, hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on human experience and how it is lived (Neubauer et al., 2019). The author argues that "we cannot bracket all the presuppositions and we are obliged to use words and we are bound to language" (Shahbazian, 2015, p.3). This means that the central focus of hermeneutics is ensuring that a clear sense of participants' lived experiences through language is provided. To understand the phenomenological method, it is necessary to explain the three keywords; *Phenomenon*, *Logos* and *Hermeneutics* used by this scholar in his magnum opus – *Being and Time*, to provide a detailed examination of the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon (Matua & Van Der Wal et al., 2015; Shahbazian, 2015).

This section introduces the fundamental concepts and definitions to allow for in-depth understanding of the hermeneutic phenomenology. The fundamental definitions of the concepts; Phenomenon, Logos and Hermeneutics are discussed below:

Phenomenon

According the literature, phenomenon is derived from the Greek verb 'phainesthai', which simply translates 'to seem' or 'to appear' (Shahbazian, 2015; Matua, 2015). This highlight that the term phenomenon can be understood as an expression that shows itself from itself (Heidegger as cited in Shahbazian, 2015).

Logos

The expression 'logos' simply means speech. Shahbazian, (2015, p.4) accord that through time, the term logos "has been translated and therefore interpreted, as reason, judgment, concept, definition, ground, and relation". Shahbazian (2015) further confirm that, in speech, logos mean to make clear what is being talked about in conversation.

Hermeneutics

The term hermeneutics can be traced all the way back to ancient Greek philosophy (Shahbazian, 2015). Shahbazian (2015) notes that, as a theory of interpretation during the middle ages, hermeneutics materialized as an important branch of Biblical studies. However, with the emergence of German romanticism and idealism, this later developed to include the

study of philosophy (Shahbazian, 2015). Shahbazian (2015, p.6) posits that, “as far as Heidegger is concerned, hermeneutics is ontology; it is about the most fundamental conditions of man's being in the world” as opposed to understanding linguistic communication.

The aforementioned fundamental concepts of phenomenology seek to show that hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with unpacking and understanding “the deeper layers of human experience that lay obscured beneath surface awareness and how the individual’s lifeworld, or the world as he or she pre-reflectively experiences it, influences this experience” (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 94; Bynum & Varpio, 2018). Hermeneutic phenomenology in an academic discourse is concerned with the participants’ phenomena in order to unpack and interpret their daily-lived experience in their life worlds (Neubauer et al., 2019). Since the hermeneutic tradition focuses on descriptively interpreting the experiences of participants, scholars often argue that the Heidegger’s philosophical inquiry that influence this approach is rooted in theology (Neubauer et al., 2019). The foundational break from Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology meant that Heidegger had to depend on his theological background as the foundational approach to phenomenology (Neubauer et al., 2019). Therefore, hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to go beyond the description of the phenomena using the researchers’ intellectual standpoint and/or life world; but makes the researcher to be aware of other external influences (*i.e. background*) beyond the phenomena, in order to interpret it correctly (Neubauer et al., 2019).

3.6 Phenomenology theory and the current study

According to Nelson (2013, p.183), “research aims to solve a particular teaching-learning problem that has been identified”. The aim of this study was to explore early career academics' experiences in negotiating their belonging at a South African university. Discussions in this chapter reveal that phenomenology suited this study for several reasons. For instance, the literature review in chapter one showed some limitations in the field regarding the lived experiences of early career academics in South African higher education. Most literature reviewed revealed that there was lack of qualitative investigations into the participants’ lived experiences when negotiating their belonging at a South African university and why these participants experience this phenomenon in South African HE in the way that they do (Yousefi, Bazrafkan & Yamani, 2015).

Incorporating phenomenology in a research project presents an opportunity for the researcher to learn by immersing himself/herself in the experiences of participants. The usage of “phenomenological research can broaden our understanding of the complex phenomena involved in learning, behaviour, and communication that are germane to our field” (Neubauer et al., 2019, p.95). Perhaps, most critically, phenomenology in a research project can be used by the researcher to create a robust and deep engagement with the collected data, and this can be attained through reading, reflective writing, re-reading and re-writing (Neubauer et al., 2019).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the research project is rooted in phenomenological exploration of the lived experiences of early career academics in South African higher education. It attempts to determine the object of direct consciousness in the lived experiences of early career academics as participants of this study regarding their experiences by specifically focusing on the following core research questions:

- What are the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university?
- How do early career academics experience negotiating their belonging at a South African university?
- Why do early career academics experience negotiate their belonging at a South African university in the way that they do?

Since this research project sought to understand the lived experiences of early career academics, this research project draws on some of the founding fathers of phenomenology’s scholarly views and publications, such as the theory of lived experience by Edmund Husserl, ontological notion of being by Martin Heidegger, and the lived body theory by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The scholarly contributions and views allowed the researcher to explore the experiences of each early career academic participating in this research project, and their outlook towards negotiating their belonging at a South African university. Simply put, the use of phenomenology as a framework to guide this research project, provided insights into what early career academics thought about, felt and believed when negotiating their belonging at a South African university.

3.7 The role of the researcher

When conducting research using phenomenology as a theoretical framework, it is imperative to note that the researcher is expected to manoeuvre him/herself from an onlooker and/or outsider point of view in order to ascertain that he/she is able to gain access to the participants' pure lived experiences (Löfmark, Morberg, Öhlund, & Ilicki, 2009 & Creswell, 2013). By simply becoming a member of the group of participants on whom data is generated upon, the researcher can create an open relationship between himself/herself and the participants, which is likely to enable the team of participants to actively contribute to the research study as envisaged by the researcher (Dare, 2019). In a research study, where phenomenology is used as framework, the researcher is an instrument of data generation, and should therefore, mediate through human contact as opposed to the usage of data generation instruments, such as questionnaires (Denzin & Lincoln, as cited in Dare, 2019). This view is supported by Ponterotto (as cited in Dare, 2019, p. 31), who argues that, "a good qualitative researcher should adhere to probing questions, then listen, think and ask more probing questions in order to access a deeper level of conversation". It is at this point that Creswell (as cited in Dare, 2019, p. 34) indicates that, in as much it is difficult for the researcher to avoid being bias when collecting data, "the neutrality of a researcher gives more credibility to the study".

3.8 Conclusion

Chapter three discussed the theoretical framework which directly informed the undertaking of this research project, that is; to unpack and understand early career academics' experiences when negotiating their belonging at a South African university. The relevance and importance of the theoretical framework chosen for this study to address the study objectives was clearly stated.

The subsequent chapter will cover the methodological decisions taken in the study. An explanation of the research design and methodology employed in this research project will be provided. Moreover, my reasons for positioning this project within the interpretivist paradigm using qualitative research and the usage of case studies are presented. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the data generation method and its relevance to this project. Other relevant issues in research were discussed in detail: ethical issues and limitations in conducting the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters introduced the theoretical framework adopted in this study. The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university. In addition, the study sought to understand why early career academics experienced negotiating their belonging at a South African university the way they did. This chapter discusses the research design and methodology employed in this study. Moreover, this chapter provides reasons why certain research methods were chosen over others. This study used the qualitative approach within the interpretivist paradigm using case studies as an important methodology. This chapter provides the research method used to understand, at a deeper level, participants' experiences and how they experience the phenomena studied. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the data generation tools used to collect and analyze data, and their relevance in this project. Subsequently, the research problem, research questions, research approach, and the location of the study were discussed. To conclude, the sampling techniques, ethical considerations, trustworthiness and limitations of the study are discussed in detail. The research design and methodology employed in this research study are geared towards answering the study's research questions guiding this study, namely:

- What are the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university?
- How do early career academics experience negotiating their belonging at a South African university?
- Why do early career academics experience negotiating their belonging the way they do?

A research design is a detailed plan used by the researcher for a research study to select research sites, subjects and methods used to respond to the key research questions (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Durrheim (2004) defines it as a strategically formulated framework that serves a guide of action that the researcher needs to take in order to implement the research strategy that will lead to the research questions being answered. For Leedy (1997, p. 195), a research design is a “plan for a study, providing the overall framework for collecting data” that will eventually lead to the provision of credible results. The views are support by Terre

Blanche, Durrheim, Painter, and Kumar (as cited in Fynn, 2019, p.31), where they “suggest that a research design has two basic functions: the development of procedures and logistical arrangements required to undertake a study and ensuring the quality of these procedures to ensure validity and accuracy”. MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) further define a research design as a detailed plan used by the researcher to select research sites, subjects and methods used to respond to the key research question(s). From the above definitions of what research design is, it can be understood that research design follows a flexible plan that details how the researcher will collect and analyze data needed to answer the research question (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017).

4.2 The research problem and research site

This section acknowledges the limited research on the phenomenon under scrutiny. This problem is of current interest to the researcher, since most early career academics experiences in institutions of higher learning are neglected. Trower, Austin and Sorcinelli (2001) confirm that, ECAs still struggle to get acknowledgement in the various departments they work in and some often experience sabotage, loneliness, isolation, intense competition and rudeness, resulting in a stressful and unrewarding entry into academic life. Experiences of early career academics often range around high levels of anxiety when they first begin their academic work, as they often struggle to find the balance between their research workload, lecturing for the first time, and at times, completing their higher degrees (Sutherland & Taylor, 2011; Lewin, 2019). The researcher obtained data from eight early career academics from the University of KwaZulu Natal, School of Education in Pinetown. The participants were from different disciplines within this institution, disciplines such as Curriculum & Education Studies, Teacher Development Studies, Early Childhood Education, Life Orientation Education, Mathematics Education and English Education.

4.3 The Research Questions

The primary research questions which the researcher intended to answer by undertaking this research study were as follows:

- What are the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university?
- How do early career academics experience negotiate their belonging at a South African university?
- Why do early career academics experience negotiate their belonging in the way that they do?

4.4. Research paradigm: Interpretive paradigm

According to Salvador (2016), a paradigm is a universal view of the world that reflects the principles and values of a discipline, and that directs how to solve problems. Similarly, Bertram and Christiansen (2017, p.21), supports Salvador's definition of a paradigm and thus define it as "way of seeing the world and doing research". The authors go further to say, working within a research paradigm assists the researcher to reflect upon and determine choices such as; "what kind of questions are supposed to be asked, what can be observed and investigated, how to collect data and how to interpret the findings" (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017, p.22). The term paradigm originated from the Greek word *paradeigma*, which can be translated to mean pattern, and has four basic elements (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). However, in modern literature and educational research, this term can be used to "describe a researcher's worldview and/or school of thought" (Mackenzie & Knipe as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 26). Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) highlight that there are three components to a paradigm, namely; *epistemology*, *ontology* and *methodology*. These three basic components to a paradigm define the paradigm (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017).

A good understanding of these elements in research is crucial, as they comprise basic assumptions, beliefs, norms and values that each paradigm holds (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Table 2 below provides a summarised discussion of what each of these components mean, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jacson and Lowe, (as adopted in Žukauskas, Vveinhardt & Andriukaitienė, 2018).

Components of research paradigm	Description
Epistemology	General parameters and assumptions associated with an excellent way to explore the real world nature.
Ontology	General assumptions created to perceive the real nature of society (in order to understand the real nature of society).
Methodology	Combination of different techniques used by the scientists to explore different situations.

The interpretivist paradigm underpinned this research study. This paradigm focuses on interpretations, and uses the qualitative approach to explain the sense and scope of each situation (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Through this research paradigm, the researcher was able to understand early career academics' experience negotiating their belonging in a South African university. Bertram and Christiansen (2017) state that research framed in the interpretive paradigm can be used to interpret, understand and engage the situation from the viewpoint of the participants. Through the participants' lenses and their worldview, the researcher was able to unpack early career academics' experiences as active and autonomous agents who are able to create their own social reality (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Through this paradigm, the researcher was able to interpret early career academics behavior and experiences in institutions of higher learning, as this paradigm depends on participants' backgrounds and lived experiences (Viljoen, 2015).

4.5 Research design

Once research questions have been developed by the researcher, a plan on how data is collected ensues. A research design is a blueprint of how the researcher will answer the research questions (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Through a design, the researcher is able to plan how the study should be conducted from the start to the end (Ntshaba, 2012). Through this planned and systematic research design process, researchers are able to generate and analyze data. Data is collected through a variety of data collection tools available, and the design covers what the researcher will do once the data has been generated (Maxwell, 2013; Bertram & Christiansen, 2017).

In this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted for exploring the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university. Since this was a qualitative study, interviews (i.e. semi-structured) were used to collect data. The qualitative approach presented me with an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the early career academics experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university. The approach enabled me to collect and understand the experiences of the ECAs and gain an in depth insight into the phenomenon under investigation.

4.6 Research Methodology: Case study

Research methodology is a creative synergy that was gained from the blending of two distinct words, research and methodology. ~~It is important to understand the difference between research method and methodology as there is often a fluid interplay between these two concepts (Birks & Mills, 2015).~~ Research has shown that some scholars often “confuse research methods (e.g. data collection methods such as interviews, questionnaires, or focus groups) with research methodology (e.g. phenomenology, ethnography, critical theory, grounded theory, etc.)” (Smith & Small, 2017, p.202). In as much as “these two terms are usually used interchangeably in the literature; however there are conceptual differences between them” (Smith & Small, 2017, p.202). Khothari (2004) highlights that research method is described as a method used to find solutions to a problem or a quest for a sea of knowledge that can be used to enrich the researchers attempt to solve the phenomenon under scrutiny. Birks and Mills (2015, p.4) describe research methodology as “methodological framework that influences how the researcher works with participants” and their position in the study. Birks and Mills (as cited in Smith & Small, 2017, p.202) further confirm that, a research methodology describes, “the philosophical framings of the study and the research method used to gather and analyse data” while allowing significant interplay between the research methodology and the research process. Kumar (2019) explains that methodology, as a strategy used to find answers to a research problem, enables the researcher to make recommendations on how the problem should be understood and solved by other researcher in the field of study the study emanates from.

Vithal and Jansen (2012) say a research methodology is a comprehensive and informative depiction of procedures and methods the researcher would have used to construct the research methodology. Similarly, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) say research methodology refers to a structured and specifically designed process that allows researchers to produce and

evaluate data. Through a research methodology, researchers are able to investigate the phenomenon within its real-life context (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). A research methodology enables the researcher to systematically solve the problems that emanate from the research phenomena and as this the research study will be prepared in a logical manner and sums up how the researcher should go about doing what he/she sets out to do in the research study. (Kothari, 2004).

In this study, a case study was employed to determine the experiences of early career academics within a South African university. A case study is a systematic and in-depth analysis of a specific case in its context, in which a group of individuals, a school, a society or an organization assist the researcher to interpret and/or conclude on the phenomenon studied (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). A case study was used in this study. The case study assisted the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon currently under investigation. Through a research methodology such as a case study, the researcher is able to describe and identify systematically the phenomenon that constitutes a researchable problem in a given field of study, which leads to a systematic way of solving the research problem (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010; Kothari, 2004).

Creswell (2009) says using case studies in a qualitative research study is important because the phenomenon being analyzed occurs in a real-life situation. The case study enabled me to achieve the overarching objective of putting forward knowledge that can contribute to the creation of new insights in the current field of study. A case study helps the researcher to work in a limited context (Creswell, 2012). In the case of this study, the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university was the case.

Through the usage of a case study, the study aimed “to capture the reality of the participants’ lived experiences of and thoughts about a particular situation” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, as cited in Bertram & Christiansen, 2017, p.42. Bertram and Christiansen, (2017) say case studies can be either be *intrinsic* and/or *instrumental*. Literature has shown that there are several categories of case studies (Zainal, 2007) and each of these categories is illustrated using Baxter and Jack’s (2008, p.547-548) table below, which provides a compilation of randomly selected case studies in various scholarly research papers by Baxter and Jack (2008), and how various scholars have understood these case studies:

Table 3: Definitions and examples of different types of case studies

Case study type	Definition	Published Study example
Explanatory	This type of case study is used if you are seeking to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies. In evaluation language, the explanations would link program implementation with program effects (Yin, 2003).	Joia (2002) Analysing a webbased e-commerce learning community: A case study in Brazil. <i>Internet Research</i> , 12, 305-317.
Exploratory	This type of case study is used to explore situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003).	Lotzkar & Bottorff (2001). An observational study of the development of a nurse-patient relationship. <i>Clinical Nursing Research</i> , 10, 275-294.
Descriptive	This type of case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003).	Tolson, Fleming, & Schartau (2002). Coping with menstruation: Understanding the needs of women with Parkinson's disease. <i>Journal of Advanced Nursing</i> , 40, 513- 521.
Multiple-case studies	A multiple case study enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. The goal is to replicate findings across cases. Because comparisons will be drawn, it is imperative that the cases are chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory (Yin, 2003).	Campbell & Ahrens (1998). Innovative community services for rape victims: An application of multiple case study methodology. <i>American Journal of Community Psychology</i> , 26, 537-571.

Intrinsic	Stake (1995) uses the term ‘intrinsic’ and suggests that researchers who have a genuine interest in the case should use this approach when the intent is to better understand the case. It is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest. The purpose is NOT to come to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon. The purpose is NOT to build theory (although that is an option; Stake, 1995).	Hellström, Nolan, & Lundh (2005). “We do things together” A case study of “couplehood” in dementia. <i>Dementia</i> , 4(1), 7-22.
Instrumental	Is used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation. It provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else. The case is often looked at in depth; its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, because it helps the researcher pursue the external interest. The case may or may not be seen as	Luck, Jackson, & Usher (2007). STAMP: Components of observable behaviour that indicate potential for patient violence in emergency departments. <i>Journal of Advanced Nursing</i> , 59, 11-19.

	typical of other cases (Stake, 1995).	
Collective	Collective case studies are similar in nature and description to multiple case studies (Yin, 2003)	Scheib (2003). Role stress in the professional life of the school music teacher: A collective case study. <i>Journal of Research in Music Education</i> , 51,124-136.

This research used the *instrumental case study design*. The selection of the instrumental case study was guided by the purpose of this research; to explore early career academics' experiences in negotiating their belonging at a South African university, and to understand how early career academics experience negotiating their belonging at a South African university and why early career academics negotiated their belonging at a South African university in the way that they did. The researcher could understand the case of a small group of eight purposively sampled early career academics within a historically white university.

4.7 Data generation instruments: Semi-structured interviews

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), an interview is a structured conversation between the researcher and participants, where the researcher has particular information in mind that he/she wants to learn from the participant's perspective. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 265) state that "an interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life; it is part of life itself and its human rootedness is inescapable." Denzin and Lincoln (2008) highlight that, as a structured and focused conversation between the researcher and the participants, interviews tend to be one of the most powerful ways a researcher can use to understand the phenomenon through the respondent's lenses or perspective. To generate data in this study, semi-structured interviews were used to probe and glean unique insights into the pre-determined research questions. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) and Bertram and Christiansen (2017) say semi-structured interviews use pre-determined questions to allow the researcher an opportunity to probe the participants to provide as much detail as possible, interpret their responses and allow space for additional questioning. Jamshed (as cited in Pandor, 2019) says semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to pose pre-set open-ended questions to obtain in depth understanding into the university early career academics experiences. To ensure that participants answer the questions in detail, a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere was created.

No specific categories or other answers to choose from were provided. The interviews assisted the researcher to obtain information from the participant's viewpoint.

Semi-structured interviews were an appropriate choice for this study as they allowed participants to provide detailed responses of their lived experiences, which ensured that thick and rich data was generated (Mareer & Pietersen, 2010). The probing process during the interview sessions presented the researcher with an opportunity to obtain clarity on their responses for information analysis purposes. Early career academics were asked to share their lived experiences regarding negotiating their belonging at a South African university. All interviews were voice recorded after permission had been sought out and granted by the participants, to allow the researcher an opportunity to identify issues that might require additional inquiry from the participant's side at a later time (Pandor, 2019). Interviews were used to describe the central themes through the lived experiences of early career academics at the UKZN.

4.8 Sampling and Selection of participants

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (as cited in Fynn, 2019, p. 36), "the quality of a piece of research stands and falls not only on the appropriateness of the methodology and instrumentation but also on the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been used". Niewenhuis (2007) allude to the fact that, in a qualitative research study, the researcher tends to use either non-probability or purposive sampling to sample research participants. There are different types of probability sampling methods the researcher can use in his/her study. The main types are systematic sampling, purposive sampling, stratified sampling, multiphase sampling, convenience sampling, and cluster sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Taherdoost, 2016). For this research study, purposive sampling was used to generate a sample from the population.

The term 'sampling' can be defined and understood in many ways. According to Shipman (1997), sampling can be understood as a design methodology used by the researcher to carefully select a suitable group of participants to be used during the research process. According to Tongco (2007, p. 174), purposive sampling is "a technique which is a type of non-probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain with knowledgeable experts within". Purposive sampling technique used in this study by the researcher is justified because the researcher has a specific objective in mind; to analyse,

explore, interpret and present early career academics' experiences in negotiating their belonging at a South African university.

The researcher made use of purposive sampling, to select the eight early career academics as participants from the UKZN, School of Education in Pinetown. Participants were from different disciplines such as Science and Technology Education, Languages and Arts, Education and Education Studies. Participants in this research study were specifically chosen as they were deemed to have the potential to assist the researcher achieve his research objectives (Tongco, 2007). These participants were in their early stages of their academic teaching careers, employed by UKZN and some have completed their Ph.Ds . Moreover, this means that a thorough decision was made before in order to find participants who are well informed and experienced on the topic under scrutiny. In using purposive sampling, the researcher selected the people to include in the study, whilst avoiding subjectivity and bias during the process (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

The researcher also ensured that the sample was constructed around the issues of diversity, issues such as gender, age, language, race and discipline background. One criterion that I used was to select academics that are in their early stages in the academic field and have recently completed their professional doctorate to further their careers.

The ECAs were purposively sampled because of their new academic roles they had assumed at the university. They had to be within their first five years as members of HEIs working as seasonal, part-time and/or full time basis described by Hemming (2012) and Antoniadou (2020). Not only did these academics constitute the kind of ECAs that shaped and influenced this research study, their experiences as individuals whose had limited experience in academia necessitated exploring their lived experiences in institutions of higher learning, particularly when supervising research (Price, Coffey & Nethery, 2015).

The sampled ECAs' responses were expected to add value to the body of knowledge; thus, enabling other scholars to understand ECAs' experiences when supervising research.

Table 4: Profile of the research participants.

In the below table, I give a profile of the research participants who took part in the study:

Name (Pseudonym)	Race	Gender	Highest qualification	Discipline background
Chance	African	Female	M. Ed.	Curriculum & Education Studies
Phelelani	African	Male	PhD	Curriculum & Education Studies
Mukeleni	African	Male	M. Ed.	Teacher Development Studies
Lwandile	African	Male	M. Ed.	Early Childhood Education
Busiswa	African	Female	PhD	Curriculum & Education Studies
Mandisa	African	Female	M. Ed.	Life Orientation Education
Onjengawe	African	Male	M. Ed.	Mathematics Education
Vuyiswa	African	Female	M. Ed.	English Education

4.9 Data analysis

According to Cohen, Morrison and Manion (2017), and Bertram and Christiansen (2004), data analysis is a process that involves the systematic organization and analysis of data to ensure generated data adheres to the fitness for purpose of the study. Given (2008) further says data analysis assists the researcher to describe facts, detects patterns, develop explanations and test hypotheses within the generated data. The purpose of data analysis was to make sense of the literature available in the field of study.

There are different ways a researcher can employ to analyze data; qualitatively or quantitatively (McLeod, 2019; Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). In this study, qualitative data analysis was used. Data analysis is a vital process in any research study since it allows the researcher to “turn quantitative data into useful information to help with decision making” (McLeod, 2019, p. 6). In this study, the generated data was organized thematically. Landsheer and Boeije (2010) say thematic data analysis is a process of discovering and analyzing trends or patterns that appear in a set of textual or visual data, generated by the researcher for meaning making. In this study, thematic data analysis is applied to analyze the textual data that emerges from the participants’ account of negotiating their belonging at a South African university. This method of analyzing data will be aimed at “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns that emerged within the generated data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.6). Braun and Clarke (2006) further confirm that, a theme in a research study helps the researcher to capture, organize and describe the generated data, whilst relating it to the research questions, and interpreting some aspects of the research topic and patterns that emanate from the set of data. Another purpose for

organizing data thematically or using thematic analysis in this study was to organise and “interpret various aspects of the research topic” in detail (Boyatzis as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 6; Namey, Guest, Thairu & Johnson, 2008). According to Namey, Guest, Thairu and Johnson (2008, p. 138), and Alhojailan, (2012, p.40), “thematic analysis goes beyond simply counting phrases or words in a text and moves on to identifying implicit and explicit ideas within the data”. This process allows the researcher to develop key facets and build “relationships between the concepts and compare them with the replicated data”.

In this study, the researcher analysed data by firstly analyzing the recorded data that emanated from the semi-structured interviews. The recordings were played and replayed to ensure clarity. Secondly, the researcher conducted data analysis which “consist of three flows of activity: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification” (Miles & Huberman as cited in Bertram & Christiansen, 2017, p. 116). In this instance, the generated data was organized and coded according to themes emanating from the collected data, whilst ensuring they reflect a critical analysis of the key research questions. Organizing data thematically assisted the researcher to ensure that the core research questions were answered. During this process, participants’ lived experiences such as perceptions, perspectives, and understandings were analyzed and used to create an understanding of what it is like to be early career academic, and to supervise students conducting research in higher education. The study used phenomenology as a powerful research strategy to explore the phenomenon from the viewpoint of those who had experienced it, whilst ensuring that the interpretive phenomenological approach was employed to analyze data generated to understand how early career academics experienced this phenomenon. (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019).

4.10 Trustworthiness of the study

~~According to Ntshaba (2012, p. 81), validity can be understood as “the complement to reliability and refers to the extent to which our measure reflects what we are expected to measure”. This simply translate to an understanding that, irrespective of the research tools and techniques employed by the researcher to collect and analyze data, the research results must be reliable, valid and trustworthy.~~ The researcher in this study used a variety of research methods, approaches and techniques to ensure that the study produces reliable, valid and trustworthy research results. Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Johnson, & Rasulova, 2017) and Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 330) say there is a set of quality criteria used in quantitative and qualitative research studies to “guide the field activities and to impose checks to be certain that the proposed procedures are in fact being followed”. The suggested list of criteria and techniques

include; credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. These are discussed in detail below. This is done to ensure that the study's guiding principles around trustworthiness are based on the criteria as initially proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

4.10.1 Trustworthiness

According to Nowell (2017, p. 3), "trustworthiness refers to the level at which the study can be trusted". According to Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utrianen and Kyngas (2014), trustworthiness can be explained as the connection made by the researcher during the data generation process, and how data reflects what is captured in the study. In other words, trustworthiness is the level at which the study can be trusted. ~~According to Guba and Lincoln (2003), the reason behind using this criterion in a qualitative study supports the researchers' quest of accurately recording the data and ensuring the extent to which study can be trusted and relied on.~~

4.10.2 Conformability

In a qualitative research study, conformability can be understood as a concept that seeks to explain how the generated data can be "confirmed by someone other than the researcher" (Toma, 2006, p. 417). Data generated in this study needed to depict the participants' responses to the research questions asked, and not how the researcher personally interpreted their answers (Polit & Beek, 2012). Polit and Beek (2012) say one of the trustworthiness concerns in a qualitative research study is to exclude the researcher's prejudice and bias, ensuring that he/she is neutral throughout the data interpretation process (Polit & Beck, 2012). This means that, the researcher must not fabricate findings nor impose his or her own bias and prejudice onto the findings (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

As a result, to address issues of conformability in this study, the researcher transcribed the findings from the semi-structured interviews and gave them to the participants to check and verify whether their responses in the findings section were a true reflection of what they said. This assisted the researcher to ascertain whether the recorded findings had not been influenced by his biases as a subjective party in this research study. To further ascertain that conformability is maintained, the researcher also checked with his supervisor for any subjectivity when data was interpreted. Since this study is rooted in a phenomenological school of thought, the researcher also used 'bracketing' to enhance conformability. Bracketing, as indicated earlier, means putting aside your own preconceptions about a

phenomenon to allow for conceptions from the data to emerge (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The researcher frees himself from the usual and preconceived way of perceiving data and the essences and/or details of everyday life (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

4.10.3 Credibility

Credibility refers to the “confidence we have on the data” (Amankwaa, 2016, p. 121). Cope (2014), where he substantiates that credibility can be taken to mean the truthfulness of data. Credibility is “the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings, and whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants’ original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants original views” (Lincoln & Guba as cited in Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 121). To ensure and increase credibility in this research study, the researcher used triangulation and prolonged engagement with the generated data to ensure that it resembled the respondent’s viewpoints.

4.10.4 Dependability

According to Cuthbert and Moules (2014), dependability is the researchers’ explicit display of the steps taken to generate data whilst ensuring that it remains unchanged from what it was before its transcription. Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 121) further confirm that, “dependability involves participants’ evaluation of the findings, interpretation and recommendations of the study such that all are supported by the data as received from participants of the study”. Dependability is one of the trustworthiness criterion applicable to all qualitative designs, to make sure that all steps used to generate data are clearly stated and there is consistency within the data (Given, 2008). In a research study, there are several techniques used by the researcher to achieve dependability. In this study, the researcher provided a detailed coverage of methods employed to collect data, and the type of analysis used to allow those who engaged with their body of work an opportunity to understand the research practice followed when the study was conducted (Shenton as cited on Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016). The researcher has to show clearly what approaches were used to achieve consistency and reliability of the research findings (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016). In a qualitative study, dependability is one of the most suitable quality criteria to assess rigour as opposed to reliability, as it normally requires tightly controlled research settings normally used in quantitative research studies (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, Sorensen, 2010).

4.10.5 Transferability

Transferability is used to assess rigour involves the ability of a research study results to be transferred to a different setting and/or context, involving different groups of participants as research participants in academia (Moon et al., 2016, Toma, 2006). The researcher makes use of thick descriptions in his/her study to ascertain that the phenomenon researched is transferable (Li, 2004). According Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017), “the researcher cannot know the sites that may wish to transfer the findings; however, the researcher is responsible for providing thick descriptions, so that those who seek to transfer the findings to their own site can judge transferability”. Tobin and Begley (2004) say thick descriptions give those who engage with the research study the ability to read, critique and review the suitability of the research outcomes for another study. In this study, transferability will not happen because ECAs’ experiences in one context are not the same as in another context.

4.11 Positionality

According to Gary and Holmes (2020), positionality in a research study can be understood as the position researchers adopt when they conduct a research study. This world view is connected to, but not only limited to the researchers’ background, in terms of where the researcher is coming from, their beliefs, value systems, religion, political affiliation sexuality, social status etcetera (Gary & Holmes, 2020). Gary and Holmes (2020) standpoint on positionality can be understood as the worldview the researcher chooses to take to immerse him/herself when conducting the research project.

In this study, positionality was not a tricky process as some of the ECAs that I was interviewing used to be my former university lectures, high school teacher, classmates and acquaintances. Therefore, it was easy for me to have access to the research site and the research participants because of the extensive knowledge of and familiarity of the research site. Furthermore, this allowed me to navigate the implications for the interview, the type of questions I could ask; as oppose to engaging with ECAs that I had limited to no background knowledge of. This understanding seeks to points out that, before this research study’s findings were presented, I acknowledged my standpoint as the researcher who is also an aspiring young academic who had pre-existing relationships with some of the ECAs who participated in this research study. Although these relationships influenced my standpoint on positionality to some degree, they,

on the contrary proved to be an important tool that helped me during the data generation process.

4.12 Ethical considerations

According to Neuman (2014, p. 145), ethical issues are “concerns, dilemmas and conflicts that arise over a proper way to conduct a research and define what is not legitimate to do or what moral research procedure involves”. Mamosa (2010, p. 78) notes that “ethical consideration plays a vital role in all research studies and must be attended to by researchers. Educational research involves people as participants in the research, therefore ethical and legal considerations are of great concern”. In other words, all participants interviewed during the data generation process must be voluntarily participated in the study and had no one was coerced to take part in the study.¹ Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, (2014) indicate that when conducting research, researchers are expected to carry out their studies in an ethical and responsible manner as this is of crucial importance. Biggs and Coleman (2007) highlight that, irrespective of the research approach a researcher applies in his/her study, ethics exemplify and provides a communal framework to which the researcher needs to adhere. Simply put, ethics offers basic principles and rules the researcher needs to observe in all the procedures he/she carries out, as “it is important that all research studies follow certain ethical principles” and subject themselves to these principles (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017, p. 66; Langkos, 2014 and Kumar, 2014). Kumar (2005) and Bertram and Christiansen, (2017) say ethical consideration when research involves human participants and animals tends to be an important consideration that the researcher needs to pay careful attention to. Hence, the researchers, co-researchers and sponsoring organizations must ensure that the research is ethical and can be used by other scholars in the same or other fields of study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Strydom, 2011; Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2011). For the purpose of this study, the following ethical aspects were taken into consideration in the process of conducting this study:

4.12.1 Gaining access

¹ Please see annexure B for a copy of the consent letters

With regard to the present study, the researcher followed the ethical requirements set out by the UKZN, when dealing with human beings, in this case the university staff. Firstly, the researcher applied for and sought permission from the University registrar to access the research site, the university. The researcher then requested written permission to conduct the research from the University ethics committee and consent was given.

4.12.2 Recruiting participants and consent

After being granted permission by the UKZN registrar, I then went on to personally engage the sampled participants and explained to them what the study was about and how they could partake in the research process. Having obtained the academics' permission, consent forms between them and I, were issued out for them to complete. The consent forms were particularly important during this process as they showed that the participants acknowledged that they had been fully informed about the purpose of the study, the risks involved in the research, and had agreed to participate (Cohen, et al. 2011). Most importantly, the consent forms also solidify and promotes autonomy and trust between the researcher and the participants (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017).

4.12.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

The researcher shared with the participants the research schedules i.e. dates, times and video conferencing for the semi-structured interviews. One of the pivotal research principles the researcher has to always adhere to is to ensure participants' anonymity during the data generation and analysis process. According to Feleming and Zegwaard (2018), "participant anonymity means the participants identity are known to the researcher (e.g. when using anonymous surveys, the participants' identity is truly unknown to the researchers). Participant confidentiality means the participants identity are known to the researcher but the data was de-identified and the data is kept confidential (e.g. interviews, where the participants identities are known to the researcher, therefore only confidentiality not anonymity can be offered" (p. 211). Durrheim and Wassenaar (as cited in Bertram & Christiansen, 2017, p.66) say "it is important that all research studies follow certain ethical principles, and these principles are autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence". In order to protect the participants' real identity and ensure anonymity, the researcher used pseudonyms when analysing the semi-structured interviews.

~~Furthermore, participants were given a form to read and sign to consent and confirm their availability and agreement to be interviewed in this research study.~~ Bertram and Christiansen (2017, p. 66) say “consent means that the participants agree to take part in the study”. The researcher had to make sure that all participants interviewed in this research study were informed in writing and verbally, where possible, about their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, and that they were allowed to withdraw from the study when they wanted to. In addition to respecting the participants’ autonomy in this research study, the researcher informed the participants’ about non-maleficence and beneficence, and how the data collected during the semi-structured interviews would be used solely for the study, and not for other purposes. The aforementioned efforts were all geared at promoting participants’ voluntary participation.

Since the participants in this study are university academics working under tight schedules, flexibility about the video conferencing times for the interviews and other additional interactions that both the researcher and the participants might need were allowed. To ascertain that all critical research questions were attended, the researcher personally conducted all the interviews. Once the data had been recorded, it was then transcribed, summarized and analyzed by the researcher. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) say once data has been transcribed, analyzed and recorded, participants have ownership of the data captured, the results as well as control over the release of data. As a result, during this process, the participants were given an opportunity to check whether the information emanating from the interviews was accurately recorded and understood. Participants were allowed respond to questions in their mother tongue and ask clarity seeking questions where they did not understand the question properly (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

4.12.4 Data protection

According to the Data Protection Act of 1998, data protection is an ethical issue that gives individuals rights and privacy regarding the use of information about them. Data protection helps researchers to protect personal data stored on computers or in an organized paper filing system. To ensure that this data generated was safe, I was guided by the UKZNs ethics office in terms of sharing the information. The results from this research study would be available in the university library in terms of the copyrights rules. My academic supervisor would be

responsible for protecting this data in a storage system of the computer and a hard copy in his office locked cupboard with restricted use.

4.13 Limitations of the study and challenges

According to Marshal and Rossman (2006, p.42), “there is no proposed research project that does not have limitation and none is perfectly done”. Firstly, this study was only carried out in one of the five UKZN campuses in KwaZulu Natal; therefore, the data generated cannot be transferred or generalized to another study in other campuses. However, focusing on one case study was important as it enabled the researcher to understand the experiences of early career academics. In order to minimize this limitation, validity of the data collected through interviews was assured by the data generation method being solely used in answering the research questions and removing researcher bias in analyzing and interpreting the participants’ responses. The researcher ensured that the reliability/accuracy of the findings is not diluted when analyzing the data collected. Moreover, the expertise of the research supervisor that I have been assigned to will be used to minimise the identified limitation.

Secondly, in this study, participants were selected from academics. However, the research participants were early career academics who had busy schedules, hence, time constraints as they were not always available to be interviewed. To avoid unexpected time delays and minimize this anticipated limitation, I schedule a suitable time that accommodated them. I did not try to pressurise the participants, to ensure that they are as relaxed so as to gain authentic responses.

Another limitation to this study was the fact that the participating academics were from one university and a lot of valuable information that could have been obtained from other early career academics in other UKZN campuses and institutions of higher learning was lost. However, the data collected by the researcher solely reflected the views of the academics who participated in this project, and the researcher used all the responses emanating from the data collected through interviews to reflect these academics’ views, whilst avoiding being biased.

As the academic landscape changed daily owing to the coronavirus pandemic, commonly known as COVID-19, researchers were forced to make decisions on research consistent with stricter principles of research to take into consideration. COVID-19 altered the manner in which researchers collected data (Radala, Jendro & Padala, 2020). All face to face interviews

were outlawed by the institution where the researcher sought to conduct his study and the researcher adopted creative and modern strategies to mitigate the aforementioned challenges. Furthermore, the adoption of these strategies were geared towards ensuring that WHO and the NCCC guidelines were adhered to, to protect both the researcher and the participants from all the risks associated with this virus.

As a researcher conducting research in these trying times, I mitigated against this by adhering to all the regulations, by minimizing in person contact with participants, and where an in person interview was necessary, by using personal protective gear and hand sanitizers. Furthermore, participants who were unable to tune in for the scheduled interview session were accommodated, by rescheduling the interview session to a time convenient for them, to ensure that data is generated in an ethical and legal manner (Radala, Jendro & Padala, 2020). In this regard, the researcher worked remotely, conducting all the interviews electronically using electronic materials such as Skype, Zoom, telephone and WhatsApp (Adom, Osei, & Adu-Agyem, 2020).

The study could further have been limited by many academics refusing to take part in the study or volunteering to participate but withholding crucial information on questions the researcher provides. To help mitigate this limitation, I negotiated with all selected participants to build healthier relations so that they all positively contribute to the needs and success of this study. Good negotiation means leaving each participant satisfied and willing to engage. My approach was to show the mutual benefits of this study to the selected participants.

4.14 Conclusion

This chapter described the research design and methodology used in this study. It covered the methods, techniques and approaches used in collecting data. The choice of the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative approach to the study was outlined and explained. The chapter also outlined the population, data collection instruments, as well as strategies used to ensure the ethical standards, reliability, validity of the study; and the rationale behind these choices. In addition, the sampling procedure used to select the participants, the higher education institution, as well as the data analysis, and how informed consent was obtained were clarified. The chapter further explained the limitations encountered during data generation and how the researcher mitigated against these limitations. In the following chapter, I discuss the results and findings of the study in greater detail.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the research design and methodology used to guide this research study. Moreover, the principles that foreground qualitative research design were explained and evidence was shown why a design of such nature was suitable for this research study. In this chapter, data that was generated through semi-structured interviews is presented, interpreted and analyzed. The semi-structured interviews were recorded using an audio recording device, transcribed, categorized using various codes and placed into themes. This chapter places the findings within this research study's main objectives. The following were the primary research questions the study aimed to address:

- What are the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university?
- How do early career academics experience negotiating their belonging at a South African university?

Why do early career academics experience negotiating their belonging in the way they do?

Eight early career academics from the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood campus participated. Pseudonyms were used to preserve their anonymity and comply with ethical requirements. These were Chance, Phelelani, Mukeleni, Lwandile, Mandisa, Onjengawe, Busiswa and Vuyiswa. The ECAs' direct quotes in response to the semi-structured interviews are included in the detailed data presentation presented below, in order to support the research findings.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first substructure presents the findings and discussions emanating from both the transcripts and literature. These findings are presented as themes, and verbatim quotations are used to interpret the data, since "data does not speak for themselves" (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017, p. 175). As indicated in the above paragraph, the findings were discussed and analyzed using thematic analysis, and major themes were discovered. The themes that ensued from the transcripts were then supported by scholarly work reviewed to create credibility to the study.

In this chapter, a theoretical analysis of the generated findings that will be in relation to the critical research questions of the study will be presented. The chapter shows how the study responded to the research questions through a summarised discussion of the key findings.

The section below focuses on the findings and discussions of the themes that emerged from the data generated.

5.2 Findings and discussion

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017) and Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017), research becomes increasingly recognized, valued and credible, when it is presented using verbatim quotations from the participants' interview responses. The generated data was analyzed and presented in themes, and below are the themes that emerged from data analysis.

5.3.1 Theme one: Academic development

The majority of the early career academics who participated in this research study said when they transitioned into the academic arena, there was some form of support and assistance that was extended to them. However, most of them indicated that the kind of support that they received was not formalized as they had to resort to other means of *getting the grips* on how things are done to ensure that they catch up on the job (Teferra, 2016; Monk & McKay, 2017). The little attention afforded to ECAs resulted in one of them expressing that: *"So I would say I did have, but uhm, not much training at that particular time. The training part of it only came in – I think when I was doing my Masters, then we had these workshops that were training us. But at the Honours level, we just had mentors whom we would observe and see how they do things"*. (Chance).

To further emphasize this point of early career academics being supported and prepared where research was conducted, Mandisa said that:

"...I was very much supported when I first started out, because I remember when I started teaching, I had no prior experience of taking it all. The only teaching I knew was the teaching that I had obviously gotten from my lecturers. So I've never been on the other side. I've always been a student, so when I first started out as a lecturer in my early career days, I had plenty of support, enormous support from my colleagues. Um, a lot of the teaching load I didn't have to do. So I actually was, um, asked or requested that I shadow a certain colleague of mine for about six months."

So it'd be, imagine that's an entire semester and I'd have a very small teaching load every now and then, but I just observe at the manner in which she teaches, the manner in which she conducted classes, but also the administration of the classes. So I was very much supported, uh, when I first started out” (Mandisa).

When it comes to academic support and development, Vuyiswa said:

“I feel that the university, there are so many things that you are not taught. And this worries me because you find other academics who come straight from the university. For example, you have just done your Masters, you have done your PhD, and then you are recruited to the university and you have no prior experience of being a lecturer. So, I find that the induction process does not teach a lot, or does not, does not help you as an academic to understand really what university is all about, your expectations. And I think there... there's so much more that can be done in terms of the induction process...I feel that for someone who is out of university and go straight to, eh, start working, there may be challenges that experienced, because you are not fully inducted to a what is expected...” (Vuyiswa).

Proper and more formalized academic development was still needed in assisting ECAs to quickly immerse themselves within the institution of higher learning from which they are employed (Mabaso, 2012), as this does not only assist the early career academic but it also assists the university in the long run. Nevertheless, some participants expressed what can be regarded as bad experiences when it comes to support by university by saying, *“Basically, no one supported me, because when you remember when your transit from high school teaching level to a university teaching, is something different – Yes, you might have an experience of teaching at a school level, but when it comes to the university, it's something different. So no, no one taught me how to teach at the university, except that I used my experience that I had by then to teach at the university. So, I learned by doing things so through my, my, my, my, my actions, that's where, I learned that's where I got my experience of how to teach at the university, but no one taught me how to do it. And through the colleagues that are close to you, one had to ask how to do this, how to do that. And then they also advise you on how to teach whenever you want to get help from them...” (Phelelani).* In as much as Phelelani expressed that not support was offered to her when he first transitioned into academia, we cannot rule out that some ECAs received some form of academic development when they transitioned into the profession, even though some of it was not formalized. Evidence from the data also suggests

that participants were trained and developed by their peers “...So, even when I got there, so some of them re uh, recognize my face and then they like congratulations. Congratulations, you have joined the university and what not... and then it will start to sort of give me some sort of form of advice, from the languages and from education. So, it was not only people from my discipline, and people from my cluster, even other other lecturers that, uh, I would come across, in, in, on campus, they they'll sort of recognize me and say, oh, wow. So this is how we deal with things around here, you know, those kinds of informal. Uh, so I was learning a lot. I was picking up a lot because, for me, it was sort of a drastic change because I had to, like drop off from school. Uh, and then it go straight to live within a space of a month, you know, so, yeah. But there was a lot of support from on, uh, all academics that, um, I interact with in the School of Education.” (Onjengawe)

The nature of academic development often received by these participants when they start their academic journey needs to be formalized in order to ensure that their basic skills are strengthened and that, as new academics, they are able to perform their roles as per expectation (King, Roed & Wilson, 2018). In as much as the literature reviewed in this research project revealed that the state of affairs in some institutions of higher learning was daunting (Teferra, 2016), ECAs were not adequately prepared when they transitioned into HE teaching. Responses emanating from these semi-structured interviews revealed some form of professional development ECAs were normally offered to assist them strike a balance between what they know and the demands of their new role.

The theme clearly indicates the kind of support ECAs receive when they transitioned to their new academic role. This then further shows that ECAs, not only received support from the institution, but also from immediate colleagues whom they shared departmental duties with. Participants' responses demonstrate that ECAs were guided sufficiently to help the transition. Meaningful learning and transition occurred according to the following response from Onjengawe: “I joined the university while it was face to face, while everything was alright, Because, uh, the support was there in terms of mentorship; and the support I was getting from them... was priceless, I would say, it was great, it was great. Yeah, because come COVID, bese ngiqala (I was beginning to start to), adjusting to, you know, getting used to this environment of higher education” (Onjengawe).

The following is a discussion of the second theme that came up during the data generation.

5.3.2 Theme two: Publications and funding

The second theme focuses on publications and funding also came into light when the participants' responses were transcribed and analyzed in relation to their experiences when negotiating their belonging at a South African university. What emerged from the findings was that, early career academics were still expected to execute tasks that outweighed some of the core functions of institutions of higher learning, which is teaching and learning (Rawat & Meena, 2014 & McCormick & Barnes (as cited in Kreber, 2010). Mandisa shared that: *"I think research is important... it allows us to keep abreast of the latest development in our respective fields, but I think the manner in which it is approached at universities, especially on... academics, it can create a lot of pressure that obviously can have, um, impact on the teaching and learning aspect, which is also equally important in the university. But, um, I think it is the manner in which it is rewarded, that it takes away, um, from, from teaching and then, because almost everyone is focused on publications... research conferences, highlighting research project that they've decided to sort of leave the teaching and learning aspect at the bottom because, and then you can clearly see, um, how teaching and learning is affected when all the time people want to focus on research. Who's supposed to do the teaching and learning? Who's supposed to find new creative ways to teach students? I think it is important, but if it comes at the expense of teaching and learning, it needs to be read by needed"* (Mandisa).

The majority of the ECAs interviewed expressed that the university often expected them to write and publish a certain number of academic papers to source funding for the institution from the government and from other bodies. The ECAs interviewed indicated that, this often left them with little time to focus on educating students as the *'publication and funding agenda'* is something that the university has made mandatory to all academics (Rawat & Meena, 2014). Mukeleni similarly added that: *"Yeah, I think, uh, we do publish, which is a good thing, right? However, I think we mostly chase the numbers, the number of publications that one has; and forget to bring in the change. Maybe, to say your paper was talking about a student's behavior and residences, after you publicise your findings and everything, you forget about that; you go to another thing; what change did you bring? People might read the article and change the behavior, but what change did you bring? How sure are you that they have read and that they are changing? And then we just publicize and don't do a follow up. We go to another thing after publicizing and we put one other thing... So, yes, we do publish, but it's like we publish and then we forget about whatever findings...."* (Mukeleni).

Research shows that, the institution where data is collected often fosters writing attitudes and strategies into ECAs when they start their academic careers, as they seek to meet the set departmental performance targets, resulting in their research projects being converted into publications, promotions and more remuneration (Rawat & Meena, 2014; McKay & Monk, 2017; Hollywood, McCarthy, Spencely & Winstone, 2019). Vuyiswa supported the views of the other participants by saying: *“...linking publications to performance, eh, to performance management, maybe it affects other aspects of being an academic, like I said, in the teaching and stuff. So, I, I think it has been linked to, or even for the number of publications that they have. Maybe, it makes people to focus more on publishing because obviously, you gain something from publishing in terms of, maybe money or in terms of advancing in your career and getting promotions and stuff. So, obviously we all want the best, like I said, maybe the salary, although it may sustain you, but you only aspire to get more. So in terms of this, it then makes people to be power hungry sometimes, or maybe to get a better salary. So I do end up focusing on one aspect, which is just publishing, purchasing papers and stuff, and forgetting maybe an aspect that's like, maybe teaching. So, you find that others would not focus much on, on that aspect of academia, but focuses mainly on publishing. And because it helps them to be prone to get promotions and you get better salary and stuff. So this is what we all want. So maybe, you end up, eh, not focusing on other areas that I think are also important...”* (Vuyiswa).

In addition, the generated data revealed that, most participants appeared overwhelmed by these hidden expectations, as the academic setting they had transitioned to appears to be more research and publication focused, whilst teaching and learning was being compromised. This inability of the university to be accommodative of ECAs entering the academic landscape for the first time was expressed by Onjengawe above. Most importantly, recent scholarly work and debates in higher education show that great strides need to be taken to address the current status in these institutions, where there is a decline in the quality of education fuelled by research focused institutions of higher learning. Scholarly work reveals that, research “has been valued and given priority over teaching for a very long time in academia” (Chen, 2015, p. 15). This implies that ECAs are expected to devote a certain amount of their time to publication and research in conjunction with the ~~as opposed to the~~ actual teaching and learning in order to get recognized and get promoted (Chen, 2015). Fox (as cited by Chen, 2015) notes that, in as much as there are many reasons why institutions of higher learning often push academics towards

prioritizing research over teaching, like promotion and evaluation system used in higher education, funding challenges from outside sources, monetary rewards and world-wide recognition; ECAs cannot be rushed into adapting to such higher education expectations to avoid short-changing their growth and development in academia. However, an initiative geared towards assisting ECAs to navigate in the academic arena without the pressure of publishing their scholarly work being exerted upon them must be developed and prioritised.

The following is a discussion of the third theme that came up during the data generation, focusing on academic responsibility and community engagement.

5.3.3 Theme three: Academic responsibility and community engagement

Literature suggests that in order for ECAs to be successful and be regarded as ‘good academic citizens’, certain key elements of what makes a good academic must be demonstrated. This, not only contributes to the ECAs professional development, but to the universities’ economic and social future bringing behavioural and environmental change (Macfarlane as cited in Sutherland & Petersen, 2009 & Bidandi, Ambe, Mukong, 2021). Whilst universities are engaged with the core business of teaching and learning; contributing towards the society through community engagement, research (through the publication of scholarly papers) and social responsibility, which is often encouraged through “collaborative relationships, leading to productive partnerships that yield mutually beneficial outcomes” amongst academics (Bidandi, Ambe & Mukong, 2021, p. 1-2). The deliberate shift from the university’s solely focus on teaching and learning has been witnessed as more and more HEIs are now focusing on promoting community engagement to inculcate and embed the culture of being socially responsible. Community engagement is intended to contribute to improve the well-being of individuals in the immediate communities HEIs are surrounded by (Bidandi, Ambe & Mukong, 2021).

When interviewed about their envisaged contribution to their immediate communities and community outreach projects in the near future, participants echoed what Macfarlane (as cited in Sutherland & Petersen, 2009) termed ‘*good academic citizenship*’. Below are some of the responses from the interviews: “... *I’ve been doing community outreach projects, for years now. And, it’s a good space for us to be in, because you, you work with different people from different backgrounds; you work children from different backgrounds. I had one community ... outreach, I was with my students’ to one of the old age homes. So we went there to assist the old people*

in Claremont and them seeing people from the university coming to visit there, it's a huge thing for them. It's very important. And it makes the name of the university to some heights. We, we, we had done community engagement where we were dealing with, um, rape survivors. So, you know, you learn so many things from those people is that you never knew because of where we stay, you know, the environment that we are in. So, I think community engagement is very, very important... ” (Mukeleni).

Busiswa said: “...Um, so I've always loved engaging in community work since in my undergrad days, right. And so, um, till this day I'm engaged in various or rather a couple of community projects. And, um, my passion is within youth development. So, right now, I am part of two projects. Uh, one that is an outreach that helps learners or rather we go out there... So, we are currently working on a project where we go and teach some skills, upgrading the skills on learners, we go to the learners and introduce the university to the learners, so that's the NPO that I am part of, that I have partnered with, with the university on their project. So it is really nice, and I am enjoying the programmes that they are having. And I am also enjoying the impact it has on the learners... ” (Busiswa).

Another form of community engagement, which the participant regarded as community service was echoed by the participant when he remarked and explained that: “...I think for me, um, what I'm, what I'm involved in is more of community service. Maybe I needed to say that, um, because people are confused engagement and service. So uhm, I am involved in a community service, so I volunteer my services to the school of education; I train staff on online teaching, I don't get remunerated for that. It is just community service. But within the university community – and I, um, I also train students on using Endnote, um, of course, even that one, I don't get paid – it's community service within the university community. I am using my skills to better the lives of others or to equip others with those skills. It is actually transferring the skills to others. That's how I view it, but without being remunerated.” (Lwandile). Phelelani similarly indicated that: “There's no formal projects that I was in included, but as part and parcel of the, you the UKZN committee, I do sit in the research proposal, uhm, reviewing student's proposals. And then, I also sit in different UKZN committees, like currently, I am the curriculum, uhm, I am the educational and curriculum discipline coordinator. And I also play a part in sports – I'm also a coach as well; a player in one of the school teams in the Edgewood UKZN, School of Education...” (Phelelani).

Chance gave a different approach she is using to give back to the community when asked about community engagement she was part of since being employed at the university. She said: *"...No I haven't, I am not even part of any NGO or any organization. I just do my bit, like I go back to Umlazi. I don't have an NPO, I don't, uhm, I am not part of any – like I just do things on the side – I go back to Umlazi and then, you find that there are graduates or non-graduates, matriculants, jah, that is the correct word. So you find matriculants who are sitting at home, and they are just wasting their lives; and that's where you come in and you start to motivate them and then you start helping them with i-CAO form – you, trying to bring back, you know – their minds, their mind-set into the world, you know, trying to help them to find a future again, because some of them are, they become lost..."* (Chance).

From the above interview responses, three out of eight participants indicated that they were part of some community engagement since being employed at the university. Most of them indicated that there was a project they wanted to create at the university, and when further probed on what these projects would look like, Mandisa shared that: *"I do have, um, an idea of what I'd like to see, uh, this at this university, especially coming from a sport science background. What I have figured out is that we are challenged very largely, uh, by, you know, health issues such as obesity, physical inactivity. So, it's something that I'd like to highlight because it fits also with my, um, PhD project. So, to get a program where, uh, could engage with, um, teachers in schools to sort of improve fiscal activity of, um, of adolescents of school learners, because going to schools, I've learned that, uh, people that teach physical education, are actually not really qualified in sports science or they don't, they have really limited knowledge of sports science. I think that has limited them in terms of promoting physical activity because they too don't really know what is happening. It's a project I would like to start, to go to schools and train, um, uh, physical education teachers in terms of the programs, the measurements techniques that they can use in their classes, uh, so that they promote physical activity because at the moment I think physical education is perceived as a subject that is nice to have, if it can be afforded..."* (Mandisa).

Phelelani said *"Yeah, that project would be to discover the early researchers, from undergrad. There are students who have got the potential at an early age of doing research, but because our modules do not cater them to research, therefore, there'll be a need - there might be a need for that project to identify those students from first year, second year or third year, so that they can start doing research at an early stage. Come at an honors level or masters level, those*

students will be writing articles and publishing articles in different journals. That would be my, my project.” (Phelelani). Vuyiswa also communicated a closely related response and revealed that: “...I believe that what we can do in terms of improving literacy project. That is how I would do it, it would be to improve the literacy skills of learners, especially those from disadvantaged or rural areas. And you find that they don't even have libraries. So, any projects that would try and improve their literacy skills of ... learners in disadvantaged communities.” (Vuyiswa).

Onjengawe said the project he would like to create at university would revolve around empowering and giving extra support to high school learners in Mathematics subject: “...*And the other projects as well, which I'm also thinking to become, working on becoming part of, with regards to community engagement within my discipline, so these are projects which were established by some of my, um, colleagues and I am also taking part in that. So, it is very important, especially with regards to mathematics, since mathematics ikulesimo ekusona (is in the state that it is in) in our country. So, I believe that giving back to the community with regards to assisting students in everything like numeracy and all those things is very important and being part of that, for me is something that is important I would say, yeah.*” (Onjengawe).

The above responses show that the participants understood that apart from being knowledge transmitters (teaching and learning) and co-constructors of new knowledge in the institution of higher learning they were employed in (research), attention still needed to be paid to the role of giving back to the society, particularly community services (Council of Higher Education as cited in Kgosinyane, 2019). What was interesting in all the participants' responses is how almost all their future projects and the ones they were currently engaged in were all geared towards shaping and improving the lives of students, while at the same time creating a pool of educated future scholars. The contributions these participants made to various communities created a sense of hope and love for education, particularly to those to whom these kind of projects were aimed at. This is evident from the reference made by Onjengawe when he was further probed about a project he would want to create at university, and what that project would look like. He said, “... *you find that, these kind of projects, they sort of, uh, uh, bring out a lot from students who may be shy or who may be couldn't perform in that particular way, under normal school teaching and learning environment. But because of these type of projects, which go out there to school, you get learners, you know, starting to shine, we start to see learners, you know, performing differently because of the type of projects that are being offered*

by the university, like the university image, coming together into going back to the schools, in assisting the schools. Like it sort of motivates learners, like even I myself, when I was still at school, um, like uma ngabe kuthiwa kuzoba khona (when there would be) some projects that is being offered by Mangosuthu, or being offered by DUT, so for me, like and my peers, at that time, it was something big, because it was something that we are always looking forward to going to and participate in. But under normal school circumstances, uh, not it is fine, because this is something we are used to. But the minute, you say there is these projects, and then learners, they sort of, you, their interest is triggered and they would want to take part in that. So, working in a project where, it seeks to assist learners perform better...” (Onjengawe).

According to O’Malley (2020), academics can be understood as deeply motivated individuals, which explains their attraction to the academic arena. He further alludes to the fact that, their sense of being can be seen in how they conduct themselves during the teaching and learning as well as through their scholarly publications. This explains why almost all the participants interviewed during the data collection process were either involved in a community development project developed by the university or were seeking to start one they developed themselves.

The following is a discussion of the fourth theme that came up during the data generation.

5.3.4 Theme four: Prioritising student-centred teaching and learning

Student centred teaching and learning refers to an instructional approach in which students choose and influence the content, activities and pace of learning (Jony, 2016). Jony (2016, p. 172) further state that, student centred teaching and learning “means inverting the traditional teacher centered understanding of the learning process and putting students at the center of the learning process.” According to Wallder and Brown (2019, p. 664), “student centred learning has, for many years, held significant interest amongst educators across all sectors of education.” This student led approach places students at the heart of the teaching and learning environment, while the instructor, in this case the lecturer, controls and guides students towards effective teaching and learning. This paradigm shift allows lecturers to build rapport with students, while allowing students to be co-creators in the teaching and learning process, as opposed to traditional teaching, which suppressed their opportunity to “learn independently and from one another” (Jony, 2016, p. 172). As the “responsibility for learning naturally shifts to the student in a learner centered setting”, the onus still remains with the lecturer to ensure that they choose

and organize the content and facilitate the teaching process, to ensure that effective learning takes place (Brown-Wright, 2011, p.94).

This fourth theme emanated from the responses of participants in relation to the teaching and learning approach/philosophy that they would normally follow when preparing and conducting lessons during the teaching and learning process. The following responses from the participants showed how they viewed their students in the lecturer rooms, and their usage of student centred teaching and learning approaches in order to construct knowledge. Chance said *“But I am more, I gravitate towards a constructivist part of teaching, because when I enter my classroom, I do not see empty vessels, I just see people who are there to teach me something. So, I am there to teach them, they are also there to teach me. So I don’t come in the class and then start teaching – I don’t do that. I just throw in the concepts, I ask them for their understanding – for example; What is curriculum? And you will be surprised that they actually know it, even though we haven’t taught it to them at that level, but they have an idea of what it is. So by you knowing, how far, or what is it that they know, it means that now you just have to elaborate and add more. So, you’re not starting from stretch, and what is very important to me is the experiences and the prior knowledge that learners bring, or students bring with them into the classroom setting – that is important, because we are coming, we are all coming from different backgrounds, and my experiences are different from theirs, and my prior knowledge is also different from theirs. So, that is important for me, and that is what I want for them to bring into class and that is where the teaching and learning begins for me – bring in what you know and we relate it to what needs to be covered in class. So that’s why I am saying, I have the different teaching and learning theories and I try to apply whichever one uhm, should be applied in that particular case or in that particular lesson or classroom setting. But I am more of a constructivist teacher”* (Chance).

University students often come with different views, life worlds and experiences into the lecture sessions, which influence their designing and structuring of lessons to allows students to experience academic success (Pajares as cited in McKean, 2014). Furthermore, the adoption of a student led teaching and learning philosophy, not only fosters academic achievement, but also develops a sense of responsibility and improved attitude towards one’s learning, as students have more control of their learning and the construction of knowledge (Lattimer, 2015 & Konold, Cornell, Jia & Malone, 2018).

Onjengawe said *“Um, the approach that I use, um, for me, I am more of a, um, a constructivist, uh, uh, kind of person. Um, when I engage my student or engage with my students, I try to, to, uh, also allow them to come in with their experiences, because mostly for me, when I started to, to, to be a lecturer, I was, uh, appointed and told that the student experiences will bring us to the degrees that they have already done, and some of them into to the industry, private sector, and then they decided to come back and do their PGCE. So, for me, I, when I was planning my teaching, or the kind of approach that I, that I take to teaching, I always try by all means to, uh, uh, to include the experiences of my students all the time. And that has gone to, not even with the post-graduate only, even at the undergraduates, ama-first years (first years), because I also started to teach ama-first years (first years), I like to take their experiences into account... in as much as I plan my lessons, the way I do, but I also try to take into account the experiences I can take from those experiences and, and sort of put together, but, they are learning and what they need to demonstrate after like the learning outcomes. So, yeah, that's the approach I take into account to teach, especially here at the university.”* (Onjengawe).

Allowing students to be at the centre of the teaching and learning process has allowed Chance and Onjengawe to draw from the students' experiences, providing their students with an opportunity to learn from one another and independently during the process (Jony, 2016). Moreover, they used what students know by allowing them to *“...bring in what you know and we relate it to what needs to be covered in class”* (Chance) and *“when I engage my student or engage with my students, I try to, to, uh, also allow them to come in with their experiences...”* (Onjengawe) These strategies have proven advantageous and helpful towards the promotion of a sustainable learning environment as students are continuously presented with an opportunity to learn from each other as co-creators and active participants during the learning process (Jony, 2016).

Mukeleni and Mandisa aligned with the views of the other participants by saying: *“For me, it's always about communication. Like I can spend hours and hours in the first slide. For me, it's about engagement. I am not going to stand in front of the learners and then start preaching to them. For me, it's about provoking them, having those debates, engaging into topics. You know, slides, yes - they can read the slides for themselves. So, if you'll rush to finish up this lesson, and the students don't understand what you guys are discussing. For me, that doesn't work. I prefer us talking about the topic in depth. So, we have the engagements, we have the debates, we have the disagreements in class, but, still having control over or over the class. So my*

approach, I think is that, um, a learner centred approach.... No, no. I prefer the learners learning from each other and I, learning from them” (Mukeleni).

Mandisa also shared a similar view. She said *“my approach to teaching is this, um, I feel that as an academic or as a lecturer, your job is to create an environment that is conducive to learning. Right? And also my job also is to not think of students as completely clueless, that they know nothing. I have to understand that there's certain knowledge that they bring. And what I need to do is to build upon those knowledge's that they bring into my classes. So, they have to actively participate, not just in the classes, but also in the creation of their own learning. So, I need to understand how do students learn because I can't use my way of learning and then impose it on my students because we come from different generations, who've come from different social, uh, social, cultural backgrounds. So, my approach is this, um, get the students to participate in creating their own teaching and learning environment. And then my job is to create, to make sure that that environment that is conducive to my learners, taking into consideration that learning styles is created offering the resources, but students, are active participants in my, in my teaching and learning...” (Mandisa)*

It is evident from Onjengawe, Mukeleni and Mandisa's responses that shifting more power towards the students during lessons has allowed their students to be autonomous and more actively engaged in lecture sessions (Bailey & Colley, 2015). The use of constructive learning pedagogy, where both the lecturer and the student are responsible for knowledge construction, gives voice to the students and allows them to create their own learning, to ensure that the lecturer does not do all the talking. The participant's responses in this study showed that they understood the importance of a student led teaching and learning environment, whose usage often leads to engaged students as explained by Bailey and Colley (2015). The participants in explained that allowing students to take charge and lead during the teaching and learning offered their students an opportunity to create knowledge in class and participate in class debates.

Busiswa also responded: *“But obviously majority of my lessons or lectures, I draw from the constructivism theory or philosophy, because it's more learner centred. And so, I make sure that in my lecture I interact with the students, you know, our students come with rich information, rich in experiences, and those experiences are worth sharing. I find it not quite this, but I, I mean, it's good when you're teaching and you give a chance for the learners, and*

they contribute to the lesson. So in that way, comes the constructivism, I do that, but other times, because I'm also teaching large classes, I'm able to draw from behaviourism, where I am just there, next to the podium and I'm delivering whatever it is that I have to deliver and that much interaction, um, with the students..." (Buiswa).

When Vuyiswa was asked about the teaching and learning approach she normally used when she is teaching. She explained that *"You need to show consideration because they come to class with so many other things that may affect their teaching and learning. So, you are not just, they deliver the content, but you also have to, to be aware of, of, of, of, of their wellbeing, if I may put it that way, and their psychological wellbeing. So, I think the way that I approach my teaching and learning approach is more of feed my valley at the same time as being a educate and educate, because I, I'm not just a lecturer. I believe that I'm also an educator. Um, I'm also a facilitator at the same time, where I believe that in class, there, there, there, there is a teaching and learning process has to be dialogic, which means I must learn from my students and my students must also learn from me. So my classes, I usually very interactive because I facilitate to hear what they have to say, and we engage on them on the content. I also believe that we have to be very progressive."* (Vuyiswa).

In the above quotation, a very crucial point was made. Vuyiswa often shifted responsibility towards her students during lessons, understood that, over and above the task of lecturing to her students, she also has the responsibility of being a facilitator to ensure constructive teaching and learning does takes place. Furthermore, the student-centred teaching and learning process requires that lecturers see each student as distinct and unique, and design lessons to accommodate these individual differences (McCombs & Whistler, as cited in Corley, 2008 & Keiler, 2018). One of the participants stated that *"...so you are not just, there - deliver the content, but you also have to, to be aware of, of, of, of, of their wellbeing, if I may put it that way, and their psychological wellbeing. So I think the way that I approach my teaching and learning approach is more of being motherly at the same time as being an educator because I, I'm not just a lecturer. I believe that I'm also an educator. Um, I'm also a facilitator at the same, where I believe that in class, there, there, there, the teaching and learning process has to be dialogic, which means I must learn from my students and my students must also learn from me. So, my classes, are usually very interactive because I facilitate – I want to hear what they have to say, and we engage on the, on the content. I also believe that we have to be very progressive... So, some students would come to you to my office and tell me their personal*

problems. If I can help them, I do help, or I can refer them to them to other people, if I cannot offer the help. So, there is so much in being a teacher than just going to class and delivering the content. So, my teaching and learning approaches that - it's holistic. You're not just there in class, but it extends even beyond the classroom... ” (Vuyiswa).

The lecturers understood that their students “learn at different rates with different styles, they have different abilities and talents, their feelings of efficacy may vary, and they may be in different stages of development” (Corley, 2008, p. 1). Fahraeus (2013) says when a lesson is student-driven, teachers assume the role of a facilitator to help guide the students and ensure that they become more engaged in their learning. As a result, by facilitating the whole process, Vuyiswa was guiding her students, especially those who might struggle to understand the content and have personal challenges, to gain a deeper understanding of what is being taught, ultimately resulting in academic success.

Almost all participants noted that when preparing their lessons or engaging with students in class, they tended to be governed by teaching and learning philosophies that empowered their students to engage more and be at the centre. That increased their cognitive engagement. Participants such as Busiswa, Chance, Onjengawe and Mandisa went further and indicated that, having a student centred teaching and learning classroom allowed students to come in with their rich experiences (prior knowledge) to contribute to the lesson, thus, making the lessons informative, fun and interactive because of the contributions the students would have made in the creation of their own learning.

The following is the discussion of the fifth theme that came up during the data generation, focusing on visibility of line managers and supervisors.

5.3.5 Theme five: Visibility of line managers and supervisors

Before exploring the participants’ responses under this theme, I will firstly consider the definition that has been put forth by scholars in defining the term line managers. Hutchinson and Purcell, cited in Kgosinyane (2019, p. 488) define a line manager as “someone who has direct supervisory accountability, normally for non-managerial employees, and are located at the lower levels of management ladder, often the first-line level”. Osborne and Hammoud (2017) allude to the fact that, in any organization, leaders in the form of line managers, have an important role in influencing how employees perform and stay engaged in their work.

Nicholas and Erakovich, cited in Osborne & Hammoud (2017, p.53), further confirm that, “leaders that are authentic influence the engagement of employees.” As a result, employees’ morale is improved, as leaders continuously demonstrate values that foster teamwork within the various departments they work in. This theme related to participants’ relationships with their immediate superior or supervisor, and how these relationships impacted their teaching and learning. The majority of participants felt that their relationship was professional and contributed positively towards how they engaged with students as they were able to learn, get advice and support from their superior/supervisors. Phelelani said: *“I think it's a very, very great and prolific. Um, I don't have a beef with them. I'm working with them as my superiors, whenever I've got a problem, I do consult them and, and they give me advice as well. So, but I know that they are my seniors, then I should know my space. I must stay on my lane, but whenever I need to help, I do contact with them. Their relationship is great.”* (Phelelani)

Busiswa shared a similar view: *“... I think, our relationship is professional, and it's very much beneficial to me because I get to learn a lot from them, you know, especially my supervisors who also happen to be my mentors. So, whenever I have other issues, I just text them on WhatsApp and they're able to, interact with me in that way. And yeah, they made me aware of new school. I don't know, seminar or any other thing that may help me learn and grow within that academic space. You know, and I remember going to the, uh, to the conference for the first time, in 2019. ... so they were the ones who prepared me for that a lot. Um, cause I didn't know what to expect to, what to do when it comes to the processes that are involved in, when comes from going to well or attending an academic conference.”* (Busiswa)

Both Phelelani and Busiswa’s responses showed that their relationship with their superiors enhanced their academic development, and that their superiors were always available whenever they needed guidance.

When Mandisa, Lwandile, Onjengawe and Vuyiswa were interviewed on the relationship they shared with their immediate superiors and how it impacted on their teaching and learning, they expressed that the relationship was good, professional and supportive. Mandisa: *“to be honest, I think, um, my line manager is a female in, um, in the senior years. All right., I think she's been incredibly supportive. I almost can go to her with any challenge and she takes her on, she's extremely supportive in, even in times where, I had messed up or I was on the brink of messing up. She found a way to give me better guidance. ... but I think when I first started, when I first left the institution, um, I think what she expected was quite different. I think I was expected to*

hit the ground running, but it's a different thing when you come from a different institution where the policies and the day-to-day, uh, ways of doing business, are different. I think he eventually could understand that a little bit more guidance was needed in terms of giving me structure. So, allowing me to feed into this new work environment, but beyond that, she's been incredibly, incredibly supportive. ... I can go to him for almost any issue, almost any event you always, as a response in terms of my teaching and learning, in terms of my research. So she's been very supportive..." (Mandisa).

Mandisa was mentored and/or supervised by a female line manager who was her senior in years. Mandisa's responses to the relationship she shared with her line manager showed that she was supported and had good communication with her, and she could depend on her whenever she was faced with a challenge. The relationship she shared with her superior had a foundation in good communication, which was more beneficial to her, as she was coming from another institution of higher learning. Furthermore, the response showed the kind of support she was offered as the line manager allowed her to come see her whenever she had an issue, as opposed to being expected to hit the ground running immediately after being employed.

Lwandile also weighed in and said *"... I have a very good relationship with my, uh, superiors, so no, it hasn't affected me in any way. It hasn't affected my teaching and learning..."* (Lwandile).

Onjengawe also shared a similar view and said: *"... I would say, ... it has a very good impact, because I don't think ... I would this kind of, a lecturer that I am... yes I was going to develop of course over time, but I think, for them being close to me, like it has initially made the progress ukuthi ukuba fast a little bit (to be fast a little bit). Because, each and every time... for example, we needed to, run past something or confirm something, really quickly, be it with regards to assessment or teaching or whatever I'll get, good feedback. I would say from either one of them, because, like I said, I would interact with each and every one of them; my line manager, my colleague or I mentor or anyone. So, so yeah, I would say that it has a good impact, extremely good impact because for me, I would say, because I'm a person who's always willing to learn every now and again."* (Onjengawe)

Vuyiswa also shared that: *"We get along, we get, well, we get along well and yeah, it's, it's, it's, it's, it's quite well. And also she tries to empower us, you, or she tries to empower me as a, an upcoming or an early career academic by, eh, because right now we are trying to write a*

paper together. So, she's trying to help that way. And, uh, I've seen that she also tries to make sure that I am involved in university activities... So, it's, it's a nice relationship, but at the same time, she still has the authority because she is my immediate supervisor, but it's a cordial relationship. It's nice. And she tries to help me as an early career academic, and to familiarize myself with the teaching space... she's quite young and she's also motherly. So, If I do have challenges, I can always go to her and she's always willing to help. So, anytime I have any issues or in terms of my teaching, I can go to her and is always willing to help. And also, like I said, even in terms of, um, my carrier and in terms of my professional development, she tries to be there..." (Vuyiswa).

Despite this positive and professional relationship for Onjengawe and other participants such as Lwandile, Mandisa, Phelelani, Busiswa and Vuyiswa, Mukeleni had a different kind of a relationship with his superior. Although the relationship was professional, you could tell from his response that, the tone did not reveal any excitement about the relationship he shared with his superior. That could be attributed to clashes and different opinions that might be shared between the two parties.

Mukeleni had this to say with regards to his relationship with his superior: *"Yeah. It's more like most relationship because people, have their own way of bringing things and people think differently. So, sometimes it's not personal, it's always professional because I have my own views and you'll find my supervisor have their own views. Right. And if we have that engagement and then it clashes – and we don't take it personal. If people don't agree with what you are saying, you have to accept. Because at the end of the day is it is me that wants to have the PhD, the person already has their PhD or professorship. So at the end of the day, you'll have to compromise some of the things, even your beliefs as well."* (Mukeleni)

The majority of the positive experiences shared by the participants in the above quotations could also be attributed to staff's need "to become responsible for their own input and process conditions, which resulted in top management in HEIs to embark on monitoring and managing the performance of their staff in general, including academic staff" (Kgosinyane, 2019, p.489).

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I began with a critical discussion and analysis of themes that I derived from the findings. The themes that I identified were academic development; student centred teaching

and learning; publications and funding; student culture and identity; workload vs community engagement (*academic responsibility and community engagement*), transitioning and prioritising teaching and learning and support between supervisors and ECAs (*visibility of line managers and supervisors*). The data that I derived from the participants' responses in the form of quotes were presented, analyzed and interpreted thematically. Moreover, I showed in this chapter that the participants had some similarities in their experiences as they negotiated their belonging in the higher education institution they are employed, even though they were interviewed separately. However, I also discovered that some of the experiences were unique to each individual participant. In the subsequent chapter, I theorize the findings and critically discuss them in relation to the body of knowledge available in the field

CHAPTER SIX

THEORIZING THE FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This is the second chapter of two, where I present the discussion and analysis of findings. In the previous chapter, I presented, interpreted and analyzed the findings under different themes. In this chapter, I seek to provide a critical discussion and justification on the use of the interpretive phenomenological analysis in this body of work, as it is presented and discussed in the second chapter of this study. In this chapter, the theoretical analysis and/or discussion on the life-world of early career academics and their lived experiences in the South African higher education context is presented. Having discussed the life-world of these academics, I discuss their intentionality as they negotiate their belonging in higher education as well as noema-noesis. These dual terms, noema-noesis are related to intentionality, and they were used in this study to unpack and present the objective and subjective experiences that ECAs go through.

I conclude the chapter with a short discussion on bracketing, where I discuss how I purposefully bracketed off my preconceived knowledge, beliefs and prior knowledge during the data generation and analysis process.

The theoretical framework provided the foundational support upon which I theorized the experiences of ECAs in higher education and discussed participants' life-worlds as the cornerstone of this phenomenological investigation (Ocholla & Le Roux, 2011 & Imenda, 2014). The following section presents an analysis of the different phenomenological concepts.

6.2 Life world of early career academics

In chapter three, it was highlighted that the aim behind the use of phenomenology as a theoretical framework for this research study was to explore, gain an insight and interpret the lived experiences of early career academics (Koopman, 2018). In other words, in this research project, how the participants perceived and understood the reality they were confronted with on a daily basis whilst trying to negotiate their belonging in higher education, was analyzed to provide insights on how they made sense of the world around them. In broad terms, through this theoretical analysis, ECAs perceptions, feelings and insights were analyzed and the used to construct an understanding of how it is like to experience academic life where they were

employed (Mokoena, 2021). Although the life-world seeks to capture subjectivity and how specific experiences are experienced and felt by the participants, we cannot ignore the understanding that the life-world draws directly from the authentic lived experiences of the participants as opposed to their inner world subjective feelings (Finlay, 2009; Pillay, 2020). Participants' personal accounts of their lived experiences on issues such as health, illness, pain, emotional trauma etcetera, tend to play a pivotal role towards shaping their lived experiences.

The life-world of early career academics who participated in this study related to their personal lived experiences of the higher education teaching space they were employed in. This specific setting provides an educative experience and vivid insight into the state in which ECAs operated on a daily basis, whilst at the same time highlighting the difficulties they underwent in this professional teaching space. The participants' life-world experiences manifested themselves in how they tackled the demands of their academic responsibilities on a daily basis. Through the data analysis and interpretation in chapter five, the participants' life-world was characterized by exhaustion, stress, frustration, and minimal liberty when it comes to research publications. From the data generated in chapter five, ECAs felt stressed, exhausted, overwhelmed and overworked, with no proper guidance afforded to them. This was evident in their own words, taken from the semi-structured interviews like *"...the current generation of students always expect to be, to be given information, not to search for information. I will change the style of, of handling students when it's come to academia, because the students expect to be given information. They are not expected to learn. They are not there - they do not learn. They do not discover information for themselves. They expect lecturers to give information. They expect lecturers to give them scope before they write exams, not even a scope to give them the rubric; what is exactly is going to be exempt in that particular module. So, I think that's the only thing, especially at an undergrad level, because this thing kills them when they come to a postgrad level, where one has to find things for himself or herself, is that where the one be anyone else, except your supervisor yourself and your, your articles or your books. So, on that note, it makes them lazy and think that everything just comes as easy as they are; without working hard so that you can be able to discover them at your own."* (Phelelani)

Phelelani when propped about his thoughts on publishing research in the institution of higher learning he is employed in and how it is made compulsory to publish scholarly articles as academics, he exclaimed and further expressed that: *"Um, especially in the UKZN that because it's a research intense university, they can say so, it is hard because definitely you don't have a*

choice. Once you are employed in UKZN, UKZN, then you have to do research and you have to publish that one it is compulsory...” (Phelelani).

One other participant further argued that when it came to research publications, the institution he was employed at, and other academics seemed to be only interested in numbers and publicity as opposed to bringing about change. That often frustrated and concerned him as these academics and the institution seems to be not focusing on the bigger picture bringing positive change in the lives of those participated in the study: *“...I think we mostly chase the numbers, the number of publications that one has; and forget to bring in the change, maybe to say your paper was talking about a student's behaviour and residences, after you publicise your findings and everything, you forget about that; you go to another thing, what change did you bring?... So, yes, we do publicise, but it's like we publicise and then we forget about whatever findings. But jah, also it's about why where you publishing. Why did you take that, why did you write that article, what was your objective, what was your goal? So, I think jah, my only concern is that, it is as if we are chasing numbers, and then we are chasing the promotions and stuff, I don't know – maybe it is just me being negative, I don't know.” (Mukeleni)*

Lwandile expressed his frustrations on the calibre of students the institution was producing. He highlighted that *“...another thing that I would change is I think throughout the country, we being too lenient to students, um, uh, not to say, um, um, and I am an authoritarian person or authoritative person, but I think students are no longer responsible for their studies. And I think that is very important because if they don't care what they submit and whether they complete the assessments, then they wouldn't care, uh, when they get to schools and teach learners. So, I think we need to reignite that culture of holding students responsible for their studies and, um, ensuring that they are committed to, to, to this, because I think e-NSFAS, and other funders, they spend billions of rands on students yet, I don't think, um, uh, students they commit themselves in that, that much...” (Lwandile).*

One other participant similarly noted that: *“...the manner in which we are teaching our students, I feel that we are not training them to be independent in their careers because everything is laid down on the table for them to just consume and consuming and consume. Um, and students are very demanding in terms of, um, nearly everything. Um, they do not want to just engage, fully, they try to do less, for more. They don't attend classes. Um, if they don't pass, uh, it's tricky now, you have to give them an opportunity and an opportunity and another*

opportunity. So, it feels that, um, the students are in the driving seat of teaching and learning. Uh, even with the assessment, it is always their way, so we are over accommodating our students... ” (Mandisa).

Chance further confirmed the point of being frustrated and worried about the calibre of students currently being produced by the university. She observed that: *“...but what I worry, what worries me the most, is the kind of students that we are shaping, we are training – the kind of teachers that they are becoming. That is worrying me. So, that comes back and it says, maybe as educators ourselves, or as lecturers or as an institution – there is something that we are doing wrong. Right now, we are, uhm, assessing, uhm, students for TP, and what we are seeing, is just, joh! I don’t even know what to say, there is no word to describe what I’ve seen...”* (Chance).

Chance further expressed that, in as much as the calibre of students she is entrusted to teach is worrying; they too, as academics who are involved in the process of grooming and shaping these future educators need to do some introspection and question their own teaching methods. She indicated that: *“...here is something wrong that we are doing, that’s why I am saying that we should come back, we should point the finger at us, because maybe we are doing something wrong; maybe that is how we are teaching, we don’t know – because we don’t videorize ourselves of what we are teaching, but that is what we are seeing in school, and it is not good because learners are not excited about learning”* (Chance).

From the above analysis and discussion, it can be deduced that, the life world of these academics within the teaching space was punctuated by worrisome factors or challenges as they tried to navigate their belonging. Some of the challenges they faced could be linked to lack of support, poor infrastructure, and the changes such as the migration to online teaching for all students, online assessment and virtual interactions with fellow staff members brought about by the pandemic.

Having looked into the participant’s life-world, it is imperative to then look into the participants’ intentionality, that is, their preconceived thoughts and the consciously repeated actions. In phenomenology, this term is used to understand and explain people’s conscious acts they would normally carry out purposefully day in and day out. In the subsequent section of

this chapter, intentionality is used to explain the participants' deliberate actions, the researcher picked up.

6.3 Intentionality of early career academics

In the theoretical chapter, I revealed that the phenomenological concept of intentionality “applies to the mental relationship we have with the world around us”, as opposed to actions or doing something for no purpose (Giorgi, 2012, p. 14). Simply put, intentionality refers to actions done deliberately and with intention. In this case, intentionality would be used to understand and interpret the conscious actions or activities performed by the participants, with the intention of achieving and attaining a certain desired goal. Furthermore, through the study made by Mokoena (2021, p. 118), it substantiates that; “intentionality refers to the consciousness of stretching out towards an object, an act of doing something with purpose”. Mokoena (2021) further affirms that intentionality does not necessarily have to be a physical or tangible object, as it can also manifest through the participants' mind. Ashworth (2003) supports Mokoena's view and Spinelli (2006) indicates that the concept of intentionality can be understood as a mental state, memory or a fantasy that is about something.

From the interviews, ECAs were conscious of the fact that they had to use student centred teaching and learning methods in order to engage students during lessons. This was evident in their words like *“I'd like to think of myself as someone who uses different elements, being um, and different theory. You know, how we have constructivism and all this behaviourism philosophy. And so it depends really on the lecture that I am facilitating or teaching at that time. But obviously majority of my lessons or lectures, I draw from the constructivism theory or philosophy, because it's more learner centred. And so I make sure that in my lecture, I interact with the students, you know, our students come with rich information, rich in experiences, and those experiences are worth sharing. I find it not quite this, but I, I mean, it's good when you're teaching and you give a chance for the learners, and they contribute to the lesson. So in that way, comes the constructivism. I do that, but other times, because I'm also teaching large classes, I'm able to draw from behaviourism, where I am just there, next to the podium and I'm delivering whatever it is that I have to deliver and that much interaction, um, with the students...”* (Busiswa).

From the semi-structured interviews, it was further revealed some academics were conscious of teaching and learning approaches they were using and how in using these approaches complete student engagement and participation could be achieved. This was evident in one of the participants' words: *"...I prefer us talking about the topic in depth. So, we have the engagements, we have the debates, we have the disagreements in class, but, still having control over or over the class. So, my approach, I think is that, um, a learner centred approach. Not more than more often, like teacher centred. No, no. I prefer the learners learning from each other and I learning from them"* (Mukeleni). Most of the participants in this research study were mindful and cognisant of the surroundings, particularly the teaching space they were in confronted with since the start of the novel coronavirus and the contactless teaching and learning policy that was imposed by the university. Most importantly, some of these participants had to adopt strategies to maintain discipline in this new teaching and learning space. One participant highlighted that: *"Before COVID-19, Um, I think it's the one thing that has really worked for me that I learned from the senior staff members is that first lecture or perhaps the second lecture that students don't attend the first lecture, make sure, you formulate ground rules, you know, so tell them, this is what is acceptable here. This what is not acceptable here and tell them what, um, the setting is all about. We are here to teach and then anything other than that, is not allowed, uh, also in that case, the students let the students be the ones who come up with these ground rules, more than you, cause if it's you, it'll be like you are imposing them, but if it is something you formulate together..."* (Busiswa).

One other participant, Vuyiswa, shared a similar strategy when asked how they managed learner behaviour during the teaching and learning process, and further stressed that: *"...So I, I try at the beginning and tell them about respecting, one another. Eh, I tell them about the use of hands. If you want to ask a question, the reactions that you can give, you can raise your head, you can do whatever. And I tell them as well, if someone is being disruptive in class, I'm going to remove that person from the Zoom meeting. So, they do try and, and, and listen and cooperate. And, but you do find one or two who would, eh, trust out of the blue and forget and open the video and forget to, unmute themselves. But they quickly, as soon as they realize, they quickly apologize, and then they switch it off, but it does it disrupt, but it doesn't happen often..."* (Vuyiswa).

It is important to highlight that, some participants were aware of the new teaching and learning space they were in and the challenges it presented them with, and some chose to prepare their lessons accordingly, through the usage of their immediate superiors and other colleagues advice and input. This manifested itself when participant Onjengawe, Phelelani and Mandisa revealed that: *"...each and every time I like, for example, we needed to, uh, run past something or conform something, really quickly to, be it with regards to assessment or teaching or whatever I'll get, uh, um, good feedback. Uh, I would say from, from either one of them, because like I can, like I said, I would interact with each and every one of them, my line manager, my colleague or I mentor or anyone..."* (Onjengawe).

"... and I also draw, from the good deeds that they are doing while they are teaching, the kind of strategies, that they do, while they are teaching. So, I only draw good things from them..." (Phelelani).

"To be honest, I think, um, my line manager is a female in, um, in the senior years. All right. So, I think she's been incredibly supportive. Um, I almost can go to her with any challenge and she takes her on, she's extremely supportive in, even in times where, um, I had messed up or I was on the brink of messing up. She found a way to give me better guidance... So, allowing me to feed into this new work environment, but beyond that, she's been incredibly, incredibly supportive..." (Mandisa).

The generated data shows that participants were conscious of the fact that, in order to mitigate some of the challenges and changes they were confronted with, changes to how they delivered content to the students had to be made. Overall, the intentionality of ECAs reflects the conscious acts that these participants deliberately and purposefully repeated day in and day out whilst negotiating their belonging in the academic world. Therefore, these deliberate acts performed by the ECAs in academia, can further be argued that they would not have taken place if noema-noesis, which are dual phenomenological concepts that are part of intentionality, did not manifest themselves whilst they were negotiating their belonging in this South African university.

6.4 The noema-noesis of ECAs

As explained in the theoretical chapter of this research study, noesis is a concept used in phenomenology, to refer to comprehension (Rassi & Shahabi, 2015). The terminology of noema

according to Husserl, is a term used to mean *Nous*, which can be simply translated to mind and intellect (Rassi & Shahabi, 2015). Husserl Edmund, the father of phenomenology used it to describe intentional act of consciousness (Krysztofiak, 2019), introduced these terms. This can be simply understood and translated to mean that “every act of consciousness we perform, every experience that we have, is intentional: it is essentially “consciousness of” or an “experience of” something or other” (Sokolowski, 2012, p. 8). This means that, being intentionally conscious of your actions in particular, is the choice of allowing oneself the opportunity to experience all the necessary joy which is our “God-given right bestowed upon us to be fulfilled as human beings” (Moore, 2018).

However, in as much as there are various interpretations to these phenomenological terms, it is important to highlight that, without noema and noesis, *intentionality* would not be attainable - as these pairs of terms correlate with the foundational elements that make up any intentional act (Krysztofiak, 2019; Rassi & Shahabi, 2015). In this research study, noema and noesis can be linked to the different teaching approaches, assessment methods, online class management strategies, and all the positive interactions emanating from their engagements with their immediate superiors’ within the university teaching space and the online teaching platforms.

Chance noted that one way of maintaining order and discipline during the teaching and learning session before Covid, was to walk around the lecture room and point on students and involve most of them in class discussion. This became evident when she confessed that: “...*I walk around the classroom, I point at people, unfortunately, they do not like it, but I do it, and I enjoy it. I just walk around and I see your beautiful face looking down and not looking at me, so I just go out to you, I tap at you on your shoulders, or I brush your back if you are a female, of course, not males, so I just be like; ‘hello sisi (sister), how are you, and then this question was actually meant’, and then usisi (sister) would be like, ‘Aaah, ma’am, what question are you referring to?’*, and then I would know that usisi (sister) was not listening to me, and I would repeat the question again, and give her some time to respond and walk around...” (Chance).

One of the participants indicated that she did not consciously choose to be an academic, as it was something that became an option after she completed her post-graduate studies. She said: “...*I would say yes. Um, I didn't, uh, consciously choose to become an academic. Um, it's something that, uh, after completing my post-graduate studies, then you realize, oh, okay, this*

is an option, but I, I never, in my wildest dreams ever thought I'd be an academic. So, there was a lady that did in some way, open this academic, um, career doors for me..." (Mandisa).

Even though being an academic was not this participant's goal, one could tell from some of the responses that emanated from the interview session that she now enjoying it and this could also be linked to the various kinds of support she received from when she transitioned into the academic arena, coming from a background with no prior teaching experience: *"Yeah, I was very much supported when I first started out, because I remember when I started teaching, I had no prior experience of taking it all. The only teaching I knew was the teaching that I had obviously gotten from my lecturers. So, I've never been on the other side. I've always been a student. So, when I first started out as a lecturer in my early career days, I had plenty of support, enormous support from my colleagues. Um, a lot of the teaching load I didn't have to do. So, I actually was, um, asked or requested that I shadow a certain colleague of mine for about six months..."* (Mandisa).

Mokeona (2021, p. 123) says in phenomenology, "all experience is intentional experience". As human beings, we are always intentional and conscious about our surroundings, the people we engage with, and the setting we are in, as explained by these two phenomenological terms, noema and noesis. Since intentionality is a conscious act, and requires one to be of sound mind before an act is performed, it can therefore, be said that, in order for noesis to happen, it cannot be separated from a noema, as "any conscious act begins from the mind (noema) before one acts on it (noesis)" (Mokeona, 2021, p.123). The relationship between the mind and ones' actions known as intentionality cannot exist independently from each other (Audi 2001; Flood, 2010 & Crotty as cited in Matusitz, & Kramer, 2011). The early career academics who participated in this study were also conscious of the fact that, in order to mitigate some of the challenges and changes that they were confronted with in their teaching space, various conscious acts, such as lecture rules, learner centred teaching strategies, insights from other colleagues and immediate superiors, had to be adopted.

6.5 Bracketing

Mokoena (2021) says epoche or bracketing is the cornerstone of the descriptive phenomenological theory. It can be understood as a process a researcher would intentionally apply when conducting a study in order to allow the phenomenon under scrutiny to give its contribution to knowledge (Neubauer et al., 2019). This means that, by setting aside any prior

knowledge and/or everyday preconceived beliefs, the researcher is able to clearly describe the phenomena being investigated. In as much as it is difficult for any researcher to set aside his or her preconceived knowledge or past encounters, experiences and beliefs; adopting this phenomenological attitude enables the researcher to describe things, as they are (Mokoena, 2021; Moustakas, 1994).

As the researcher, I tried to allow the participants to fully express their experiences without leading them on to certain kind of expected responses. Though I did probe and anticipated more detailed responses, this was done solely because as the researcher, I had to ensure that rich data was received, and that their responses were beneficial to the study and its aims. Likewise, to show to the participant that I was still listening and part of the structured conversation, I had to use various gestures in between the responses even on Zoom. These gestures and interjections were done consciously to show to the participant that I understood and at times, could relate with their standpoint. However, there were instances where I felt that the participants' standpoint had some shortcomings, or were misguided, I did not interject and imposed my own opinion or used any of the prior knowledge that I had during the semi-structured interview session, and by simply allowing the participant to open and express their feelings, it allowed me to gain access to the rich data that each participant had to share.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided the theoretical discussion emanating from the data collected. As indicated in the introduction, this chapter was chapter two of two that focused on the findings of the study by discussing the lived experiences of early career academics. I then moved to discuss the intentionality of academics. Thereafter, noema and noesis coupled up with the life world of these academics was discussed. To conclude the chapter, I discussed the process of bracketing off and how challenging it was to put aside past knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation as a teacher who shared similar experiences with those of the academics who participated in this study, though the context where these experiences manifested themselves varied greatly. In the following chapter, the summary, major findings, recommendations and conclusion are presented.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, MAJOR FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter of this research study presented, analyzed, discussed and theorized the findings. This research study set out to critically explore the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university. The critical research questions this research study sought to respond to were:

- What are the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university?
- How do early career academics experience negotiating their belonging at a South African university?
- Why do early career academics experience negotiating their belonging in the way that they do?

This chapter present the summary, major findings, recommendations and conclusion emanating from the findings.

7.2 Summary of chapters

This study explored the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university. This research project was made up of seven coherent and interrelated chapters, with chapter one being the overview, context and objectives of the study; chapter two, the literature review; chapter three, the theoretical framings underpinning this study; chapter four, the research design and methodology; chapter five and six, critical analysis and presentation of the rich data generated from the semi-structured interviews. Chapters five and six discussed and analysed the findings. Chapter seven presents major findings, recommendations and conclusion of the study.

7.2.1 Chapter 1

This chapter provided an overview, context and objectives of this research study. It provided the title, focus and objectives, location of the study, rationale, as well as a brief literature review around early career academics and their experiences in higher education. The research questions that this study intended to answer, research design and data generation were also

presented. The chapter concluded with an overview of the seven chapters and a chapter summary.

7.2.2 Chapter 2

Chapter two presented the review of literature on early career academics experiences and challenges in and around South African higher education institutions. The literature reviewed in this chapter further critically discussed and unpacked how these neglected experiences highlighted in the literature affected early career academics in the institutions of higher learning. The chapter, through the literature that was reviewed, also showed that, the growing body of knowledge available on the experiences of ECAs across different local and international contexts was limited in terms of the experiences of these academics. In essence, this literature revealed that a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny was needed, to ensure that the grey areas in the body of knowledge are addressed, which is this research study's contribution.

7.2.3 Chapter 3

In this chapter, the theoretical framework used to frame this study was discussed. A detailed explanation of phenomenology as a theory that guided this research study and its related phenomenological concepts that foregrounded phenomenology as a theoretical framework were explained in detail, as well as how they related to the study as a whole. Furthermore, the rationale behind the selection of the interpretive phenomenological analysis for this research study was provided.

7.2.4 Chapter 4

This chapter looked into the research design and methodology of this research project and how some of the issues such as research paradigm were addressed. Moreover, issues of data generated, sampling and selection of participants, data analysis were addressed. Furthermore, the chapter also discussed measures taken to ensure that the trustworthiness and important ethical considerations were dealt with. The chapter concluded by detailing how the limitations and challenges that manifested during the course of this study were addressed.

7.2.5 Chapter 5

In this chapter, the data degenerated during the interviews was presented. The findings were analyzed and presented thematically using verbatim quotes from the participants' responses, thus allowing the rich data to speak for itself. The presented, analyzed and interpreted data

revealed that the participants had some similarities in their experiences as they negotiated their belonging in the higher education sector.

7.2.6 Chapter 6

In the sixth chapter of this research project, the theoretical discussion related to the findings was made. The discussion began by considering the life world of early career academics, intentionality of early career academics, and noema-noesis. Thereafter, bracketing was discussed, where I explained how my preconceived knowledge and beliefs during the data generation and analysis process were set aside. I then presented a conclusion that drew the whole chapter together.

7.3 Major findings

7.3.1 Academic development

It was discovered that, although the university had a programme that acted as a safety net and familiarized the newly appointed academics with the academic landscape, the programme did not filter through the intended people as some of the interviewed academics expressed that the only form of support and induction they ever received when they transitioned into the academic arena was through their immediate superiors. Others expressed that they had to learn some of the things on their own through doing and interacting with fellow colleagues. The lack of proper support experienced by these academics tended to make them fear the unknown, and deprive them the opportunity to explore and execute their academic duties.

Moreover, data revealed that most early career academics were often expected to depend upon information provided to them by their immediate colleagues, or to source information on their own as opposed to being exposed to the system and culture of the institution by the institution itself. One participant revealed that the university UEIP programme, that is a compulsory training and development programme offered by the university to all newly appointed academics, geared towards developing and equipping academics with skills and knowledge to necessitate their smooth transition into the academic arena, was often done for a short period. The three-day modules offered by the university through this programme often expects newly appointed academics to learn a number of skills such as supervising research, assessing learning, designing and evaluating curricula,

and teaching and learning within this short period of time. Considering that ECAs are important resources and central in the long-term growth, development and success of the university, the academic development offered to them appeared rushed, and did not expose them to other roles they needed in their line of work, such as management of large classrooms and publication.

7.3.2 Publications and funding

As an institution that sought to promote excellence in all that it did, and in teaching and learning in particular, findings revealed that most early career academics were concerned with the trajectory the university is taking, where teaching and learning seemed to be neglected, as the university expected all academic staff, including the newly appointed ECAs, to invest most of their time researching and publishing scholarly articles. The mandatory research and publishing these academics and ECAs were expected to do often left them frustrated and under immense pressure as they attempted to strike a balance between writing academic papers and meeting other academic responsibilities such as lecturing, marking, grading papers, attending conferences and discipline meetings. However, some of the ECAs interviewed in this research study understood the importance of publishing their scholarly work and contributing to their respective academic field, but felt that it should not be mandatory, but rather, they should be given an opportunity to focus on what they were interested in.

7.3.3 Academic responsibility and community engagement

It emerged that all the academics interviewed understood the importance of giving back to the community, and engaging in socially responsible courses outside the scope of their line of work. Most of these academics had community outreach programmes they were engaged in, while others were planning to develop programmes geared towards assisting university students and/or high school pupils. Furthermore, findings revealed that these academics understood the significance of these programme, and some indicated that they had been greatly assisted by programmes of such nature in their early years of education.

7.3.4 Prioritising student-centred teaching and learning

Most of the ECAs interviewed revealed that their teaching and learning philosophies gravitated towards constructivism and learner centred approaches. This suggests that these ECAs tended to structure their lectures with students in mind, to ensure that during teaching and learning, their students were always engaged, and were at the centre of teaching and learning. In addition, they also highlighted that, having a student-centred lecture allowed their students to bring in their rich prior knowledge to contribute during the lecture, thus, making the lecture less teacher centred. Some ECAs expressed that, the adoption of such teaching and learning philosophies, allowed them adopt new roles, roles such as being a facilitator which ensures constructive teaching and learning takes place.

7.3.5 Visibility of line managers and supervisors

The findings revealed that most of the ECAs received some form of support when they transitioned into the academic arena, in particular from their line managers. The ECAs also expressed that their line managers would sometimes go beyond their call of duty to extend some form of support and pastoral care to them. Furthermore, the data revealed that support was also extended to them through colleagues who availed themselves to educate and expose these ECAs towards the institutional culture and system of the university.

Not all ECAs were fortunate enough to get support from their line managers, as some had to learn and understand the university system on their own. Some indicated that they had to learn as they went along, which frustrated them as the university system was sometimes complex to fully understand with no proper support structure and guidance.

7.4 Suggestions for further research and Recommendations

Towards academic development

This study suggests that the university must develop a programme that will expose ECAs to all spheres of what the university stands for, and the expectations of the university and its systems. These programmes must not be rushed but should run for a period longer than three days, as learning the culture of any institution is something that must be treated with extreme care. Furthermore, extending the duration of such a programme not only reduces

the burden, fears, frustrations, and anxiety often experienced by newly appointed academics when transitioning into the academic arena, but also gives them ample opportunity to learn all there is to know about the institution, and not just a handful number of things whilst neglecting others, especially the ones that the university prides itself in, such as teaching and learning. Focusing more on these new academics' academic growth and development prevents their early departure from institutions, as studies show that ECAs often leave the university early due to lack of support systems within the university to properly develop and align them with the culture of the institution.

As an institution which also prides itself towards the culture of learning, intellectual development and academic excellence, as seen in its motto: *Inspiring Greatness*, this academic culture can only be developed and realized if its newly appointed academic staff are trained, properly supported and inculcated into the culture of the institution for a duration longer than three days and/or six months. Therefore, this study suggests that whenever new academics are appointed by the university, the induction programme be extended to them to help them feel at ease, be part of the team, improve quality of performance, whilst reducing insecurities and fear. The induction period should be approximately a year, and during this period, a limited amount of academic responsibilities should be allocated to them.

Towards publication and funding

As an institution that prides itself in academic excellence in all that it does, the university must understand that academic excellence can also be achieved through other means and areas of interest ECAs are invested in, as opposed to the number of publications that one has. Therefore, ECAs that have research and publication as their main academic interest, must be trained and time be given to them to research and publish their scholarly work as a form of contributing towards their discipline and the academic arena at large. This study's literature and findings revealed that, through publishing their research articles in journals, it tends to have a positive impact in the growth and development of early career academics, closing the gaps through the contribution of new knowledge that is often neglected by other scholars in that particular field of study, and most importantly, towards monetary funding of the university as a form of government grants for publishing a certain threshold of academic papers within a given period of time.

However, the university must explore other means of generating funds as opposed to research and publication as its source of funding from government grants. Acquiring funds from other sources leaves room for these academics to develop and grow with the university, whilst ensuring that the university culture and ethos are not compromised in the process. This study suggests that, upon entry, newly appointed academics must not be expected to publish, but rather focus on understanding the institution and its systems and up-skilling themselves as suggested in the academic development section of this section.

Towards teaching and learning

Research shows that teaching and learning is an important tool a university can use to change, address the disconnect within the society, and meet the demands in the market which these institutions of higher learning seek to service (Mandal, 2018). Therefore, the university should allow ECAs to pursue their interests and allow them to have a formal communication platform where they are allowed to choose where they would like to invest most of their time i.e. lecturing and/or publication. Through this platform, those who choose to focus more on publication will be allocated a slightly lower number of modules and classes to lecture as their time, energy and focus will be dedicated towards research and publication. Since research and publication is an important source of generating more funds for the university, academics should be given a choice on whether they would want to publish, as this might prevent teaching and learning to be compromised and negatively affected in the end. In other words, allowing ECAs an opportunity to focus on what they are passionate about prevents their early tenure and stimulate their development in the respective area of interest and responsibility they would have chosen for themselves. Teaching and learning and the academics interest must also be prioritized and considered, and not be neglected as noted by some of the ECAs interviewed in this research study.

Additionally, in order to strengthen teaching and learning, UKZN needs to reduce the number of modules, classes and academic responsibilities ECAs are often expected to attend to upon their entry into the system. Reducing the number of classes and students in a single lecture room and module allocated to a single ECAs enables them the opportunity to monitor and reflect upon their growth within the academic field and attend to those aspects that they still need to improve and develop on. Therefore, when transitioning into the academic arena, an ECA should be given a maximum of two modules per semester to

teach and a standard number of students they can lecture. The class allocation of such nature and size will allow them to focus more on other aspects that makes them academics.

This research project further suggests that, more funds be redirected towards the employment of more seasoned academics who can also help lessen the load and pressure on these newly appointed academics so to allow them time to development academically. The ECAs should be allocated a mentor whom they will be expected to shadow for a period not more than a semester, to expose them to other important aspects such as classroom management, teaching and learning approaches and assessment and grading of student papers.

Towards the visibility of line managers and supervisors

This study notes and acknowledges that most of the ECAs interviewed in this study acknowledged the effective and efficient relationship they had with their line managers. However, in order to further necessitate the smooth transition of early career academics in the academic arena, more structured and formal support in the form of academic programmes should be extended to them, through discipline co-ordinators and mentors. This would, not only assist them in understanding how the university system works, but also help them settle in quickly and improve the state of the universities in South Africa. Through the development of these programmes, the university will be able to properly induct and expose these ECAs towards the culture and systems of the institution.

Furthermore, the university needs to develop a reward system (*i.e. certificates*), where those line managers who devote their time and often go beyond their academic duties in ensuring that ECAs are groomed and nurtured into high calibre academics are recognized and rewarded. These rewards can be in the form of certificates, incentive bonuses, or promotions.

This study further suggests that more studies be conducted exploring female academics' experiences in the academic landscape, who are often tasked with the responsibility of bearing and nurturing children, taking care of their families and balancing all this with their academic work. The amount of work exerted upon them is often doubled and yet they are often judged at the same scale levels as their male counterparts.

7.5 Conclusion

The main purpose of this research study was to explore the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university. The aim was to gain an insight and theorize why early career academics experienced negotiating their belonging in the way that they did. This was achieved through responding to the following critical research questions that underpinned this study. The use of semi structured interviews in this research study enabled data generation of wide perspectives on experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university. It was clear from the rich data generated gathered that much still needed to be achieved in the University of KwaZulu Natal and higher education in general.

The main answers to the questions above suggested that attention needed to be directed to addressing the stated challenges and frustrations often experienced by newly appointed ECAs. It is essential for the issues highlighted in this research study to be addressed to ensure that the experiences experienced by early career academics when they transition into academia are positive and developmental. Some of the neglected areas in higher education must be addressed through institutional changes geared towards developing support structures to properly induct and develop a new generation of academics. This study suggests that giving attention to some identified areas of concern would reduce the high number of young academics leaving the system, and further develop them into scholars who will contribute positively into the academic landscape through fresh and modern perspectives.

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Annexure A: Ethical clearance



21 July 2021

Mr Mlamuli Hlatshwayo 59225

Ms Thabile Zondi

School of Education

Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Hlatshwayo and Mr Zondi

Protocol reference number: HSS/0240/019

Project Title: RE-centering and re-presenting students' and lecturers voices in the South African higher education curriculum and transformation discourses.

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 18 June 2021 has now been approved as follows:

- Addition of co-investigators: Amanda Mbatha 200100456, Bongiwe Majozi 221116173, Bongiwe Ngcobo 208505717, Cheslynn Van De Merwe 984173687, Nkululeko Majozi 213510100, Daphene Pillay 216074163, Thobile Mabuza 214584579, Zamokuhle Magubane 214501893, Thobile Dlamini 221119575, Innocentia Alexander 212545769, Ayanda Ndlovu 212548717

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

cc Academic Leader Research: Dr A Pillay

cc School Administrators: Ms S Jeenarain, Ms M Ngcobo, Ms N Dlamini and Mr SN Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587

Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses:

Edgewood

Howard College

Medical School

Pietermaritzburg

Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Annexure B: Consent letter

University of Kwa Zulu-Natal
College of Humanities
School of Education
Curriculum Studies

Dear Prospective Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Nkululeko Vusumuzi Gift Majozi, student number: 213510100. I am a Masters candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education. I intend doing research aimed at *Learning the game: Exploring the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university*. With this letter, I would like to request your permission to participate in this research study. Should you agree, your participation in the study will take an hour or less in the form of a semi-structured interview session. The times and dates of the sessions are negotiable to ensure that you are not distracted from your duties.

Please note that:

- You are given a choice to participate or not participate in this study. Furthermore, you have a right to stop participating at any time. You will not be penalized so, nor expected to provide a reason for your withdrawal.
- Any information that you share cannot be used against you, and the generated data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- When participating in this study, your confidentiality is guaranteed since I will use pseudonyms when reporting findings.
- The generated data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes, and there are no financial benefits involved.

If you agree to participate in the interview session, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether you agree to the audio recording of the session:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording		

If you have any concerns or questions, please feel to contact me at:

E-mail: sparksmajozi@gmail.com

Cell phone: 074 961 8055

My supervisors are Dr. Mlamuli Hlatshwayo. He is located at the School of Education, Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. His contact details are as follows:

Dr Mlamuli Hlatshwayo

E-mail: Hlatshwayom@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 3927

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Ms. Duduzile Dlamini

HSSREC Research Office administrator

E-mail: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 4557

Looking forward to your favourable response and your contribution to this research study.

Annexure C: Email sent to participants to request participation

Dear Prospective Participant

Student number: 213510100

Research title: Learning the game: *Exploring the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university.*

My name is Nkululeko Vusumuzi Gift Majozi (213510100), and I am a Masters student in the discipline of Curriculum studies at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood campus, School of Education. I am supervised by Dr. Hlatswayo. My study is on the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university. I would like to invite you to be a participant in my study.

Please note that for your convenience, I have attached my approved proposal, group ethics and consent letter for your perusal.

Can you please let me know when you are free to take part in my research study? I can work around your schedule.

Yours faithfully,
Nkululeko Majozi

Annexure D: Turn It in Certificate



Annexure E: Language editor certificate



Dr Jabulani Sibanda
Senior Lecturer: English Education
School of Education
Tel: (053) 491-0142
Email: Jabulani.Sibanda@spu.ac.za
Alternate e-mail: jabusbd@gmail.com
Website: www.spu.ac.za
Cell: 0845282087

05 June 2022

RE: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

To whom it may concern

I hereby confirm that I have proof read and edited the following THESIS using Windows 'Tracking' System to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the author(s) to action:

Learning to play the game: Exploring the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university

Reference

- Author(s): Nkululeko Vusumuzi Gift Majozi
- Student No: 213510100
- Affiliation: University of KwaZulu Natal

Although the greatest care was taken in the editing of this document, the final responsibility for the product rests with the author(s).

Sincerely

05.06.2022

SIGNATURE

This certificate confirms the language editing I have done in my personal capacity and not on behalf of SPU

Annexure F: Semi-structured interview schedule

Research Topic

- Learning to play the game: Exploring the experiences of early career academics in negotiating their belonging at a South African university

Introduction:

- Good Morning/Afternoon ...
- Thank you for availing yourself and giving me this wonderful opportunity to converse with you.

Background

- Ms/Mr/Doctor...
- Tell me about yourself, in terms of where are you from and how has it had an impact on who you are?
- Why did you choose to be an academic and who/what influenced your decision?

Teaching and learning experiences

- Tell me about your teaching experience when you transitioned into the academic arena, were you prepared or supported?
- Do you have any teaching and learning approach/philosophy? If you do, kindly elaborate on it.

If you don't, what do you think could be the contributing factor?

- What does your current teaching load look like?
- What kinds of assessment methods do you use and Why do you prefer them?
- Out of all the teaching aspects that we normally use in the teaching field, which ones do you prefer the most – and from your experience which one do you enjoy the most?
- You know how we always fantasize about being a president for one day, and the things we would change given the opportunity. Now that you have been in the teaching field for so many years – if you were to change anything, what would you change?
- Has the current pandemic affected your teaching and influenced any changes to your teaching?

Research (publications)

- What are your thoughts on publishing research at university?
- Have you ever published your research in journals/book chapters and how was the experience?
- Being an academic means that you have to attend academic conferences to further your expertise in the academic field. Have you ever had the chance to attend such?
How was the experience like?
What did you take from it?
- Have you ever presented your research at an academic conference? Yes, no? If yes, what was that like?
- Have you ever been trained/mentored in research publications? Yes, no? If yes, who trained/mentored you and did you enjoy it?
- Some academics believe that research is at the very heart of the university. Would you agree with that?

Community engagement

- Are you part of any community engagement projects since being employed at university? If yes, what are they?
- Are you involved in any community engagement projects? Yes, no? If yes, what projects are you currently involved in?
- Is there any project you would like to create at university? Yes, no? what would that project look like?

Conclusion

- Did you have any expectations from this interview?
- Is there anything about being an ECA that you felt I should have asked but that I did not?

Concluding remarks:

- Thank you so much, I have taken so much from this conversation and I hope I didn't take much of your time.