
Zambian Higher Education and Induction of Early Career Academics: Current Status and Way Forward

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Abstract

Like many other higher education systems globally, Zambia's higher education terrain is grappling with the new complex situation of increased private higher education providers and the quality of faculty. While questions related to internationalisation and quality assurance are being discussed, very little attention is being paid to the induction process of emerging academics in both public and private providers of higher education. Higher education has experienced huge changes regarding working conditions premised on regular scrutiny of individual research and quality of teaching, and, more importantly, individual academic performance. These changes have come at a time when Zambia has seen a plethora of universities with Early Career Academics (ECAs) becoming part of higher education as they are potentially seen as an inevitable investment. In 2015, the Zambian Higher Education Authority (HEA) was established under the Higher Education Act of 2013 to ensure quality education in Zambian Higher Education, with ECAs expected to play a huge role in driving this ever-growing sector. It is, therefore, imperative that these ECAs are inducted into the academic profession adequately, as different renowned scholars have attested that the significance of experiences of ECAs in the first five years of employment determinately shape their future academic success. There are now emerging issues related to the 'massification' of higher education amid limited facilities and resources and declining numbers of senior academics. It appears that seasoned, experienced, and competent academics are not only increasingly scarce but are either retiring or getting other portfolios away from academics. Against this background, this research paper illuminates the status of ECAs induction (impacting teaching, research, and publication skills) in Zambian universities with a focus on policies, procedures, and prospects. It further examines what facilities and provisions exist for the induction and, more importantly, what Higher Education Institutions are putting in place for the growth and sustainability of the Academic Profession.

Keywords: Induction, Mentorship, Early Career Academic, Zambia, Universities, Higher Education



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Background

The liberalisation of Zambia's higher education has, over the years, necessitated a noticeable increase in universities with the inevitable need to recruit newly graduated faculty members. Like most African universities, the need to retain qualified academics has not eluded Zambia. It is for this reason that the Zambian government, through the formulation of the Higher Education Policy (HEP), hopes to "adopt a coordinated and comprehensive human resource development strategy that would promote both quality and relevant skills among academics" (MoHE, 2019, p.2). The quality improvement in universities or indeed higher learning institutions is intricately linked to the 'empowerment of academics to maximize their unique and potential skills to individually and collectively contribute to the system' (Zemicheal, 2018). The retention, satisfaction, and socialisation of Early Career Academics (ECAs) are necessary for the growth of any higher learning institution (King et al., 2018). These Early Career Academics (ECAs) are recruited as a long-term investment in Workforce for institutional capacity and growth.

As universities strive to generate and disseminate knowledge, it is paramount that the envisioned future through ECAs is nurtured and supported through a long, tough journey into the professoriate (Vorster & Quinn 2015). This journey is seen through the lens of three interrelated academic areas: research success, collegiality or academic citizenship, and personal satisfaction and balance. The realisation of these important attributes is all embedded in early experiences in academia. Additionally, ECAs staying and developing a successful career depends on the support of their departmental colleagues and an operational understanding of the social and political comprehension of the working environment (Staniforth & Harland, 2006; Sutherland & Petersen, 2010). As aptly stated by Laudel and Glaser (2008), ECAs excel gradually as they transition from dependent to independent researchers within and outside an institutional framework.

As envisioned through its Higher Education Act of 2013, Zambia's need to ensure quality education at the tertiary level can only be realized through ECAs who are adequately inducted into the academic profession. Teferra (2016) reiterates this indispensable need, which states that across the world, academic development and training opportunities to equip academics for the teaching profession have grown in significance. Sadly, in most African higher learning institutions, the state of affairs is not as it should be, and correcting it requires the serious attention of responsible leadership (Ssempebwa, Teferra & Bakkabulindi, 2016). Additionally, they point to the lack of proper induction and coaching of the ECAs is spawning many programmes and institutional inefficiencies. Therefore, this research set out to investigate the status of ECAs induction in Zambian higher education with a focus on policies, procedures, and prospects. It further examines what facilities and provisions exist for the induction, growth, and sustainability of the academic profession.

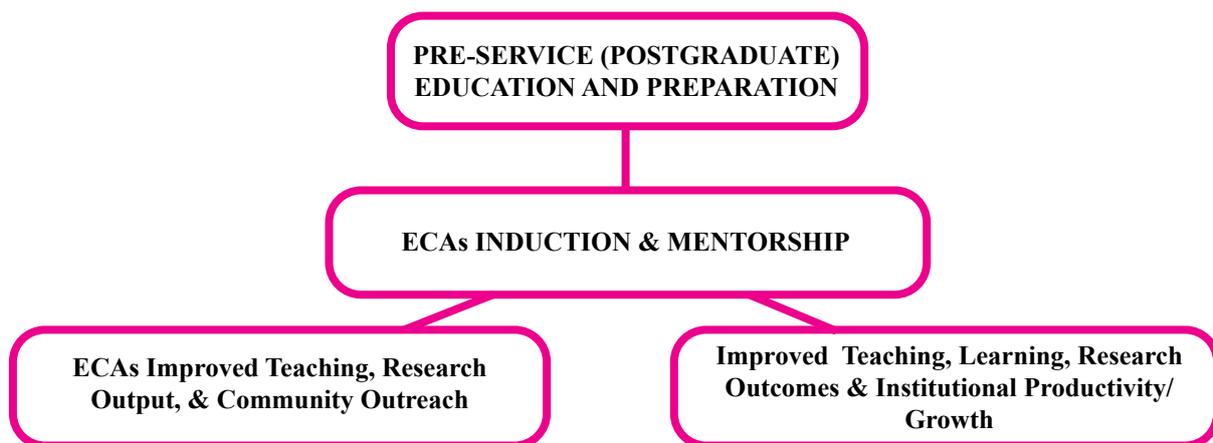
In the context of this paper, higher education refers to the postsecondary education and training offered by universities in Zambia. Induction, on the other hand, refers to a deliberate programme and process of supporting members of staff appointed to new positions to familiarise and acquaint themselves with how things are done in an organisation (Hunter, 2016). Induction encompasses learning about the policies, procedures, values and goals of an organisation and its people (Ndebele, 2013). Thus, induction can be taken as initiation, socialisation or onboarding (Jeske & Olson, 2021) of every new staff member into the culture of their profession. Inductions are carried out in various ways and are often context specific. However, the process of induction cannot be complete without mentorship. Mentorship is an indispensable component of induction in which a newly qualified staff member is supported and guided to navigate their new role by an experienced member, a mentor (Banja, 2022). Lastly, Early Career Academics are considered

junior academics with either an earned master’s or doctoral qualification appointed in a university but with less than five years of teaching and research experience.

In terms of structure, the paper first highlights the background and the theoretical framework supporting the need for ECAs, which is closely followed by the methodology. After that, the key findings are presented and discussed. The paper concludes by highlighting the study’s implications in higher education and how ECAs induction practices can be enhanced in Zambia’s higher education.

Theoretical Framing

The theory of Teacher Development was adopted as a framework to justify the need for ECAs to be inducted after joining academia in Zambia’s higher education sector and premised on Zey’s (1984) Mutual Benefits Model, derived from the Social Exchange theory, the stages of teacher development theory, as later improved upon by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) postulate that an individual will enter and remain in a relationship as long as they meet their needs. The theory thus argues that after pre-service training, a university teacher should be exposed to induction and mentorship to socialise them in their newly found profession for both their growth and organisational benefits. In the context of ECAs’ induction in the higher education sector, the theory claim that after postgraduate education and training, a newly recruited ECA in any university must be exposed to induction and mentorship programmes for them to learn more about what is involved in their new job. The induction programmeme should lead to improved teaching practice, research output and ultimately, positive student outcomes in the university. This entails that acquiring the master’s degree qualification to get a teaching job is insufficient for professional growth. Induction is, therefore, a critical and indispensable bridge for transitioning from pre-employment education and preparation to an academic position where the ECAs are expected to engage effectively in teaching, community outreach, research output and dissemination (Figure 1.0). Through effective induction and mentoring programmes, universities will socialise and develop ECAs to adjust to their newly found role to benefit themselves and the university. This requires that the ECAs are exposed to various activities to assess their growth and suitability for the academic job through meaningful interactions with mentors.



Adapted from Ingersoll & Strong, 2011

Figure 1.0: Components of the Teacher Development Theory

Methodological Considerations

Using a qualitative approach, we adopted a qualitative multiple case study design on Zambia to understand the status of the induction and mentoring processes for the ECAs in Zambia's public and private universities. A multiple case study research design (Hunziker & Blankengel, 2021) provided the lens through which the researchers investigated the variations in induction practices of ECA's in the selected university case studies. The Zambian cases involved all public and private universities with a bias towards three public and three private universities. The six purposively selected universities were a perfect fit for the Zambian case in ECAs induction status as leading institutions of higher education provision with well-established systems and policies for staff recruitment, training, and retention. Data were collected from the six universities using the interview guide and document analysis. Selected university administrators were interviewed as key informants to elicit views on how ECAs were inducted into the respective universities. Through narrative analysis, documents such as institutional policies and statutes, higher education legislation, and policies on staff recruitment and development in Zambia were thoroughly analysed (Mukalula-Kalumbi, 2021). Additionally, other local and international literature sources on academic mentorship and induction in higher learning institutions were critically reviewed to augment the discussion.

Data were collected between June and November 2021. A documentary analysis of Zambia's key institutional and national policy and legislative guidelines preceded the interviews with the selected university administrators. Most of the documents were online from the universities, Ministry of Education, and Higher Education Authority websites, among others.

Data were analysed through thematic analysis. We read the documents for familiarisation; special attention was given to the documents addressing the induction and mentoring of academic staff. A summary (annotation) of the document was then made, and after this, the document was read more critically to identify the key concepts (codes) in the document (Flick, 2014). The identified key concepts were then categorised according to the broad idea and represented. The ideas were then analysed and regrouped according to themes that emerged. The data collected via interview recordings were transcribed and analysed thematically as well. Triangulating the interviews and in-depth document analysis of higher education policies and legislations, institutional statutes, and other secondary sources provided insight into the status and prospects of ECAs mentoring processes in Zambian universities and thereby strengthened the credibility of the findings.

Lastly, all ethical issues were strictly adhered to during data collection, analysis, and writing. Before interviews, all permission protocols were followed, and interviews were conducted with some university administrators via phone. The privacy of the study participants and anonymity of the public and private universities were also maintained through the use of pseudonyms (Government Universities GU#3; GU#2; GU#1; and Private Universities PU#C; PU#B, and PU#A) to ensure non-disclosure of the participant's identities.

Findings and Discussion

Through document analysis and interviews with university administrators, the following emerged as key findings for the study. These included: the recruitment of early academics through the staff development policies in public universities and the lack of such policies in private universities. It was also revealed that there was no national and systematic policy on ECAs induction and mentoring processes in Zambia. Each university had devised its way of inducting and mentoring newly employed academics. Lastly, the study found that the facilities and provisions of the

induction of ECAs were inadequate or limited for effective mentorship and induction as discussed below.

Variations in Recruitment of ECAs in Zambia's Selected Universities

Zambia's tertiary education has undergone considerable changes across political eras embedded in different economic orientations. The expansion noted has also seen considerable attention toward staff development at the academic level. ECAs are recognised as an imperative, providing a window for countries to interrogate their transition in Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) upon engagement. In Zambia, the minimum qualification for ECAs is a master's degree, and the trend noted over the years is the recruitment of lecturers who have master's degrees or through the Staff Development Programme. Since the core business of a university is to teach, research, and engage with the community, ECAs must be inducted in all these critical areas for the efficient delivery of services.

In Zambia, the recruitment of academic members of staff in higher learning institutions is guided by the university statutes provided through the provisions of the Higher Education Act No. 4 of 2013. The Higher Education Act thus provides for the establishment, composition and functions of the university councils in both public and private universities, which are mandated to employ, train and retain both academic and non-academic staff. In Zambia, the recruitment of academic staff is done in two ways. First, universities employ junior academic staff through their staff development policies. Secondly, experienced academic staff is recruited by universities in faculties where their services are needed through a transparent, competitive process. The recruitment of junior academic staff members is the most common way of recruitment in most public universities, while private universities opt for staff already qualified to teach in the university. In Zambia, junior academic members of staff, also known as Early Career Academics (ECAs), are often recruited in universities as the lowest-ranking academic staff members. In Zambia, public universities (GU#3, GU#2, and GU#1) follow the Staff Development Fellowship Policies to recruit young academics in faculties where specialised training at the masters level is needed. One of the University Administrator opined:

For us, we take staff recruitment issues very seriously and have clear and well-documented policies which we follow. This involves a transparent process of identifying young academics by different respective faculties based on mostly their academic performance (GU, R3)

Through this policy, talented young men and women below the age of 30, who graduate with a degree of merit at first degree, are selected through a rigorous and transparent process to undergo master's degree training in a specialised field either at a university within or outside Zambia with the promise of full-time employment as young academics upon successful completion of their study programme. For private universities, though some have well-documented policies on staff recruitment, it appears most of the providers employ already qualified staff as part-time or full-time academic staff. One registrar from a Private University succinctly said:

We do not have any robust programme to recruit and mentor young academics as we are only eight years in operation. We recruit already qualified faculty who immediately start service provision. We also do not even have a programme to facilitate professional growth at PhD level (PU, R6)

Since early 2000, public universities have emphasised recruiting ECAs through the Staff Development Training (SDT) programme. The Staff Development and Training policy (2014)

at one of the public universities (#PU2) revealed that 10% of government funding on personal emoluments supports the staff development budget, which is insufficient, forcing universities to look for externally supported budgets. The SDT targeted high-performing students with merit or distinction who underwent training at PhD and master's level as the minimum entry requirement for one to lecture in a university. At another university (GU#1), ECAs are assimilated through the Staff Development Programme (SDP) and direct entrants with masters' degrees or PhDs. In the succeeding years, which have seen insufficient funding from the government, public universities recruit already qualified personnel through advertisements. The recruitment of lecturers is usually done when a vacancy is noted due to resignation or death. The robust staff development programmes have not been sustained over time.

Unlike in other jurisdictions, the minimum qualification for entry into a junior academic position is a master's degree in Zambia, despite conversations on the need to focus on PhD holders (Higher Education Act, 2013). Once one joins the university as a junior academic, they are expected to undergo the processes of induction and mentorship for professional socialisation into academia (Jeske & Olson, 2021). It is worth noting that induction programmes for early career academics are carried out differently depending on the policies put in place by a given university. The national policy on higher education appears to be about how early academics are to be inducted and mentored upon joining institutions of higher learning in Zambia (MoHE, 2019). It should also be noted that the designs of the induction programmes for early academics depend on the specialisation in which one is employed. For instance, it was found that young academics in science-based fields such as medicine were more likely to undergo robust induction and mentorship programmes compared to those in social sciences and education fields (Broekhuizen et al., 2021). This may be due to the clinical expertise required for those in science-based fields compared to those in social sciences.

The need for effective induction and mentorship processes for early academics in universities is premised on enhanced productivity through teaching, research, and community outreach (Mushemeza, 2016). This resonates with the argument that the quality of academic staff has a bearing on university outcomes (HEA, 2021). Therefore, those who take up academic jobs must be well-inducted and mentored to contribute to effective teaching, research, and community outreach. This is key, especially owing to the proliferation of junior and less experienced academic staff in many universities compared to senior and experienced ones (HEA, 2021). For instance, in 2020, there were over 3,840 junior academic members of staff compared to 262 at the rank of professor in Zambian universities (HEA, 2021). More so, most of those teaching in universities had a master's degree qualification compared to those with a PhD.

As earlier alluded, there is no clear policy on how universities should induct and mentor junior academic staff members. This is owing to the autonomy of the universities. As such, each university has unique ways of providing induction. What is common, however, is the fact that the induction focuses on socialising the new ECAs into teaching, research, and community outreach.

No Structured Induction and Mentoring Policies in Zambia's Universities

Induction retains an important role in assimilating newcomers into an academic career, and according to policy in public universities, it is supposed to be undertaken with all ECAs. The importance of inducting ECAs lies in the processes undertaken to socialise them to the institutional working culture (Mwelwa et al., 2015) and facilitate adaptation to the multifaceted aspects of university teaching and research. To effectively socialise novice lecturers in universities, conducting induction and mentoring is paramount as continuous processes yield results over

time. In the process, new entrants will be able to know what is expected of them and how they can effectively contribute to the universities. There is a need to provide an overview of the university's history, products, and services, as well as its mission, culture, and values. To give a clear picture of the status quo in Zambian universities, we must contextualise the content of Staff Development Training (SDT) policies in place and what takes effect in terms of the policy after the probationary period. What was noted was that public universities have, in effect, training policies, especially for those lecturers who hope to pursue further studies, as well as those who are employed through the SDT programme and are expected to read for their master's degree as the minimum entry requirement.

The trend in Zambia's public universities regarding novice lecturers' induction and mentoring is rather precarious and, to a very large extent, lacking in many areas. When staff development fellows graduate as lecturers, they often appoint faculty and are left alone to navigate the academic landscape. One important trend noted is that novice lecturers receive very little mentoring assistance at the point of joining the profession and the general induction conducted. In the case of the public university GU#2, according to the Staff Development Training policy, it is a requirement that as trainees transit through to becoming novice lecturers, they are inducted into the university to understand its ways of working and what contribution they are expected to make. The university propagates effective monitoring and evaluation for trainees under the SDT to be conducted in collaboration with the Dean, HoD, and Head of the unit.

Completing the training programme ushers the trainees into their careers as lecturers, and from this point, university GU#2 has no induction or mentorship policy. According to one of the participants at this university:

The probationary period for newly recruited personnel is three years, within which they are expected to meet the set targets to achieve within the sphere of teaching, research and publication, and community engagement (GU, R5)

The ECAs have no structured induction and mentoring programme in terms of policy and practice; they are left to navigate the academic environment independently. In most cases, novice lecturers conduct their first lectures alone without guidance from their immediate supervisors.

As for University GU#3, guidelines for induction for newly recruited lecturers are in place with a phased approach. The initial induction is a general one, which covers the whole institution as a whole where the inductee is oriented on the goals and vision of the university, how the university is organised, and the different schools as well as where they are housed. The new academic has to be inducted through the disciplinary and grievance codes as well as the terms of reference of employment. One important policy that has permeated public universities recently has been the newly adopted policies on workload. The induction process identifies the workload policy as an important feature because it has become the blueprint of academic work that categorically breaks down a lecturer's activities within the university (Amini-Philips & Okonmah, 2020). The second part of the induction is supposed to be done by the Dean's office in conjunction with the department, where the ECA is inducted on the intricacies of teaching and research. They are enlightened on the number of academic programmes the department houses, the courses, and student numbers. At this point, the induction ends as the ECAs are considered ready for 'work' and allocated courses to independently manage, leaving them to fit into the new environment.

In most cases, the new entrants are given undergraduate courses to manage. Important aspects of academic work, such as pedagogical approaches and research, are neglected (Ndebele, 2013). Providing the needed psychological and professional guidance from senior academic members

is usually nonexistent unless sought after by the inductee.

The study established that the six public and private universities have no statutory policy for mentoring newly recruited lecturers. Without a comprehensive policy framework for mentoring, systematically monitoring novice academics' progress in universities becomes difficult. As highlighted by Banja et al. (2018), mentorship provides opportunities where novice lecturers are helped with preparation of teaching notes, research, teaching, development of course materials, counseling students, writing journal articles, evaluation of students' work, self-evaluation and writing conference papers. At the institutional level, the expectations are that after successful induction at the departmental level, the ECAs are supposed to be merged into a mentoring programme by experienced lecturers (Erasmus et al., 2013).

All teaching activities are supposed to be done with the guidance of senior lecturers, but the reality is not as such. One of the interviewees at one of the private universities (PU#C) indicated that:

ECAs find themselves in a situation where they have had to learn the ropes with very little help from department members. It is incumbent upon an individual young lecturer to engage the senior lecturers in cases needing guidance. There are no systematic procedures in place where ECAs are provided with the needed guidance (PU, R7)

In the case of course coordination, in an ideal situation, ECAs, upon engagement, should co-ordinate courses to familiarise themselves with what is expected. This laxity is exhibited even in research, where very little help is provided for new entrants in the profession. This is even though research productivity is the major catalyst for academic advancement. According to Nicholls (2005, p.619), "there is a high correlation for new lecturers' role as being engaged in research, publishing and establishing credibility in their designated field of knowledge..." However, senior lecturers provide very little mentoring, making it difficult for ECAs to navigate the uncertainties associated with their career development (Nastesjo, 2020). In the absence of systematic mentoring for ECAs, it becomes very difficult to collaborate in research activities with seasoned academics. ECAs are left with no choice but to explore the needs and demands of research and publishing to propagate self-growth in academia.

Specialised Departments Responsible for Provision of Facilities and ECAs Induction and Mentorship in Zambia

The study also established that in higher learning institutions (Public and Private) where mentorship programmes for ECAs were available, the mentees were exposed to several available facilities and provisions that made the mentorship processes easier. These include exposure to the current teaching and learning materials, the academic sessional dates, access to teaching facilities and equipment, and engagement in other administrative duties. The ECAs also required exposure to capacity-building activities such as conferences, workshops and observing others teach to promote professional growth (Mathibedi, 2019)

It was also revealed that in almost all the universities, the specialised departments in which the ECAs were employed took up the responsibility of identifying mentors who worked with the Head of a Department to initiate the newly employed lecturers on how work is done. The assigned mentor was usually an experienced senior faculty member and not necessarily from the same department (Erasmus et al., 2013) as the ECAs. This resonates with Ekechusu and Norsfall (2015), who argued that for mentorship to be effective, the mentors must cultivate a positive and lasting relationship with the mentee. More so, they should be more experienced in terms of

teaching research experience, research and development, academic leadership, and community engagement, among others. One of the Vice Chancellor of a private university had this to say:

Even if we do not have documented policies on faculty mentorship and growth, we naturally expect that the different schools and departments where staff are employed should facilitate such activities of academic growth. These should be around issues of teaching, research and community engagement (PU, R4)

What Zambian Higher Education Institutions are putting in place for growth and sustainability of the Academic Profession

The Academic Profession in Africa and Zambia, in particular, has to start thinking outside the box to steer growth and sustainability, especially concerning inducting and mentoring Early Career Academics. Zambian public and private universities must consider critical mentoring strategies, similar to what Mgaiwa and Kapinga (2021) propose for Tanzania. Both theoretical and empirical data from the qualitative narratives conducted in higher learning institutions in Zambia suggest that going forward. Amid vivid challenges for ECA, there is a need to examine how the following can be strengthened closely: Mentoring of ECA through peer support, having workable mentoring models and possibly putting in place mechanisms not only for the training of mentors but also sharing good practices among the mentors (Thomas et al., 2015). These could be in the core areas of teaching, research, and community engagement. This is critical in the Zambian terrain where experienced faculty are increasingly reducing in numbers. It is important to allow mentors to share their experience and knowledge with the upcoming generation of academics, as Mendez et al. (2019) argue. One of the seasoned administrators from a Government University (GU#3) lamented that:

...in order for Zambian universities to start experiencing relative growth and sustainability, comprehensive frameworks for mentoring will be based on adequate funding and peer support. The overall focus should be on the core functionalities of university education which is premised on teaching, research and public service (GU, R1)

Most of the universities in Zambia have very few seasoned academics who can assume the role of mentors. With this deficiency in higher education, it is therefore desirable to foster some level of peer support among the ECAs (Merga & Mason, 2021). This will ensure, in its own right, the growth and sustainability of the academic profession in Zambia and possibly most of Africa. For growth and sustainability to be attained in Zambian universities, it might be helpful to consider giving some form of accreditation to those teaching in higher education. For instance, ECAs can obtain at least a postgraduate certificate in teaching to teach at any of the universities in Zambia, which can be obtained from either higher education institutions or regulatory bodies like the Higher Education Authority (HEA). This was argued by most of the participants of the study. One of the key academic informants from a public University argued:

Higher Education in Zambia should now begin to operate like the Teaching Council of Zambia, where all those who step into these institutions ought to be licensed through certification and completion of the special training for higher education. This will help in maintaining quality and generally making sure the ECA are given the right pedagogy for instructions in Higher Education Institutions (GU, R2)

This perspective is similar to practices obtained in most European countries (Teferra, 2016). For example, to teach in one of these universities, academics must be accredited through the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). Apart from the mentoring aspects related to newly

qualified academics, this move has the potential to bring the much-desired quality in Higher Education terrain in Zambia. In other countries, especially in the US, ECA mentoring, especially in teaching, has been made university practice through induction and specific facets of teaching in HE (Bean, Lucas, & Hyers, 2014). It is possible for Zambia's leading public universities, such as the University of Zambia, to design specific and targeted programmes for induction and mentorship that can be shared with other higher education institutions.

Most of those who enter academia with little or no pedagogical preparation for teaching and other university responsibilities often find that the job requirements do not match their university training and skills. Consequently, some ECAs lack pedagogical competence in their teaching (Greer, Cathcart, & Neale, 2016), leading some to criticise their university curricula for producing 'half-baked' graduates. Most participants, therefore, suggested introducing a special mentorship course for those coming to teach without pedagogical experience.

It appears from the literature that universities, especially in Zambia and Africa put little emphasis on preparing ECA despite teaching, research, and community engagement is the core of their business. Budge (2014) argues that this lack of preparation results in ECAs facing challenges ranging from insufficient knowledge and contextualised approaches to managing academia. The bigger issue of achieving quality in the face of issues related to the massification of African higher education and diversity in terms of background and socio-economic status. In the face of these challenges, to achieve much-desired growth and sustainability, there is a need to carefully prepare ECAs to work in such a challenging and diverse environment to achieve much-desired productivity (Nstesjo, 2020). It is worth remembering that mentoring has been pointed out as one of the strategies for (ECAs) preparation and support for a smooth transition into academia, as noted by Mgaiwa and Kapinga (2021).

Higher education institutions are essential in promoting national growth and sustainability (Mwelwa et al., 2021). They are key agents in the education of future leaders that will contribute to the successful realisation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The quality of academia usually drives Higher Education initiatives in place, and sustainable growth will surely depend on the induction and mentorship programmes for emerging scholars.

Implications of Induction to Lecturers, Universities and Higher Education

The induction and mentorship programmes have implications in Zambia's higher education and possibly other African countries in terms of having academicians who are effective teachers with solid pedagogical and research skills (Van Tonder, 2021) in line with the theory of teacher development. Based on the evidence illuminated from Zambia, the next generation of scholars will leave much to be desired in the face of a lack of clear induction and mentoring guidelines, which might have huge implications for the provision of quality education. In other words, the quality of teaching, research, and community engagement might make these academics have huge deficits in realising the much-desired productivity since induction and mentorship are done haphazardly across different universities in Zambia's higher education sector. Poor mentorship of ECAs will have a long-term impact, affecting both the quality of education at universities and university rankings, as teaching, research output, and citation index are critical factors in university visibility and quality (Thomas et al., 2015). With increasing competition in global universities, the ranking phenomenon has put additional pressure on universities to perform exceptionally well. Without well-thought-out induction and mentorship programmes, sustaining and improving the rankings will increasingly become challenging.

The most critical issues to pay attention to, especially in Zambia's higher education landscape, are mentorship and ageing senior academic retiring, coupled with employment freezes in most higher education institutions. From Masaiti et al. (2021), most academic departments are dominated by junior academics; hence the need to mentor new faculty members is a huge reality to which most universities pay little attention in preparing the ECAs.

It is pertinent that universities strive to put in place multifocal policies to deal with all aspects of academic and professional growth adequately. Mentoring policies must look at areas of developing teaching and learning and Workforce development and must be tailored towards specialisation. These policies will create a context necessary for meaningful mentoring. Bearing that learning is a multiple-avenue process, university systems must enhance mentoring programmes and peer support systems in supervision, learning, and teaching assessment (Mathibedi, 2019). Secondly, universities must implement measures to incentivise excellence by enhancing educational qualifications for mentors.

Future Prospects

We must remember that Zambia's resilient academic labour will remain the backbone of a focused process of training generations of the needed Workforce at the national level. Transitioning from a novice lecturer to an accomplished academician is marred with several challenges that can be overcome with induction and mentoring (Dishena & Mokoena, 2016). Hence the need to invest massively in ECAs to cope and withstand the increased working environment, as argued by Betlewski (2019). The success of Zambia's higher education sector will be measured by the academic outputs such as the publications and citations, collaborations and networking, completed supervision of masters and PhD students and, more importantly, research and successful grant application. These can only be realised if the ECAs are effectively initiated into academia with greater support for growth and retention (Hunter, 2016).

To a very large extent, mentoring young academics impacts the quality of teaching and research undertaken. Well-structured mentoring policies have the potential to alter the career trajectory of novices at individual and institutional levels. As highlighted by Law et al. (2014), mentoring can turn challenges into opportunities to mitigate inexperienced lecturers' professional and occupational problems. Zambian universities must fully employ several measures to benefit from the well-instituted induction and mentoring environment.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to discuss Zambian Higher Education concerning the induction of Early Career Academics in public and private universities. The focus was on illuminating the current status and way forward. In doing so, the following context was discussed as its major findings: variations in the recruitment of ECAs in Zambia's Higher Education Sector, the non-availability of structured induction and mentoring policies in Zambia's public and private universities and last but not least, limited or non-availability of specialised departments responsible for the provision of facilities Induction and Mentorship programmes for ECAs in Zambia. The paper also has provided key implications and prospects.

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