



RESEARCH CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER
EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
PRESENTED BY THE NEW GENERATION OF ACADEMICS PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

Investing in the development of research capacities among young academics from designated groups has become a central part of planning for the South African government and universities. Research capacity development initiatives have therefore increased significantly over the years, with most universities initiating multi-faceted approaches to providing training for research staff and funding through research grants. This study explored the concept of research capacity development in South African higher education by investigating and analysing the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) in selected South African universities.

It was noted that these opportunities and challenges could be either constraining or enabling for the nGAP programme in general, as well as for participants in the study, who are nGAP lecturers, mentors and managers. Determining the factors that enable or constrain the implementation of the nGAP was achieved by exploring the motivation of participants to be part of the nGAP, examining the mechanisms employed by participating universities to support the programme and the extent to which these constrain or enable its implementation; as well as investigating the views and experiences of participants about the implementation of the different components of the nGAP in their respective universities.

This study is the first qualitative research to investigate and analyse the factors that affect the implementation of the nGAP at institutional levels, from the point of view of the lecturers, managers and mentors participating in the programme. This is a timely study, given that the nGAP is in its sixth year of existence, which marks the conclusion of training for the first cohort participating in the programme. The programme was initiated in 2016 to recruit, develop and retain young and emerging academics from designated groups across the twenty-six universities. The nGAP has the long-term goal of transforming the academic staff demographics in the South African higher education sector.

The study is located within the interpretivist paradigm, therefore qualitative research methodologies and instruments were applied. The sample for the study comprised eight lecturers, six mentors and five managers participating in the nGAP at the eight public universities. A total of nineteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants, with the purpose of understanding their views and experiences, and the contexts within which they operate, as well as how the implementation of nGAP functioned. The study was limited

because it only focused on the implementation of the nGAP as one of the many strategies for developing research capacities in South African public higher education institutions. Although there are other research capacity development programmes implemented by universities, the majority are not government sponsored and are therefore not very well known. It would therefore have been a daunting task to even begin to expand the focus of such programmes, especially considering the time limitations and financial constraints of the study. This limitation provides an opportunity for further research to be conducted on how these other programmes compare to the nGAP, and how their implementation and support vary at different universities. Only eight universities out of the 26 that participated in the implementation of the nGAP took part in the study.

The rich narrative data produced by the study was analysed through the lens of the capability approach, which provided a structure for reflecting on factors associated with the participants' environments and circumstances that could suggest policies for improving the implementation of the nGAP at institutional and national level.

Evidence produced by the study indicates the nGAP is a valuable programme, based on sound principles and good intentions. However, its implementation at the institutional level is both constrained and enabled by several factors at the individual and institutional levels. These tend to affect the experiences of the three categories of participants in the study, both negatively and positively. These issues include institutional cultures and climate, the university processes and systems, the contradiction between national policy and practices at institutional level, the lack of policy to guide mentoring for the programme and the inflexible implementation of the different features of the programme. The findings are intended to contribute towards a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of the nGAP.

The study's contribution to theory is through its conceptualisation of the nGAP as a research capacity development programme, with its implementation taking place at three interconnected and interrelated levels: individual, institution and government. The study was also intended to influence policy and practice in government and in the higher education system, in order to strengthen the nGAP implementation processes. Mentoring was one aspect of the nGAP that featured strongly in the narratives of the three categories of participants, particularly the lectures and mentors. It was found to be constrained, mainly by the lack of policy or any other

guiding framework. As part of its contribution to new knowledge, the study proposes a model for the development of the nGAP mentoring framework to improve mentoring practices in the programme. It is hoped that this will help to develop a mentoring policy/ framework for the nGAP would strengthen the debate around mentoring in the South African higher education sector.

Keywords: higher education, research capacity, research capacity development, new generation academics, early-career academics.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own thesis and has never been submitted for examination or any degree at any other University. The work is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.


M. A. MAGABANE

July 2022

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Oriah Motlhamme Mokubyane and Rosinah Motshodi Mokubyane, who instilled in us the importance of education, consistency and hard work. You certainly prepared us for this world. To my late uncle, Alfred Moshire Mokubyane, it is unfortunate that neither you nor my father are here to witness this. Thank you for the legacy you both left behind - it remains.

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I feel exceptionally grateful to the participants in this study, whose invaluable contributions I will forever appreciate. Without their contributions, the study would not have been a success. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the universities that granted permission to conduct research on their campuses, as well as the support they provided.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ARC	Agricultural Research Council
ASSAf	Academy of Science of South Africa
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CoEs	centres of excellence
CoPs	communities of practice
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation
DST	Department of Science and Technology
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
HAIs	historically advantaged institutions
HDI	historically disadvantaged institutions
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HESA	Higher Education South Africa
HoD	head of department
HRDC	Human Resource Development Council of South Africa
MEDUNSA	Medical University of South Africa
MRC	Medical Research Council
NDP	National Development Plan
NFs	national facilities
NFF	New Funding Framework
nGAP	new Generation of Academics Programme
NESP	Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme
NPC	National Planning Commission
NRDS	National Research and Development Strategy
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSI	National Systems of Innovation
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RAWOO	Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council
RCD	Research Capacity Development
RDG	research development grant

R&D	research and development
SARChI	South African Research Chairs Initiative
SARUA	Southern African Regional Universities Association
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SoPs	standard operating procedures
SSAUF	Staffing South African Universities Framework
TDG	teaching development grant
UCDG	University Capacity Development Grant
UCDP	University Capacity Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAF	Universities South Africa

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

South Africa has an urgent need to increase the number of doctoral graduates, and this is evident in the many government policies and investments that have been made over the years, by both government and universities, to address this important need. Investing in the development of the research capabilities of young academics, particularly those from designated groups, has become a central to the planning of the South African government and universities. Research capacity development initiatives have increased significantly over the years, with most universities initiating multi-faceted approaches to providing training for research staff and funding them through research grants.

It has been noted, however, that developing younger academics from designated groups comes with its own challenges, as most of these young people are not attracted to academic careers. Several studies, such as the one conducted by the Human Resource Development Council of South Africa (HRDC) have indicated that most of these young people do not stay in the higher education sector long enough to develop an interest in academic careers; instead, they are attracted to the private sector and government, as careers in these sectors offer competitive salary packages. Government and the universities therefore needed to develop a dedicated programme to attract young people to academic careers, particularly those from designated groups, who would normally consider other careers.

This study investigated the opportunities and challenges resulting from the implementation of the new Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP), a research capacity development programme that seeks to recruit young people from designated groups into academic positions in the South African higher education sector and retain them in such positions. The study is the first to investigate the factors that could be constraining or enabling the implementation of the nGAP from the point of view of lecturers, managers and mentors. It is hoped that its findings will contribute to and influence policy and practice at both the institutional and government levels. The study therefore serves the crucial purpose of ensuring that in the current economically challenging times, when there have been significant protests regarding funding for higher education in South Africa, the funding allocated to the nGAP is utilised in ways that benefit the beneficiaries, and the higher education sector as a whole.

This chapter provides the background and describes the context within which the selected case studies occurred, as well as information about how the nGAP was originally conceived. This is followed by a problem statement and a rationale for why this topic is worthy of investigation. The chapter goes on to describe the research process that was undertaken, the positionality of the researcher, and how this influenced the interpretation of the findings.

1.2 Background and context

1.2.1 A brief history of the South African public higher education system

Prior to 1994, the South African higher education system was differentiated and diversified along racial lines, ethnicity geographical location and language. Policies implemented by the then regime, referred to as ‘apartheid’, were aimed at benefiting what is commonly known as the historically advantaged institutions (HAIs), which were mostly urban, at the expense of the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) most of which are located in rural areas. Although the higher education system has evolved over time from a differentiated system based on racial discrimination to a democratic dispensation which focuses on issues of equity and redress, the patterns of advantage and disadvantage are still visible (CHE, 2000; CHE, 2004; DoE, 2007; DHET, 2013a; DHET, 2013b; DHET, 2014a).

As emphasised by Dada (2007), during the post-democratic dispensation, the government has focused on restructuring the higher education system in order to serve democratic principles and the goals of equity and redress. Accordingly, most of its efforts were geared towards creating a transformed, single coordinated higher education system that would better serve all the sectors of the South African society. As accurately captured by Dada (2007), the restructuring process involved the merging of many institutions, the dissolution of some campuses and institutions, and the subsequent change, in 2005, from 36 to 23 public higher education institutions. Three additional universities were established in 2013 and 2014 after the unbundling of the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA), (now Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University) from the University of Limpopo, bringing the total number of public universities in South Africa to 26. Apart from decreasing the number of institutions, the restructuring process has resulted in the South African higher education system comprising three types of institutions, namely:

- **universities**, which offer traditional, formative and professional undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and research;

- **comprehensive universities**, which offer a mix of career-focused diplomas and professional degrees; and
- **universities of technology**, which offer career- oriented programmes at undergraduate certificate and diploma levels.

1.2.2 Persistent inequalities in higher education

In their study of the challenges and opportunities for new faculty in South African higher education, Sehoole and Ojo (2015) commented on the negative effects that the institutional mergers have had on research capacity development in South African higher education. The study argues that most staff from former technikons did not have Master's or PhD degrees at the time when the mergers were taking place and their institutions were incorporated into the university system. The majority of them were considered underqualified, therefore impacting the profile of staff. According to the authors, from a historical point of view, previously black universities/ HDIs focused on teaching and most of their staff did not have PhDs. On the other hand, historically white institutions were advantaged, in the sense that they were empowered by law and through funding to offer postgraduate programmes and engage in research. Staff were required to have or study for Masters and PhD degrees, which gave them an advantage after the mergers, compared with their counterparts from HDIs and former technikons. These were challenges that forced government to develop redress policies and programmes such as the nGAP, which represents an attempt to alleviate these obvious inequalities in the system.

Despite all the interventions and efforts made by the new government to restructure and transform the higher education system, the country continues to reflect a higher education system that is characterised by inequities. These are evident in the unequal distribution of resources, such as funding, infrastructure, staffing expertise, performance output and geographical location. It is undeniable that, to a varying extent, these factors influence the ways in which universities develop their research capacities or visualise developing the capacity of young and emerging researchers. As argued by Jansen (2004), the current South African higher education system is still characterised by a few established and well-resourced universities on the one hand, and several underdeveloped and under-resourced universities on the other. The latter have been found to perform poorly in terms of the quality of the learning experience offered to students, with low standards of teaching and negligible research outputs. Owing to the legacy of apartheid, South African universities find themselves at different levels of

development, and not all of them have the capacity to formulate or implement good strategies and programmes for developing research capacity among young and emerging academics.

1.2.3 The problem of an aging workforce

In addition to the factors listed above, one of the important issues for South African higher education is guaranteeing that there will be enough capable academics to fill the knowledge gap when the current aging staff retire (CHE, 2016). The reality is that most of the aging academic workforce, who are mostly at senior or professor level, will be retiring soon and creating a major knowledge gap in the higher education sector.

The Higher Education Information Management System (HEMIS) hosts to data collected by government from universities for funding and planning purposes for steering the system and for monitoring the sector. Figure 1.1 presents data from the HEMIS which indicates that in 2019 the total number of permanent and contract instructional and research staff was 26 070. Of this total, 36% had a PhD qualification. In terms of racial classification, 43% were from designated groups (African, Coloured and Indian). With regard to age, 30% were younger than 45 while 61% was between 45 and 70. This is an indication that the sector has more people who will be leaving (retiring) in the next 10 to 15 years, compared with those who are young enough to stay and replace them.

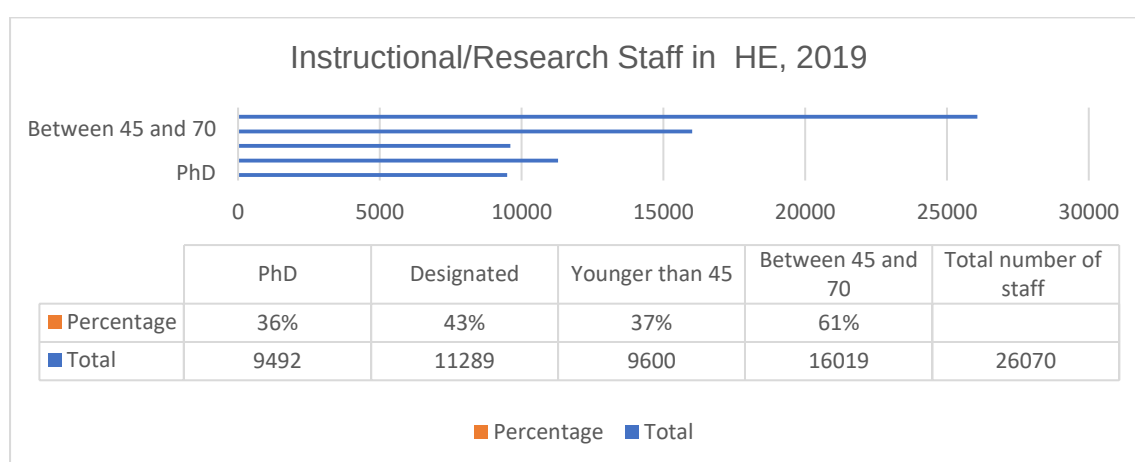


Figure 1.1: Summary of instructional/research staff in the higher education sector by age, designation and doctoral qualification

Source: HEMIS (2019)

Furthermore, the 2019 audited HEMIS data indicated that, out of a total of 19 901 permanently appointed academic staff members in the higher education sector. 2 288 were full professors and 2 407 were associate professors. A total of 1 216 professors and 738 associate professors were aged between 55 and 70, implying that some had already reached the retirement age, while others were due for retirement in the following five to ten years.

This is not a positive prospect, and it could have profoundly negative implications for knowledge production and academic leadership in the future. The challenge for government and the higher education sector is therefore to ensure the transformation of the academic workforce by appointing young academics from designated groups and retaining them in permanent academic positions at the universities. There will be great loss of capability if no efforts are made to pass on knowledge and develop a younger academic workforce that is able to take over and assume responsibility for future academic functioning.

To exacerbate the situation, there are insufficient numbers of young academics from designated groups who have the doctoral qualifications that would equip them to take over as the next generation of academic staff. This situation could create dangerous practices such as gatekeeping with regard to knowledge dissemination, since the nGAP model requires that senior academics become mentors of the nGAP scholars. These senior academics are sufficiently influential to promote dominant discourses. Their biases could remain unchecked because of the way the programme is designed, keep the nGAP scholars on the margins or out of the discourse altogether. Although the nGAP mentoring promotes collaboration between senior academics and the nGAP scholars, such relationships may often result in a one-way flow of knowledge from ‘senior’ to ‘junior’ academics.

Based on their research on the declining demand for faculty positions in Europe, Huisman, De Weert and Bartelse (2002), supported by Selesho and Naile (2014), looked at factors that could account for the low rate of the retention of academic staff at selected universities in South Africa. They pointed out that higher education institutions in South Africa and internationally are facing challenges stemming from the changing economic environments, contests from rival institutions, maintaining the balance between teaching and research and an aging workforce demographic (Huisman, De Weert and Bartelse, 2002; Selesho and Naile 2014).

1.2.6 Attempts by government to equalise higher education

Several government initiatives have been undertaken over the past twenty-five years that attempt to equalise the higher education system. These include initiating institutional mergers, the development of policies and regulations to promote transformation, the quality of provision, equity and redress, as well as the strengthening of research and research capacity in universities. However, as argued by Tanimoto and Fujii (2003), the current levels of research capacity in the South African higher education system still reflect investments made in the past by the apartheid government, particularly in research and development activities requiring physical capital (investments in research and development) and human capital (research staff to manage and conduct research activities at universities).

It is in this context that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) identified the training of young and emerging academic staff, improvement in the quantity and quality of research and the strengthening of postgraduate enrolments and outputs as some of the factors that must be prioritised, as they affect research capacity in South African higher education institutions (DHET, 2013a). However, it has been noted by some researchers that several initiatives that have been implemented by the universities in an attempt to increase the number of young academics in the system have not been able to fully realise this objective.

The Department of Science and Technology (DST), which was delegated to coordinate and implement a comprehensive national system of innovation (NSI), and improve the country's research capacity, adopted the National Research and Development Strategy (NRDS) in 2002. The aim of this initiative was to increase the country's investment in research and development (R&D) to 2% of gross domestic product by 2018, and double the country's contribution to global research outputs from 0.5% in 2002 to 1% by 2018 (Herman & Sehoole, 2018). To meet these targets, the National Research Foundation (NRF), the nation's foremost research funding agency, was assigned the task of developing high-quality doctoral credentials which would allow the nation to compete in the knowledge economy (Sehoole & Herman (2018). Even so, a report compiled by the DST and the NRF indicated that these targets were far from being achieved. It was reported back in 2007 that the country produced only 1,274 doctoral graduates. As highlighted in the report issued by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), in the same year there was a total of 26 PhDs per million of the population, which was low in comparison with other developing countries (ASSAf, 2010). This prompted the development

of new strategic plans and policies between 2010 and 2016, and the formulation of plans for increasing the number of PhDs and increasing the amount of research conducted in the country.

1.2.7 The National Development Plan

The National Development Plan: Vision for 2030 (NPC, 2012) was introduced by the government as its macroeconomic growth plan. It set the national target at 100 Ph D graduates per one million of the population, to be achieved by 2030. According to Herman and Sehoole (2018), this translates to 6370 doctoral graduates per year, nearly five times higher than the 2007 figure. In developing the NDP, the National Planning Commission highlighted that, in order to address past disparities, 80% of all funded grant holders pursuing PhDs must be Black; and up to 60% must be female (Herman & Sehoole, 2018).

1.2.8 Initiatives by the National Research Foundation

The NRF's Thuthuka Programme was one of the programmes that was introduced to promote the achievement of PhD qualifications, as well as fast-track the development of the research capacities of early career academics employed at various South African universities. Particularly, the Thuthuka funding instrument aims to develop human capital and to improve the research capacities of researchers and scholars from designated groups (Black [African, Indian and Coloured], female or persons with disabilities) with the ultimate aim of redressing historical imbalances. This is done in partnership with public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), science councils and other public research institutions, as recognised by the NRF as eligible beneficiary institutions for NRF funding. Emerging/early career researchers and scholars will be supported under the following three tracks:

- **PhD Track:** for applicants intending to obtain a doctoral degree within the funding period;
- **Post-PhD Track:** for applicants that have recently completed their doctoral degree and are transitioning to become established researchers, by strengthening their research capabilities; and
- **NRF Rating Track:** for applicants, that have not been able to realise their potential or sustain their research ability and are now intending to apply for an NRF rating within the six-year funding period.

The National Research Foundation reported in 2015 that a total of 662 students had benefited from funding provided through the Thuthuka Programme between 2014 and 2015. Of the total recipients, 59% were female and 69% were Black, with a shortfall of 11% in the equity target (Herman & Sehoole, 2018).

The NRF introduced three other initiatives, with a view to increasing research capacity in the country's higher education: they were The Centres of Excellence (CoEs), the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI), and the National Facilities (NFs). These were described as follows in the NRF Strategic Plan, 2015 to 2020: The CoEs were implemented in 2004 to focus on promoting collaborative and interdisciplinary research. The main aim of the CoEs was to enhance research and knowledge production, as well as develop capacity in the long term (NRF, 2016).

The objectives of the SARChI were to attract and retain excellence in research and innovation at South African public universities through the establishment of research chairs with long-term investment trajectories of up to 15 years. Evidence has shown that research chair holders supervised approximately twice as many PhD students and three times more post-doctorates than any other grant holders (NRF, 2011).

The investments highlighted above demonstrate the seriousness with which the South African government took the role of research development and the need to replenish the next generation of academics. Other science councils, such as the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), have instituted similar initiatives to support research capacity development in their respective areas.

1.2.9 Initiatives by the Department of Higher Education and Training (formerly DoE)

In 2004, the then Department of Education (now Higher Education and Training) published the New Funding Framework (NFF) for universities, which was reviewed in 2013. The NFF is goal-orientated and performance driven. Its main purpose is to enable the distribution of government funding, both as block grants to institutions and as those earmarked for individuals. Grants were made to institutions with approved institutional plans that were in alignment with the national goals and priorities (DoE, 2004). The NFF has two main elements, namely **block grants** and **earmarked grants**:

Block grants are not allocated to compensate for the operational expenditures of higher education institutions. The funds are associated with the delivery of teaching and research-related activities, and comprise approximately 70% of the total state budget allocations to universities. The funds are provided for the operational costs of teaching and learning activities at the universities (DHET, 2016). However, the block grant funds controlled by the University Council and can be utilised for other purposes at the discretion of the council and management. **Earmarked grants** are allocated for specific purposes, such as research capacity development, infrastructure development, and so on.

The **research output subsidy**, as a funding lever, currently has the highest weighting. It comprises research publications and postgraduate graduation outputs (Masters and PhDs). Research output publications are measured in terms of units, calculated according to the number of publications approved by the DHET. These are, typically, articles in accredited journals, conference proceedings, patents, and books on specialist topics. The allocations for each university are announced through the *Ministerial Statement on University Funding*, issued annually by the Minister of Higher Education and Training.

It is worth noting that the New Funding Framework employs two instruments to allocate research development funds to universities, namely the Research Output Block Grant and the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG). The UCDG is an earmarked grant which replaced the Teaching Development Grant (TDG) and Research Development Grant (RDG). All public higher education institutions are eligible for both the research output subsidy and the UCDG.

The purpose of the UCDG is to enhanced quality, success and equity in universities by transforming teaching, learning, research and leadership. The total annual allocation for the UCDG is around R900 million. Teaching and research development at universities are key components of the UCDG and a range of programmes has been designed and is being implemented to build capacity in these areas (DHET, 2017). The Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics (2019), commissioned by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, further highlighted the need for targeted support for Black and female academic staff in order to increase the proportion of permanent South African instructional/research staff at universities that hold doctoral degrees

1.3 Institutional initiatives to develop research capacity

1.3.1 South African initiatives

South African universities have also implemented several other programmes that seek to contribute towards growing the number of PhDs produced by the system and developing young academic staff, particularly among under-represented groups. Most of them focus on assisting staff to complete masters and PhDs through funding for conference attendance, sabbaticals to focus on research, mentoring and coaching and attendance at various research workshops.

Some of these research capacity development initiatives are well documented, such as the Equity Advancement Programme (LEAP) at UKZN, the Emerging Researcher Programme (ERP) at UCT, the research grants and ‘sandwich programmes’ at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), the Academic Accelerated Mentoring Programme (AAMP) at UJ and others. UNISA has implemented a Grow Your Own Timber (GYOT) programme, aimed at supporting post-graduate students through fixed-term, fulltime contract appointments. At Wits and UCT, the funding has focused on supporting Black and female academics, including those from the rest of the continent. At UKZN, African immigrant academics were not eligible for this funding. The aim of the programme was to ensure that adequate support in the form of funding is provided for the growth and development of Black and women researchers. Even though these programmes appear to have played a crucial role in producing a pipeline of new academics, and helped to provide favourable settings for young academics and provisions for their orientation into the academic profession, there has not been enough research to evaluate the impact of these programmes in relation to the transformation of the academic staff profiles in the sector (Cloete & Galant, 2005; Badsha & Wickham, 2013).

1.3.2 Collaborations with foreign universities and funders

In addition to many of its programmes, the University of Pretoria recently announced a new partnership with the Partnership for African Social Governance Research (PASGR), which is based in Kenya, to boost capacity-building, especially for postgraduate students and early- to mid-career researchers in Africa.

Other programmes have been supported by international organisations: they include the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which funded initiatives for the development of the next generation of academics at three South African universities. This was undertaken in response to the need for a diverse academic pipeline in the South African higher education sector. The

universities that were funded through this programme included the University of Cape Town (UCT), the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN), and Wits.

Another example of north-south collaboration includes one between a group of Flemish universities and a South African university, whose goal is to improve productivity, quality and capacity amongst researchers. The project began in 2003 and consisted of multiple sub-projects spanning two consecutive five-year phases. An evaluation of the programme revealed that, as a result of the collaboration, the members were able to establish intra- and inter-disciplinary relationships that enhanced capacity-building efforts, both individually and institutionally (Frantz et al., 2014).

The Ford Foundation of Southern Africa also allocated grants totalling over USD 5 million (for the five-year period 2005–2010) in support of some 17 projects under the umbrella of its Next Generation of Academics (NGA) Programme, which aimed to promote the emergence of the next generation of academics and to create greater equity in the composition of academic staff in South African universities. The Mellon Foundation also provided grants for UCT, Stellenbosch University, Pretoria University, Wits, University of Free State (UFS) and Rhodes University as well as two historically disadvantaged universities – Fort Hare and UWC. The grants focused on supporting equity and transformation initiatives to nurture the next generation of scholars and to advance research and teaching in the humanities.

In addition, an African initiative discussed by Khisa et al. (2019) is the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA), which is jointly led by the African Population and Health Research Centre and the University of the Witwatersrand and is funded by the Carnegie Corporation. CARTA comprises eight African universities and four African research centres across eight countries, with a range of non-African partners. It was set up to build research capacity in African universities, including interventions to inspire and promote institutional change. It comprises a set of interventions, including some system-level ones, to promote institutional change, such as internationally competitive PhD training for existing university staff, improved research supervision through PhD supervisor workshops, a range of interventions with relevant academic and administrative staff at universities to promote research supportive environments, and support to CARTA graduates to enable them to remain research-active and located in Africa.

Another interesting initiative involving SA and US universities is the US–South African Partnership, which resulted in research training for 30 postgraduate students at the University of the Western Cape and the University of Limpopo. The project was funded by an initiative from the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), which invited proposals for a research partnership between institutions in the US and South Africa. The goal of the proposal was to build research capacity for South African postgraduate students and selected faculty mentors.

It is clear from the above discussions that there are many of these programmes and that most of them rely to some extent on funding from international partners, mostly from the northern hemisphere. This is not surprising as research has shown that funders from the north have been making considerable investments in research capacity development in African countries (Whitworth et al., 2010). However, documenting long-term sustainable change has proved challenging. It can be argued that not all South African universities have been able to benefit from these initiatives, or to put in place targeted programmes aimed at supporting and mentoring young academics who are joining the higher education system for the first time. It cannot be denied that most of the research capacity development initiatives that have been implemented by various universities have benefited both staff and senior postgraduate students; however, the impact of these nationally has not been documented in the form of research or published material.

As the numbers demonstrate in Figure 1.1, progress in increasing the number of PhDs in the sector has been slow. Because of this, the government agreed to the proposal by HESA to develop and implement a nationally driven initiative that will be implemented at all the universities, with the aim of increasing the number of academics by recruiting and retaining young academics from designated groups in full-time academic posts and supporting them to acquire PhDs.

The presentations above indicate that South African HEIs under apartheid were unequal in all aspects, in terms of human resources, finances, and infrastructure. After 1994, -plans were implemented to restructure the higher education sector in order to redress the imbalances and rid the sector of the apartheid legacy. Research capacity has been one of the components of the system that was hugely affected by these imbalances, in the sense that some universities (HDIs) were hampered by law and through apartheid funding policies from participating in research, while others were enabled to undertake research. The restructuring of the sector allowed for

higher education to be viewed as a single entity and not divided as it was during the apartheid era. This meant that the distribution of financial resources had to be streamlined for the entire sector through the new funding framework. The new funding framework made provision for various funding models for research output and research development, teaching and learning development, student allocations, NSFAS and other causes. It was assumed when introducing these policies that inequalities would be eradicated and that transformation would be achieved in the higher education sector.

Even though the policies introduced after 1994 have made significant gains in terms of transforming the sector, the historical inequalities perpetuated by apartheid continue to haunt the higher education system and have a negative impact on every possible intervention instituted by the government. Evidence gained from different monitoring instruments showed that most of the policies could not achieve the envisaged transformation of staff inequalities within the sector, therefore the state resolved to introduce different types of grants to augment the current legislation and policies, for example, the SSAUf-nGAP, the UCDP, and the HDI grant.

The implementation of these interventions has not been a smooth transaction, as half of the universities in the sector to date, still, experience low administrative and research capacity, low budgets an inability to expend allocated funds; low numbers of staff with PhDs, high student-staff ratios etc. This study therefore investigates how the nGAP is being implemented within several universities with different contexts.

1.4 International practices on the development of research capacity in HE

The pressure on higher education institutions throughout the world has grown as a result of globalisation and global ranking requirements (Huenneke et al., 2017). In response to these pressures, most countries have adopted a variety of approaches to strengthening their research capabilities. According to several researchers such as Nguyen, 2016; Huenneke et al., 2017; Harrison & Seddon, 2013, these approaches and strategies usually include elements such as the construction of the infrastructure needed for conducting the research, recruitment, development, motivation of staff, extensive partnerships and affiliation programmes, the promotion of internal and external collaboration and identification of national research priorities.

The developed countries have implemented a range of programmes to boost research capacity in higher education:

In the United Kingdom, Fowler et al. (2009) identified three capacity-building initiatives in the United Kingdom, including the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) which supports educational research across the United Kingdom; the Applied Educational Research Scheme (AERS); which encourages collaboration to build research capacity across seven universities in Scotland, and the Welsh Education Research Network (WERN), which focuses on building a network of all higher education institutions in Wales.

The federal state in the **United States of America** supports several initiatives and programmes such as the USA Study Abroad implemented by the state offer U.S. colleges and universities opportunities to participate in a series of study abroad research capacity building activities. The federal funding program designed to build university research capacity is the Comprehensive Partnerships to Advance Cancer Health Equity (CPACHE). The program aims to increase capacity for cancer-related research at institutions serving under-represented minority populations in collaboration with NCI-designated comprehensive cancer centers.

In Vietnam, research by Huynh, and Tien (2016) found that HEIs have also paid attention to developing their research capacity. In particular, the Vietnamese government has issued a range of policies and directives were aimed at supporting and directing HEIs' research capacity. However, Vietnamese HEIs' research capacity is still limited.

Studies have also shown that over the past decade, innovation and investment in research and development in developing countries such as India and China have been growing. India and China are part of the BRICS, which comprises five growing economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The BRICS partnerships are fostered through several forums and think tank council whose meetings rotate among member countries.

It is clear from the above discussions that some significant initiatives have been developed at local, regional and international levels in recent years, aimed directly at the development of the active or human element in research capacity, which include the skills and attitudes required to become competent researchers. There are notable similarities in collaborative projects implemented by higher education institutions locally and internationally, as well as those

implemented and supported by different governments. Generally, the emphasis has been on developing the research capacities of young and emerging researchers. It can be deduced from the above that most governments have been refocusing and redirecting institutions of higher education towards research capacity building with the main aim of improving the calibre of researchers at these institutions and the conditions under which they work.

1.5 Attempts to meet the challenge of developing research capacity for staff

1.5.1 First efforts to address the challenge of academic staffing

By 2009, it was already acknowledged across the sector that there was an urgent need for a systemic conversation to come up with interventions that would focus on addressing “the slow pace of transformation, the aging workforce, the relatively under-qualified academic staff workforce, and the recruitment and development of young/next generation academics” (DHET, 2016, p. 3). It was during this period that HESA convened a national workshop in June 2009 at Rhodes University, dedicated to developing initiatives for developing the next generation of academics. The participants at the workshop explained the objectives, procedures, administration, accomplishments and challenges of the programmes they implemented. The workshop culminated into the development of a six-member working group to develop a strategy, and in 2010, Professor Saleem Badat (chairman of the HESA Funding Strategy Group) was mandated by HESA to formulate a proposal for a national plan to address the growing challenges of recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of academics and researchers who would become part of the next generation of academics in the higher education system.

The HESA plan was presented and discussed at many forums involving universities, stakeholders and government entities. According to the proposal,

...the overall purpose of the next generation of academics’ development programme is to facilitate the quantitative growth and qualitative development of new generations of academics for the South African/African higher education sector through the establishment of appropriate national and institutional structures (as well as, where relevant, multi-national), processes and activities (HESA, 2010, p. 14).

The proposal argued that the most important purpose of the programme was to increase the numbers of academics from designated groups who would be “recruited to, prepared for, and retained within higher education” (ibid). The programme aimed at increasing the numbers of

South African scholars embarking on academic careers, however, focusing on previously disadvantaged candidates.

In 2013, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) published the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, which set out a plan for the development of the post-school sector as a whole. For the higher education sector, the focus of the White Paper was the development of a new staffing framework that would focus on attracting and retaining new academics into universities, in particular Black and women academics, since they are under-represented in the sector. In response to the requirements of the White Paper and for building on and taking forward work that was carried out by the HESA task team, in 2016 the DHET developed the Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUF) as one of the programmes funded through the UCDG.

1.5.2 The SSAUF programme

In order to fulfil the policy imperatives of academic staffing, SSAUF funds programmes that address the size, capacity and composition of academic staff, and that enhance the professional development of academics (DHET, 2015b). The programme components of the SSAUF include:

- support for emerging scholars;
- support for the appointment of early career academics into permanent positions;
- support for professional development of staff through mentoring by experienced and senior academics (ibid).

The DHET (2016) noted that the SSAUF took as its starting point the urgent necessity to ensure that Black academics are recruited, supported and retained to address their very serious under-representation in the academic space at all levels. The programme integrated ways of ensuring that academic work is seen as an attractive and attainable career choice for people with abilities, and solutions for effectively recruiting, developing and inducting staff into academic careers. SSAUF provided four core training programmes related to academic development, as well as cross-cutting support services (DHET, 2016). These are not discussed in detail in this study as its main focus is the nGAP. Below is a brief summary of each of the SSAUF programmes, as outlined by the DHET:

- **The Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme (NESP)** identifies students in their senior undergraduate or honours years that are beginning to demonstrate academic

ability but who may be lost to the system if they have no structured, attractive opportunities available to them and no recruitment efforts are made.

- **The Existing Academics Capacity Development Programme (EACEP)** provides support for existing academics in various ways, for example, by completing doctoral studies or by addressing specific gaps relating to teaching, research, social engagement, and academic leadership.
- **The Supplementary Staff Employment Programme (SSEP)** enables universities to recruit staff to fill specific skills gaps temporarily while staffing issues are addressed.
- **The Staffing South Africa's University Development Programme (SSAU-DP)** provides support for teaching and research development is provided across core programmes. It is designed to ensure that scholars/academics within different categories are supported in a balanced manner, to enhance retention and growth, and to ensure a better chance of success for the development of each academic. (DHET, 2016).

The government acknowledges some of the failures of the post-democracy policies and initiatives intended to transform the academic staff demographics in South African higher education. One of the latest of these programmes to be introduced by government in an attempt to address these failures is the new Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP). The programme is funded through the UCDG and it is one of the sub-programmes of the Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUF).

1.6 The nGAP programme

The nGAP was initially conceptualised by the Higher Education South Africa (HESA), now Universities South Africa (USAF), out of concern that great numbers of academic staff are aging and approaching retirement and that low numbers of younger academics are joining the higher education system to serve as replacements (Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), 2010; CHE, 2016). In its proposition, HESA highlighted the urgent need for a general renewal of the academic profession, a project that required several multipronged strategies (DHET, 2010).

As a national programme, the nGAP takes into account the fact that South African universities are at different stages of development when it comes to teaching and research capacities, and it therefore sought to level the playing field by providing each university an opportunity to

apply for the nGAP lecturer positions so that it stands an equal chance of attracting young academics, through the programme. The current situation is that some universities have made significant advances in terms of developing teaching and research capacities of young/emerging/next generation academics, while others are still lagging.

As indicated earlier, the South African higher education system is producing low numbers of PhD graduates compared to its counterparts in other developing countries (ASSAf, 2010; DHET, 2013a; NPC, 2012; Cloete et al., 2015). Therefore, the DHET has positioned the nGAP as one of the national strategies aiming to support the sector towards meeting the National Development Plan (NDP) target of producing 5000 PhDs per annum. The nGAP has a dual role: to provide support for scholars embarking on doctoral studies pertinent to the needs of the institutions, and employing top scholars in permanent jobs, subject to the terms and conditions of the programme.

1.6.1 How the nGAP operates

The nGAP recruits new academics in accordance with carefully designed approaches to equity, and, considering the need within certain disciplines, drawing from promising current senior postgraduate students or previous graduates who hold appropriate postgraduate degrees and who have ambitions to, or are interested in, becoming academics.

The nGAP was introduced by the DHET in 2015 and the programme officially began with the appointment of lecturers in 2016. All twenty-six South African universities participate in the nGAP. It is a structured programme in which government and universities collaborate over a six-year period to fund and support lecturer posts. As outlined by the DHET, the structure of the programme is as follows:

- a three-year development programme (with the possibility of the programme being tailored to meet the needs of participants);
- a three-year induction after successful completion of PhD; and
- a continuing permanent employment at the appointing institution thereafter (DHET, 2015b, p. 19-20).

The nGAP recruits, develops and retains young academics who are passionate about pursuing a career in academia; they are placed in permanent positions at South African universities

(DHET, 2015b). It is hoped that lecturers recruited through the nGAP will be retained in the system and will fill vacancies left by senior professors in future. The DHET invests an annual total of R2.5 million in each nGAP position over a six-year period. The focus of the nGAP is to support and fast-track the candidates' completion of their PhDs. This is based on research showing that the South African higher education system is producing low numbers of PhD graduates in comparison to its counterparts in other developing countries (ASSAf, 2010; DHET, 2013a; National Planning Commission (NPC), 2012; Cloete, Mouton, & Sheppard, 2015).

According to the DHET, the nGAP is a prestigious programme involving the recruitment of highly capable young scholars to take up positions as new academics. The allocation of nGAP posts by the DHET is based purely on the institutional staffing needs. Therefore, universities are invited, through a closed call, to submit applications to the DHET indicating their interest in participating in the programme. In order to commit to supporting the programme, universities submit proposals for nGAP posts. The universities must indicate in the proposals that they are committed to employing these early career academics in permanent positions, as well as absorbing the cost of the permanent posts once the six-year training period has lapsed. It should be noted that provision is made at the application stage for the post to be aligned with a vacant and funded post within the university. The post allocation recurs on an annual basis, and is labelled as Phases. Successive cohorts of nGAP lecturers are appointed at intervals determined by the availability of funds from the DHET. Universities are also required to assess their ability to meet their financial obligations after the six-year partnership model, since they would then be expected to take over the salary payment on a full-time basis.

The nGAP is currently the biggest national programme focused on transforming the staff demographics in higher education. It is implemented in partnership with all 26 public universities in South Africa. By the end of 2020, the nGAP had already allocated a total of 446 lecturer positions from Phase 1-7 to the 26 universities. In March 2022, additional positions were announced under Phase 8. This is a clear indication that the nGAP is increasing the participation of young academics from previously underrepresented groups.

According to Badat (2010), the outcome of developing a new generation of academics does not mean that this group must be constituted only of participants from designated groups, but other applicants must also have the academic abilities in relation to teaching and learning, research

and community engagement, which are essential conditions for the transformation and development of South Africa's higher education institutions.

1.6.2 nGAP funding

The table below provides a summary of items funded by the nGAP allocations (DHET, 2018. p.2). Below it is a breakdown of how the different components of the nGAP were conceptualised and are supposed to be implemented by the universities.

Table 1.1: Summary of items supported through the nGAP allocations (DHET, 2018)

Items	Stage 1 Development Programme			Stage 2 Induction and early career development		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Employment	√ [reduced workload]	√ [reduced workload]	√ [reduced workload]	√ [increasing workload]	√ [full workload]	√ [full workload]
Doctoral/Post-Doctoral study	√	√	√	PhD possibly still in completion		
Mentoring	√	√	√	√		
Participation in development activities as part of the SSAU-UP	√	√	√	√	√	√
Research study costs	Contributions towards the lecturer's research study costs					
International mobility	The intention is to support one international mobility opportunity, to take place at a point where it would have maximum benefit for the development of the nGAP lecturer					

Firstly, as indicated earlier, the appointment of lecturers into the programme is done on a permanent basis and therefore the employing university needs to commit to this. The employing university commits towards the payment of the portion of the lecturer's salary from the fourth year and in full after the six-year training. Secondly, because the nGAP is a targeted training programme that seeks to balance the development related to teaching vs research development, academics are granted reduced teaching and administrative workloads. From year 1 to 3, scholars are allocated 20% teaching load and 50% in year 4. This is to afford the lecturers sufficient time (80%) that they are able to concentrate on their PhD research. Once the PhD is completed, the workload is increased to 100% in the fifth and sixth year.

Research conducted by Allan and Dory (2001), looking at the process of doctoral education and the difficulties that students encounter while completing their programmes in the United States. This showed that a lack of funding to support students in pursuing doctoral degrees is mentioned continually as a major stumbling block. They argue that financial pressure makes it necessary for students to work in part- or full-time jobs at times, and this tends to interfere with

dissertation work and discourages students from finishing their doctoral programmes. (Allan and Dory, 2001).

In South Africa, the development of the next generation of academics, which must, increasingly, be constituted of individuals from designated groups, has become a national priority. However, research demonstrates that academia is not a predominantly attractive career option for most of the young people targeted by the programmes, compared with other professions (HRDC, 2015a). According to this source, Black South African students struggle to secure adequate funding to pay for their postgraduate studies and they end up being attracted to well-paying positions that do not require qualifications such as PhDs, either in government or in the private sector.

In order to deal with the issue of lack of funding, which has been identified as one of the main barriers to the completion of PhDs by many young Black South Africans, the nGAP allocates R2.5 million to each position over a six-year period. The funding goes towards a salary, registration fees, equipment, mentoring and international mobility. In terms of the salary allocation, the DHET is committed to incurring the full expenses of the allocated position for the first three years of training, with cost-sharing arrangement between the DHET and the host university, starting from the fourth year of the programme; the host university takes over the full salary cost from the fifth year of training. This is, however, dependent on the type of offer made to the lecturer, since some universities have had to cross-subsidise the salary aspect in order to align the post with other lecturer positions.

As indicated earlier, the universities are expected to take responsibility for the full employment costs of the lecturer after the six-year period has been completed. The table below outlines the activities towards which allocated funding should be utilised.

Table 1.2: Allocation of funds for nGAP implementation (Source: DHET, 2018, p. 2-3)

nGAP component	Maximum amount that can be paid from the DHET funds (%)
Salary costs of the nGAP appointees.	18% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee per year for each of the first three years
	14% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee for the fourth year (university contribution to meet gap)
	9% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee for the fifth year (university contribution to meet gap)
	5% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee for the sixth year (university contribution to meet gap)
A contribution towards registration and tuition fees for postgraduate studies of the nGAP lecturer	2% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee over the full registration period
Costs associated with assigning a mentor for each nGAP lecturer	4% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee over the first four years of the nGAP programme
Costs associated with the nGAP lecturers' participation in the Staffing South Africa's Universities Development Programme (SSAU-DP)	6% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee over the full programme
Costs of equipment and activities needed to support the research studies work of the nGAP lecturer	5% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee over the full programme
International conference/mobility participation costs	1% of the total allocation per nGAP appointee over the full programme
TOTAL: R2 500 000	100% = Specific allocated amount for each year

1.6.3 Employment in a permanent, full-time academic position

A great feature of the nGAP is that candidates are appointed to permanent university posts firmly incorporated into long-term staffing plans at the onset, and contracts contain details of the expectations, duties, roles and responsibilities of both the university and the newly appointed academic (DHET, 2016). Full-time employment means a permanent position, with benefits and regular hours.

Strydom (2011) asserts that full-time employees often feel that they are in control of their lives, and that this feeling of control allows an employee to feel a sense of loyalty to the organization to which they belong. These principles underpin the nGAP programme and provide a controlled environment which includes a permanent post with reduced teaching loads, which enables candidates to complete their studies, with financial contributions towards studies and for equipment or resources, thus creating an enabling environment.

1.6.4 Doctoral study

The candidates participating in the nGAP are required to enrol for a PhD within the first year of their participation in the programme. In other words, the nGAP provides candidates with a scholarship so they are supported to complete the degree within the six years of their training. The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) is a national framework adopted by government and adopted by the South African Qualifications Framework (SAQA) to determine the qualification types, characteristics and purposes of all higher education qualifications in South Africa. According to this body, a candidate for a doctorate receives training for an academic career and is required to submit a thesis that demonstrates the candidates' research capabilities at the highest academic level. In order to achieve their PhD degree, graduates must demonstrate high-level research abilities, make a significant and original academic contribution, and have the ability to supervise and evaluate the work of other researchers in the area of specialisation that they have studied (SAQA, 2014).

According to the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) (2010), the research dissertation/thesis is at the centre of each PhD programme and this aligns with the notion of the PhD as training for the academy. It is therefore clear from that PhD graduates are expected to demonstrate a high level of expertise in research, and to make a significant academic contribution at the frontiers of the discipline or field he/she is studying and to supervise and evaluate others' research in their area of specialisation.

The nGAP seeks to develop candidates to become highly qualified research academics who develop a range of knowledge, understanding and skills through doctoral research, and are able to apply this in a wide variety of contexts, enriching their own lives and the lives of students. According to Jenson (2008), almost all academic disciplines rely on the doctoral pipeline for the development of skilled researchers. While participating in doctoral training, candidates have an opportunity to acquire advanced analytical and methodological skills. The DHET-initiated programme recognises that doctoral training is a critical avenue for developing researchers and academics. The programme rests on the principle of robust support for nGAP candidates while they pursue doctoral programmes

1.6.5 Mentoring

Rankhumise (2015) maintains that mentoring is widely acknowledged as a powerful intervention for developing human resources and promoting career progression among inexperienced workers. According to Smith (2007), mentoring is a specific form of learning in which mentors support their mentees through support, while also challenging them productively in order to accomplish goals. Alkathiri (2016), argue that mentoring has been used previously to prepare doctoral students for their scholarly responsibilities, but has also been used to prepare them for other professional roles and responsibilities.

The rationale for the nGAP mentoring is premised on the notion that students in their PhD years of work in a thoroughly unstructured environment which require them to have a great deal of independence, but without good guidance and mentoring, these circumstances can be daunting for them. It is therefore important for them to have some form of communication and collaboration with their peers and with senior academics. The nGAP processes require that all lecturers participating in the programme be allocated a mentor during the six years of their participation in the programme. According to the nGAP, the Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) is a document that outlines a standard set of policies and procedures to guide the implementation of the nGAP at universities. According to the SOPs, the mentors are envisaged as experienced and successful academics who are employed by the university or have recently retired. Their role includes assisting lecturers in creating a personal professional development plan; assisting with the registration for a PhD, providing advice on personal problems, time management and financial management; they also facilitate reflective discussions around teaching and research experiences, opportunities and challenges, (DHET, 2018).

Mentoring for the nGAP is the responsibility of the employing university. The university, through the Head of the Department (HoD) within which the nGAP lecturer is hosted, is trusted with the responsibility of allocating a mentor.

1.6.6 The reduced teaching workload

Havenga and Sengane (2018) have stated that postgraduate degree students are expected to meet multiple demands and responsibilities. Essa (2011) added that postgraduate students with full-time jobs and families of their own have a difficult time balancing their academic, work and family responsibilities. In order to alleviate this issue, the nGAP allows for lecturers to have a reduced teaching load (at 20% in the first three years and at 50% in the fourth to fifth year). According to nGAP guideline documents, the workload of a lecturer covers the total amount of work a lecturer does, such as preparation for classes, research, grading and administrative work (DHET, 2016). The idea behind the reduced workload is to make the attainment of the PhD qualification possible by allowing candidates to allocate 80% of their time towards their PhD research.

1.6.7 International mobility

According to Damonse (2011), undertaking postgraduate studies requires additional preparation for the participating students to be able to participate and collaborate in international settings. Oude (2014) stated that student mobility is seen as valuable for students, since it provides them with progression and growing their competencies in the following aspects:

- Acquiring scholarly expertise in areas that are not taught in the home country or on a significantly lower level than in the home country;
- A field trip to a host country allows the students to acquire and experience knowledge about its economy, society and culture;
- The students are exposed to internationally comparative approaches, the acquisition of international and intercultural communication skills through the acquisition of foreign languages, a more refined understanding of intercultural communication styles, and so on. The exposure also broadens their minds and increases reflection through contrasting experiences in different countries and different academic cultures.

The nGAP contributes towards the participants' research costs when travelling internationally for study and research purposes. According to the DHET, in supporting international mobility for the nGAP lecturers, it was intended that it should take place in a setting where it would be of maximum benefit to their development (DHET, 2015a). The nGAP international mobility component is carried out through a partnership between the DHET and the British Council/Newton Fund. The mobility partnerships are based in the United Kingdom (SA-UK). The Newton Fund allocates a certain amount to each successful nGAP applicant, and this is complemented by matched DHET funding, to enable a two-to-three-month mobility opportunity at a university in the UK (DHET, 2015b). It has been established that networking at local and international conferences builds research confidence and enables emerging researchers/academics to connect with their peers. In their study looking at the challenges and opportunities for early-career teaching-focused academics in the biosciences in a UK university, Hubbard, Gretton, Jones and Tallents (2015) found that forums such as conferences are essential to networking efforts.

1.6.8 Research and teaching development

The nGAP funding allows for participants to be provided with additional research and teaching support through a variety of services provided by the universities, as well as other partnerships. As an additional intervention to support research training, a partnership has been established between DHET and the National Research Foundation (NRF), which provides research support grants to qualifying nGAP lecturer candidates for the initial stages of their research and to position them for advancement into NRF research support grants (DHET, 2018).

Figure 1.3, below, presents a visual representation or model of the support provided to the nGAP lecturers through the programme.



Figure 1.2: A visual model of support provided to nGAP lecturers

1.7 The implementation of the nGAP

1.7.1 Partnerships with universities

The implementation of the nGAP programme assumes a partnership model in which the DHET provides funding and determines policy and regulation processes, while universities are responsible for the actual recruitment and placement of the lecturers and the implementation of all the features of the nGAP described previously. The DHET initiates the application process by inviting universities to apply for posts. Once the universities have submitted their applications and the process of allocating posts has been concluded, the DHET sends formal communications to universities approving the requested posts. Communication between the DHET and institutions takes place by sending official letters to the offices of the vice-chancellors and the deputy vice-chancellors responsible for overseeing the nGAP. All the units within the universities then proceed with the various roles that they play in the programme: among others, these include procurement, financial allocations to cost centres, recruitment and the appointment of lecturers in accordance with their own human resources policies and procedures. Furthermore, universities are expected to provide the lecturers and mentors with infrastructure, equipment and an enabling environment for the implementation of the programme.

Universities therefore need to set up mechanisms to support the lecturers' participation in the programme, as well as to enable the effective implementation of the nGAP. In terms of managing the funding allocated towards each nGAP position, the universities are required to create a separate cost centre for each phase. The university must maintain a budget which clearly shows how the funds are used over the six years of the programme, and a report on the budget for each lecturer must be included in the annual nGAP report submitted by the university.

On the DHET side, once posts have been approved and universities have been notified, a composite advertisement, comprising all the posts allocated per university, is developed and published in a newspaper. The DHET stipulates that the posts advertisement must indicate that the posts are institution-based and that appointments will be done on a permanent basis. Once the universities have compiled their advertisements, these must be forwarded to the DHET for approval. Therefore, the post advertisement cannot be published without the Universities receiving approval from the DHET.

1.7.2 The nGAP guidelines

The DHET develops and publishes a set of guidelines for the institutional processes, including reporting and evaluation. For instance, the DHET developed the nGAP standard operating procedures outlining, among other matters, the requirements for participation in the programme, the mentoring, the reduced workload and contractual issues. It is required that upon employment, the candidates should sign a performance contract stipulating obligations, expectations, roles and responsibilities and workload. The contract spells out expectations in relation to registration for a PhD (DHET, 2018). Furthermore, universities are expected to report annually on expenditure and the progress of the candidates and provide a composite report at the end of the six-year cycle.

Other issues that are covered in the nGAP guidelines include the regulations that would apply if a lecturer chooses to leave their home university for another South African university. When an nGAP academic decides not to pursue an academic career, during the programme or after completing it, the DHET expects their employer to reimburse reasonable costs to the DHET (DHET, 2018). Should the nGAP lecturer drop out of the programme, they are required to reimburse costs incurred by the host institution, on a pro rata basis.

These conditions are built into the employment contracts given to the lecturer by the universities. These conditions present challenges to universities, as some of them do not have good debt collection systems that are able to collect the money once the lecturer leaves the university. It also creates a challenge for lecturers, as they are likely to be burdened with debt incurred from a programme that is supposed to assist them and not punish them.

1.7.3 Problematic aspects of the nGAP

The nGAP programme is an effective initiative that has been well received within the higher education sector. However, some of its components have been found to be problematic by the universities as well as by participants in the programme. These issues were established at the annual engagements organised by the DHET and they have warranted this investigation.

Firstly, issues have been raised about the requirement that lecturers who leave the programme should pay back a certain percentage of the funds incurred during their tenure. This is intended to discourage the participants from leaving the programme to pursue other opportunities, especially in the private sector. However, this has been found to be problematic in two respects: the first is that most scholars in the nGAP are from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and were most probably the beneficiaries of NSFAS and may still be paying off their student loans. So, instead of assisting scholars to get rid of their student debts, this regulation might burden them even more. Secondly, some universities have indicated that they do not have the capacity to institute this policy clause, as it appears to create an additional administrative burden on their resources, which are already stretched. There have therefore been calls for the DHET to review this policy requirement.

There have also been issues with regard to the blanket approach in the implementation of the reduced teaching workload across universities. The main issue is that this required 20% load is different across universities, faculties, disciplines and departments, therefore this makes it difficult for most universities to implement this without violating the guidelines. The argument put forward by most universities is that there are a range of factors to take into account in determining the workload of academics and therefore the reduction to 20% becomes even more complicated and remain contested.

1.8 Definitions of concepts in the study

The following list of definitions is provided in order to clarify terms used in this chapter:

Table 1.3: Definitions of terms

Concept	Definition
Capacity	Lombard (2006) defines capacity as the ability of individuals, organisations or societies to set and implement development objectives on a sustainable basis. Individual capacities include skills and aptitudes and their translation into organisational capacity. Organisational capacity, in turn, consists of internal structures, collective staff capacity, and an enabling environment.
Capacity development	Capacity development is a process by which individuals, groups, organisations and societies enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner (Lavergne and John Saxby, 2001). Capacity development is described as an investment in human capital, institutions and practices (Chu et al. 2014). Bates et al. (2006) and Lansang and Dennis (2004) explain it as the improvement of the abilities of individuals, organisations and systems to conduct research and disseminate quality reports.
Research	Christiansen and Slammert (2005:1051) define research as any systematic inquiry for the purposes of discovering, establishing, substantiating and/or challenging facts and principles.
Research capacity	Research capacity can be understood as the ability to produce, debate and use research knowledge and products relevant to their needs, such as new technologies.
Research capacity development	Lombard (2006) defines research capacity development as a process by which individuals (potential researchers), researchers, groups of researchers, and research organisations/institutions improve their ability to perform research and achieve desired results and outcomes over time.
Higher education	A general definition of higher education means education, training and research that takes place after the post-secondary education level. In South Africa, the provision of this level of education takes place at public universities, universities of technology, technical and vocational colleges and private higher education colleges. For the purpose of this study, higher education means post-school education provided through public universities and universities of technology which are funded by government.
New generation academic/ emerging/ young/ early career	The terms ‘young/ emerging/ early career/ new generation academic’ are often used interchangeably (Bazeley, 2003). Garbett and Tynan (2010) argue that the terms early career/ young/ emerging/ new generation academics are often used to refer to an academic who is in their first five years after completing a PhD (p. 175). Early career/ young/ emerging/ new generation academics are defined as those in the first five years of their academic appointment (Vajoczki, Biegas, Crenshaw, Healey, Osayomi, Branfor & Monk, 2011). For the purpose of this study, the definition has been expanded to include young academic staff members who have been appointed through the nGAP, who are still pursuing a PhD and are new to the academic profession.

1.9 Problem statement

The nGAP has been in operation for over five years. Having worked at the DHET to implement the nGAP, among other government-funded programmes, the researcher has had an insider view and became aware that the programme’s implementation has not been without challenges, both for the universities and government (DHET).

As a former DHET employee, the researcher became aware of several issues that were consistently raised by universities in relation to the programme’s implementation. As an employee, the researcher felt that not much was being done to try to understand these issues, particularly from the point of view of the three categories of participants in the study (nGAP lecturers, managers and mentors)), nor to investigate the extent or the effects of these issues. To date, there has been no in-depth, qualitative investigation conducted to investigate the

challenges and opportunities associated with the programme at institutional level, as such exploring the views and experiences of the lecturers, the managers and the mentors.

For this reason, the researcher undertook to conduct a qualitative study that would investigate the factors that both constrain and enable the effective implementation of the nGAP at various universities, as well as to assess their impact on the participation of the nGAP lecturers, managers and mentors. In fact, not much has been written about the challenges associated with the implementation of the different research capacity development programmes implemented by various universities in South Africa, particularly those aiming at the development of new-generation academics.

There are a few studies documenting the development of research capacity among the new generation of South African academics, but this is the first qualitative study to investigate and analyse the factors that enable and/or constrain the implementation of the nGAP at institutional levels from the point of view of the lecturers, managers and mentors participating in the programme. What makes this study important is not only to fill existing gap in research, but also the fact that there has not been any equivalent study of a higher education system in which the PhD output is unpredictable in terms of numbers. Undergraduate education is also an unknown factor in making consistent projections about the future of the production of PhDs in this country.

The study achieved its objectives by exploring the motivations of participants to be part of the nGAP, as well as the mechanisms put in place by participating universities to support the implementation of the nGAP. The study also investigated how these mechanisms constrained and enabled the programme and analysed the views and experiences of participants regarding the implementation of the different features of the nGAP in their universities. It is hoped that the study will influence policy and practice, as well as assisting the audience to gain a better understanding of research capacity development in higher education, particularly as it pertains to young, emerging academics. Finally, the recommendations could be considered and adopted by the universities, as well as the DHET, to influence policy and practices.

1.10 Rationale for the study

The nGAP is currently implemented within a context where, following institutional mergers that took place since 2005 to reduce the inequalities, the country's public higher education

system remains hierarchical, with research-intensive universities occupying the highest level, comprehensive universities providing high-quality education to the masses, and universities of technology providing information technology-related training. According to the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (Department of Education, 2001), this stratification stems from the apartheid period, during which there existed separate higher education institutions for blacks and whites. To date, HDIs still lack resources and struggle financially, and this influences the implementation of staff development programmes, as well as teaching, learning and research. Historically white or advantaged institutions remain research-intensive, better resourced and more autonomous, and are typically located in more affluent urban centres.

Equally, there are still many challenges faced by Black academics within the higher education space based on race, gender and class. Based on the HEMIS data presented above, the universities still rely heavily on white academics. As Mirza (2006) and Wilder et al. (2013) note, these challenges create obstacles for Black academics at all levels of the academy, the problem being their lack of recognition and a system that questions their competence and legitimacy. The government therefore needed to develop a programme that empowers and nurtures Black academics, particularly women, and transforms the academy by embracing diversity.

The researcher's experience as a former Deputy Director in the DHET, who was responsible for developing and implementing research capacity development policies and initiatives for higher education in South Africa, played a major role in the decision to undertake this study. During her eighteen years in the Department of Education, and now the DHET, she was exposed to a range of challenges confronting the higher education system, especially those relating to the development of research capacities in emerging academics. The motivation to carry out this study stems from the realisation that the challenges associated with the development of research capacities of emerging academics in South African higher education have not been well investigated and documented.

Clearly, any identifiable obstacles hampering the successful implementation of programmes such as the nGAP must be thoroughly investigated, so that they can be addressed. This study will fill the existing gap in the research, both locally and internationally and the results can assist the DHET and the universities in understanding the factors that negatively and positively affect the implementation of research capacity development programmes such as the nGAP.

The study makes several recommendations in the hope of contributing towards the strengthening of the nGAP implementation processes at both institutional and government levels, as well as improving the experiences of participants in the programme. The study proposes a model for the development of the nGAP mentoring framework. If adopted, the model could assist universities in strengthening mentoring practices in the nGAP programme and improving the mentoring relationships between mentors and mentees.

1.11 Research questions

The study investigated the factors that affect the implementation of the nGAP in participating universities, noting that these factors could be constraining or enabling. The purpose was to investigate, qualitatively, the different ways in which the three categories of participants (lecturers, managers and mentors) at the participating universities perceived, experienced and understood the implementation of the nGAP, as well as to understand the implications of the arising issues for the programme.

In consideration of the above objective, the main research question posed by the study is: What are the factors constraining and enabling the implementation of the nGAP in participating South African universities?

The following secondary research questions were also addressed:

- What motivational factors influenced the lecturers to participate in the programme?
- What mechanisms have universities employed to support the implementation of the nGAP, and to what extent do these constrain or enable its implementation?
- What are the views and experiences of participants in relation to the implementation of the different features of the nGAP at their respective universities?
- What recommendations can be made based on the findings of the study?

1.11.1 Discussion of the first sub-question

The first sub-question explored the motivation for participants to be part of the nGAP. In the opinion of Ambire (2018), motivation is a complex set of forces, drives, needs, tension states and other mechanisms that motivate people to achieve their objectives or act in a proponent state that energises and guides their behaviour. Ambire defines motivation as the individual's persistence, effort and direction toward achieving a goal. From this we can conclude that

motivation is the urge that drives individuals to achieve their goals and to satisfy their individual needs, and that it is generally accompanied by achievement, advancement, autonomy and personal development.

The reviewed literature distinguishes between different types of motivation, based on the multiple reasons or goals that give rise to an action. The most fundamental distinction, according to Ryan & Deci (2000), is between intrinsic motivation, referring to doing something because it is inherently enjoyable or interesting, and extrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something to achieve a specific outcome. For example, understanding why and how the lecturers found it motivating to become academics, in this case using the nGAP, was a way of establishing the importance of either their extrinsic and intrinsic motives. It was interesting to learn from the data that most lecturers were driven by the passion they have developed over the years, as they were being socialised into academia as well as the need to pursue PhD programmes which they believed would put them in a better position to secure a permanent academic position.

Research demonstrates that most young graduates are motivated to pursue a career in academia when they have been through a process of being socialised into the profession. According to Bragg (1976), there is an intended outcome of the socialisation process that is “the acquisition of the specialised knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, norms, and interests of the profession that the individual wishes to practice” (p. 6) and it involves the whole developmental process of moving from an emerging to a fully-fledged academic. According to Selaledi (1999), motivation also comes because of good salary, fringe benefits, fair treatment, recognition, achievement, and increased responsibility.

1.11.2 Discussion of the second sub-question

The second sub-question explored the mechanisms employed by the participating universities to support the implementation of the different components of the nGAP, as well as their effectiveness. Universities are expected to create a supportive environment that enables the academics to become fully-fledged teachers and researchers. Several universities in South Africa have instituted mechanisms and systems for developing research capacities, both at the institutional and individual academic levels. Research capacity development has become an essential element of any institution’s strategy for human resource development. Various initiatives for developing research capacity have been instituted to develop staff capacity for

research; these include supporting doctoral staff through proposal writing workshops, academic and publication writing skills, computer and software training, data analysis using different software, referencing, undergraduate supervision training and professional coaching and mentoring.

There is also clear agreement in the literature that strong leadership and management, enabling policies and strategies, systems and structures' supportive infrastructure and human resources; collaboration networks; and mentorship at every level are the requirements for implementing successful research capacity and capability programmes (McCance, Fitzsimons, Keeney, Hasson, & McKenna, 2007; Newhouse, Dearholt, Poe, Pugh, & White, 2007; Dearholt, White, Newhouse, Pugh, & Poe, 2008; Stroud et al., 2009).

Capacity building is not the full responsibility of the institution but involves collaboration with academic staff; the government should provide incentives and resources to assist universities in these efforts. According to the scholars listed above, institutional leadership should advocate a proactive investment of resources in induction and training, professional development, and individualised growth plans which are aimed at facilitating the learning of numerous research skills, as well as the development of new academics (ibid). For instance, in relation to mentoring, which is one of the components of the nGAP, it is assumed that universities should be able to shape and support how the mentoring component is undertaken by determining the processes and rules of engagement between mentors and mentees. This is particularly so in relation to determining the criteria for selecting mentors, providing systems to incentivise and for motivating academics to serve effectively as mentors, addressing the factors that facilitate the mentor–mentee relationships and those that strengthen and contribute to the development of capabilities for both the mentors and mentees.

1.11.3 Discussion of the third sub-question

This explored the views and experiences of participants in relation to the implementation of the different components of the nGAP within their respective universities. It was indicated earlier that even though the nGAP was initiated and funded by government, the implementation of its different components lies with the universities.

At the centre of the study's investigation is how the participants view and experience the implementation of these different components within their universities. As outlined earlier,

these components include mentoring, the reduced workload, PhD study, international mobility and the funding and monitoring requirements that come with implementing these. As an example, understanding the perceptions of participants on their universities' practices in relation to the implementation of the reduced workload was crucial for the study, since it has been noted in different forums in the sector that the allocation of workload in relation to the nGAP lecturers load has been a contentious matter in most universities. Research reviewed for the study has demonstrated that workload distribution is always a controversial and troubling question to university managers because the faculty members have strengths and interests that they want to utilise during the implementation of flexible formulas for equitable workload (Agrawala & Mohr, 1975).

Furthermore, favouritism, discrimination, partialities or managerial biases in the allocation of the workloads will lead to dissatisfaction among academic staff that would affect the work culture of institutions (Hesseldenz, 1976; Mustapha & Yu Ghee, 2013). As it stands, universities differ in the way they allocate workloads to academics, and these allocations depend on various factors such as staff and student ratios within departments and faculties. Researchers have found that employees who are experiencing work overload are also more likely to be experiencing job stress (Huang, 2017).

1.11.4 Discussion of the fourth sub-question

This sub-question is informed by the nature of the responses provided for the first three questions, and relies on the positive experiences and shortcomings identified by participants to require attention. Finally, the fourth question also endeavours to synthesise the information gathered from the three sub-questions and formulate possible formal and well-conceived recommendations for the DHET and universities.

1.12 Aims and objectives of the study

The broad aim of the study was to investigate the factors affecting the implementation of the nGAP in participating South African universities, noting that these factors could be constraining and enabling. The specific objectives of my study were to:

- explore the motivational factors for participants in the nGAP;
- explore mechanisms put in place by selected universities to support the implementation of the nGAP;

- explore and analyse the views and experiences of the participants about the implementation of the different features of nGAP in their respective universities; and
- make recommendations based on the study's findings.

1.12.1 Overview of the methodological approach

The study's purpose was to investigate the factors that constrain and enable the participation of lecturers, managers and mentors in the nGAP, as well as its effective implementation in their universities. Therefore, the study was conceptualised and understood through the interpretive paradigm, which explores how people interpret and make sense of their experiences, and how the contexts of events and situations impact on people's constructed meanings (Creswell, 2013; Grbich, 2013). This is a qualitative investigation and it therefore utilised qualitative approaches: a multiple case study design was followed with semi-structured interviews, which were used to collect data from the three categories of participants: the nGAP lecturers, the managers and the mentors. A multiple case study approach allowed for a situation where several cases were selected for intensive scrutiny, in order to develop a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena. This approach was found to be more comprehensive than using a single case. A total of nineteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants, with the purpose of understanding their views and experiences, and the contexts within which they operate, as well as how the implementation of nGAP functioned. Figure 1.4, below, provides a schematic representation of the methodology and the research process.

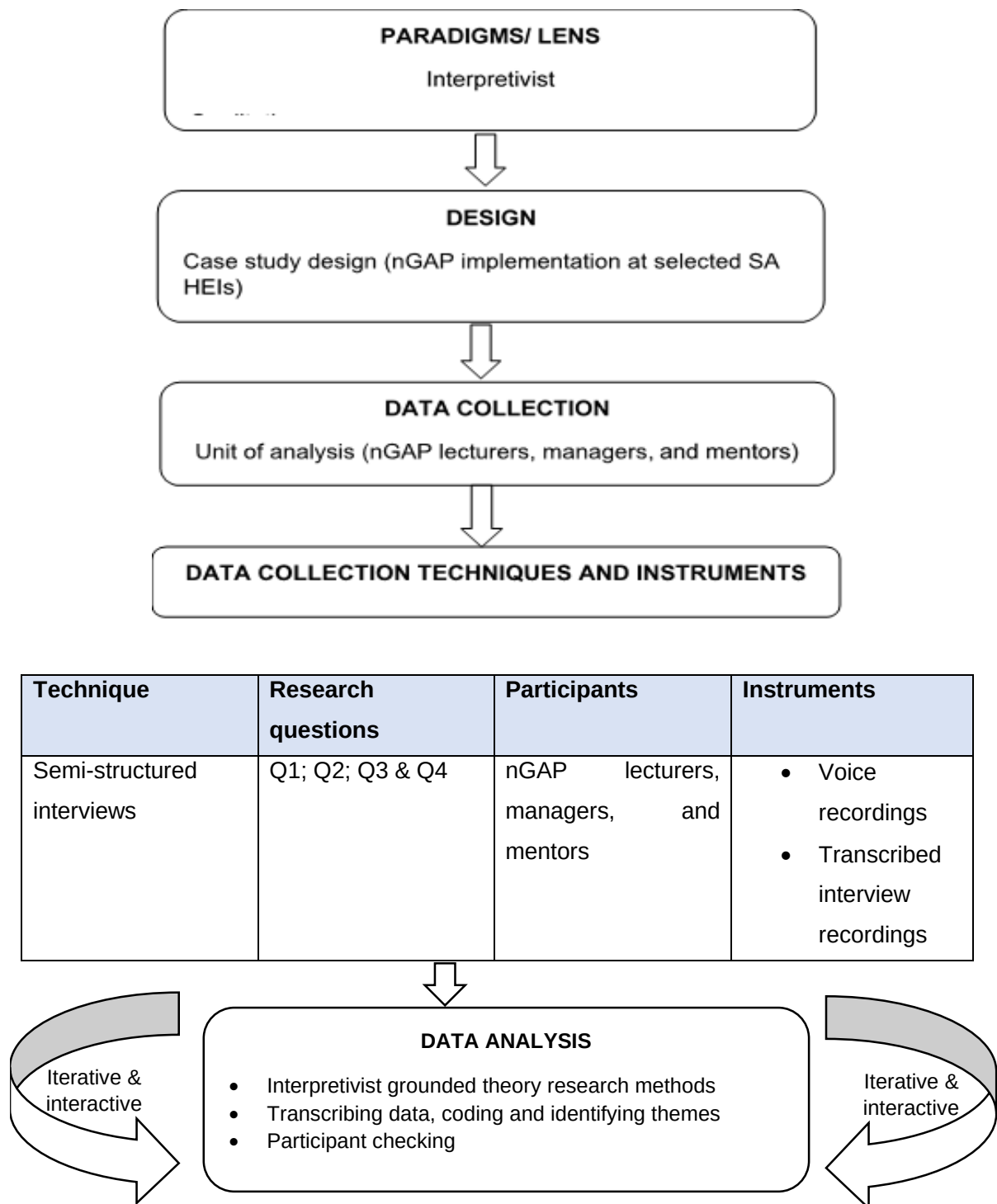


Figure 1.3: Schematic representation of the research process

1.13 Potential significance of the study

The study investigated the factors affecting the implementation of the nGAP in participating South African universities, noting that these factors could be constraining and enabling. This was done by:

- exploring the motivational factors for their participation in the programme,

- exploring the mechanisms instituted by universities to support the programme and their effectiveness,
- exploring their views and experiences on the implementation of the different features of the programme, and
- make recommendations based on the findings of the study.

There is a considerable national interest in the development of research capacities of the new generation of academics in the South African higher education system. To begin with, it is essential to fill the gap that would be left by the aging senior academics who are set to retire from the system. In addition, South African universities are under pressure from government to demonstrate to the public that they are contributing towards transformation, particularly in staff demographics.

To emphasise this point, Zulu (2020) gives an example of the Employment Equity Act, which enforces commitments by employers (including universities) to advance the interests and positions of employees and potential employees who are Black, female or disabled. Badat, CHE and the DHET have demonstrated over the years that South African higher education has a differentiated landscape and that the universities are differently resourced. The historical legacy of apartheid plays a huge role in both the contours of the sector's academic workforce and in the pipeline of potential academics with a demographic less representative of the country. There is therefore a need for equitable access at the senior level of academia in terms of young academics and those with doctoral qualifications. This should be done by prioritising the development and support for /emerging academics. It was therefore important for this study to be conducted in order to shed light on the factors that might be constraining and/or enabling the implementation of the research capacity development initiative called nGAP, and how these factors could be negatively or positively affecting the experiences of participants in the programme.

Therefore, the outcomes of the study could assist in the following:

- Enabling university and government officials to better understand what the nGAP participants experience and what they think about this important programme;
- Assisting university authorities in understanding how the nGAP should be supported and how it could be implemented effectively to improve the experiences of participants;

- Allowing policymakers to understand the discrepancies that exist between the nGAP policy requirements and the practicalities of interpreting and implementing them at institutional levels.
- Encouraging nGAP participants to develop a broader perception and conceptualisation of what the research capacity development of young/emerging/new generation academics entails, and how this should be enabled to improve their experiences in their quest to establish themselves as research academics.

Thus, the outcome of the study could inform government about the impact of its approach on the implementation of the programme. The study also makes recommendations for future research, particularly aspects that could impact on policy and practice at both institutional and government levels. The study further contributes toward theory through the conceptualisation of the nGAP as a research capacity development programme, analysing the implementation of the nGAP using Sen's capabilities approach, and the reconceptualisation of mentoring in the nGAP, which currently interprets the relationship between one mentor and one mentee in a linear fashion, assuming that the mentee is the only beneficiary and the mentor is more experienced, senior and powerful, and the mentee is perceived to passively absorb what the mentor transmits.

Lastly, the study contributes toward policy and practice through the development of a mentoring framework model which follows a blended mentoring structure and provides clarity on what mentoring for the nGAP should entail. It is hoped that this framework might help improve the universities' conceptualisation of nGAP mentoring practices and improve the existing and future mentoring relationships between mentors and mentees.

1.14 Issues of positionality

According to Dyson (2007), a qualitative study is a subjective process by which researchers collect and analyse data, interpret the results and propose conclusions. This implies that prospective researchers come to a project with their own beliefs, knowledge, experiences, values and preconceptions. Dyson (2007) reminds us that a qualitative researcher defines the domain they wish to explore, both spatially and temporally, and brackets it according to a preconceived notion, collecting data and then interpreting it. Accordingly, he acknowledges the need to be upfront about problems, because no researcher approaches a project in a vacuum.

There is, in the researcher's view, a degree of responsibility and ethical commitment on her part to reveal who she is and what drove her interest in this topic, the preconceptions she holds and how these shaped the design of the investigation, reflect on how her background and the things she experienced as a researcher influenced the study and results obtained.

The researcher has a background in social science training. In her undergraduate studies she majored in industrial sociology and psychology. Her honours degree was in industrial psychology and her Master's programme was in the field of educational planning and management. The researcher worked for government all her working life, focusing on the development and implementation of research capacity development policies and programmes in the higher education and training space. She holds the view that everyone, including herself, is susceptible to being influenced in their thinking by the work they do. For her, working in government influenced her to become a systems thinker who wants to see situations in their wholeness; to recognise that people and things are interrelated; to acknowledge that there should always be a room for several interventions to a single problem; and to have the courage to sometimes initiate and support policies and interventions that may not be popular; and to realise that there is never a perfect solution. With this kind of background, the researcher was obligated to ask deeper questions and reflect before reaching any conclusions, so that she was able to make informed choices.

The researcher's initial intention was to conduct a broad investigation of research capacity development in higher education, focusing on the policy aspects of this phenomenon. Research capacity development had interested her as she had been involved in programmes and policies initiated by government to support universities in developing their research capacities. However, after she had successfully submitted and defended her proposal, she realised that she was not actually happy with the angle of the research and that something was missing. She realised that the research was missing an angle of focus. In 2017, the DHET decided to merge two of its major capacity development grants, the RDG and the TDG, to form the UCDP. As the researcher was working on the RDG at the time, and her research was linked to some aspects of the programme, she decided that she should follow up on the work. She then joined the directorate that was responsible for implementing the entire UCDP.

Prior to the introduction of the UCDP, in 2015, the DHET introduced the Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUf): one of its main focus areas was to support newly

recruited academics in acquiring doctoral degrees (or master's degrees, in selected fields) and develop their research and teaching expertise. Upon engaging with and working on one of the SSAUf sub-programmes, the nGAP, for over a year, the researcher developed an interest in investigating its implementation at institutional level, from an academic research point of view. This was when she decided that her research would focus on the nGAP as the angle of investigation.

At the beginning of 2018, the researcher began collecting data through interviews with the various participants. During this time, she realised that she could not continue with the research while she was still employed by the DHET. The researcher struggled to balance her views about the picture that the data was likely to tell and her loyalty towards the DHET and government in general, having worked there for over eighteen years. She felt that her employment at the DHET would influence her objectivity as a researcher, as well as her interpretation the data from the interviews.

The researcher experienced misgivings when she had to select participants: she asked herself if it was appropriate to include the DHET as one of the participants in the study; it was a difficult decision, as the researcher was employed there. She then decided to not include the DHET, in the hope that she would not have to deal with conflicts of interest and the questions about the objectivity of the study, since the study would report on the role of the DHET in the implementation of the programme. This was done to avoid asking sensitive questions that might affect her working relationships, especially with senior management.

However, as the researcher started engaging with the data, the same feeling resurfaced because she was now exposed to challenging realities in relation to the implementation of the programme, and the DHET appeared to be a major contributor to them. The researcher again questioned whether she would be able to maintain objectivity in terms of the interpretation and analysis of the data. The answer appeared to be inconclusive, and the researcher took the decision to leave the DHET. She was convinced that by doing so, she would regain her voice and experience her freedom as an unbiased researcher who was objective in the interpretation of the data. Leaving the DHET was not an easy decision for the researcher, financially or regarding her career, but it was the best decision in terms of regaining her voice and for her growth as a researcher.

The researcher sees her research journey as a process of learning and unlearning. Learning, in the sense that she learnt that her insider/outsider positionality came with both advantages and disadvantages. For example, Holmes (2020) argues that the position of insider or outsider is neither overwhelmingly favourable nor disadvantageous," each of which carries both advantages and disadvantages, depending on the specific circumstances and purpose." This author suggests that it can be difficult to gain a complete picture of a given issue, since detailed insider knowledge can mask the bigger picture. As the data in the study demonstrated, there were stories of frustration from some lecturers, as they felt powerless, voiceless; there were heartbreaking stories of discrimination, racism and stigmatisation among some lecturers; there were stories of managers who felt overloaded with work and experiencing frustration and stress; there were mentors who felt that they were left to figure out the mentoring processes on their own without any guiding framework, and so forth.

Since she was still working at the DHET when conducting interviews for the study, most participants saw the researcher as a kind of saviour, someone who could ensure that all the issues they were raising would be resolved and this would result in their universities being held accountable. However, the researcher was not able to offer anything to the participants except the hope that the research findings would encourage change. There was nothing she could do for them but to promise that their stories would be told.

Moreover, because of her positionality, the researcher may have run a risk of participants not trusting her, especially the lecturers. Some lecturers were less willing to reveal sensitive information for fear of reprisal, especially in universities where the researcher seemed to have proximity to the nGAP managers/senior managers. This was demonstrated by some people agreeing to be part of the research and later backtracking on their decisions and disappearing without any explanation. It can therefore be argued that the researcher's insider position could have also been threatening to some, to the disadvantage of her research and the integrity of the data she was collecting. On the other hand, other participants might have trusted that the researcher spoke for them and were therefore willing to be open and frank in relating their experiences. Now and then, the researcher found herself having to negotiate her positionality to maintain ethical working relations. There were even moments where she thought an anonymous survey would have been a better data collection strategy, but this may have not been able to achieve the goals set out by the research. However, even this assumption may have been problematic, as it would probably leave unanswered questions, especially for a qualitative

researcher. For example, regardless of how high an instrument's validity coefficient is, if the instrument is administered in a biased manner, the validity of the measurement and the study will suffer. Mantzoukas, 2005 suggests that bias can affect an instrument's validity, regardless of how high its validity coefficient may be.

Most importantly, the researcher regards her research journey as having been an unlearning experience, in that it helped her to unlearn certain biases and assumptions that she had developed about the participants, as well as about the universities in general, while employed at the DHET. After working for government for over eighteen years, developing and implementing policies that to a large extent regulated the higher education system, it is understandable that she made strong assumptions about the system, and compiling this research has helped her to re-examine these. For one, it has always been assumed in government that the universities had too much autonomy, were inclined to abuse it; that universities were untouchable and did as they pleased, therefore government needed to adopt a firm approach in managing and restraining them. The researcher's exposure to the realities of the participants and the universities has changed her views. She has come to realise that the government's firm approach could be the main contributor to some of the challenges and inefficiencies experienced in the implementation of the nGAP. She also believes that her assumptions may have, to a certain extent, played a role in influencing her choice of participants in the study. For instance, the study only focuses on participants in the universities, but government also manages the implementation of the nGAP.

As indicated earlier, being employed at the DHET influenced the researcher's views, not only about the universities but about government as well. As a loyal government employee, she assumed at the time that government did not have any glaring issues that warranted an academic investigation of its approach to the implementation of the nGAP. However, these assumptions would later make the researcher question her objectivity and ability to exercise her freedom and make certain decisions. Even though some people may argue that the study's findings would have been enriched with a response from the government, the researcher was able to make decisions that were in favour of her principles of remaining objective as a researcher and ensuring that the integrity and validity of the data, as well as the findings, were not questionable.

The researcher's final reflection is based on what for her a moment of truth. In the last months of the write-up for the study, the researcher was fortunate to get an employment opportunity (albeit on a contract basis) at one of the country's public universities. She is currently working as a coordinator of a variety of staff development programmes funded by the DHET, including the nGAP. The researcher is of the belief that this period has been a defining moment for her study, as she is getting first-hand exposure to the experiences of nGAP lecturers and practical realities relating to the implementation of the nGAP at institutional level. Working on the programme while at the DHET, engagement with lecturers, mentors and managers in the programme was rare and limited to email communications and occasional meetings. To some extent, this new experience gave the researcher an opportunity to triangulate the data from the interviews with the actual situations, as well making sense of some of the concepts and constructs that emerged from the data analysis. It was fortunate that this experience occurred at the time when the researcher had completed the interviews and the analysis of data from the participants. Otherwise, she would have found herself inclined to be overly sympathetic because of her position as an insider.

Through her tenure at a university, the researcher came face to face with some of the complexities surrounding the implementation of the nGAP. She was able to confirm for herself that, as the data shows, the nGAP is not a programme that is straightforward to implement at university level. The decision-making processes are more complicated than they may appear to an outsider, especially coming from the government perspective. Employing a lecturer in this programme is not as simple as appointing any lecturer in the university.

To give just one example, the researcher experienced the complexities around the implementation of the 70% pass at Master's level, mentioned by some participants, particularly the managers. For example, the university shortlisting and interviewing committee decided on a candidate who they felt met their internal requirements and demonstrated the potential to be trained as a future academic. But the DHET did not agree with this decision because the candidate had not obtained 70% for their Master's degree. The university was requested to provide a motivation for this decision; however, the reasons provided were not taken into consideration and therefore the university could not go ahead with the appointment of the candidate. As a result, the university was left with no choice but to re-advertise the post. There are several contextual and discipline-specific nuances that this nGAP requirement does not take into account, and this leaves the universities frustrated and unable to fill posts. For example, it

may not be a requirement in the Built Environment, Engineering, Commerce and Accounting for PhD candidates to obtain 70%, while this may be a requirement in the humanities and other disciplines. This is just one problem that made the researcher re-examine some of the assumptions she may have had while employed at the DHET about the participants and the way universities operate. This issue highlights the controlling and managerialist approach by government that appears to constrain the autonomy and freedom to make decisions of individual participants and universities. There is also a visible clash or gap between national policy and institutional practice and processes emanating from the data, which is also exacerbated by an inflexible approach.

Working at a university, the researcher also got to appreciate the valuable efforts made at institutional level to ensure that the nGAP is, a success despite some the complexities and challenges experienced by the study's participants. It became clear to the researcher that some universities really do go the extra mile to support the nGAP lecturers and make sure that they are provided with a comfortable and enabling environment. At this university, the nGAP lecturers are provided with a range of capacity development and training activities, in addition to those stipulated by the programme, to ensure that, like other staff members they undergo holistic professional development. The activities provided include, attending the research writing retreats, career planning and networking sessions, supervision training, professional skills development workshops, professional coaching sessions, and so on. This also changed the researcher's earlier assumptions that universities were always in the wrong and were using their autonomy to get away with their inefficiency.

Thus, the researcher's entire work experience has afforded her a unique and privileged opportunity to experience the implementation of the nGAP from the government's as well as from the universities' points of view. She had an opportunity to be exposed to and learn about the processes and systems from both sides, and this enriched her experience and knowledge of the main topic of investigation, that is, investigating the factors that constrain and enable the implementation of the nGAP at institutional and individual levels. Most importantly, through both working experiences, the researcher had an opportunity to unlearn and re-examine her preconceptions about the way the universities respond to government's policies. The researcher's PhD journey can therefore be described as a unique learning and unlearning experience that has proved to be enormously valuable.

1.15 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 introduces the study and provides the background and context within which the selected case studies operate and how the nGAP was conceptualised. This is followed by a justification for why this topic was worthy of investigation, through the presentation of a problem statement and rationale. It was noted that several government initiatives have been undertaken over the past twenty-five years in an attempt to promote transformation, quality of provision, equity and redress, as well the strengthening of research and research capacity at universities.

The nGAP is one of the programmes introduced by the DHET in 2015 with the aim of transforming the academic and research staff demographics within the higher education system. The nGAP officially commenced with the appointment of lecturers in 2016 and all 26 South African universities participate in the programme.

Chapter 2 outlines the literature reviewed, focusing on the conceptual framework adopted in the study. This concentrated on the development of research capacity in higher education, among young/early/new generation academics. Concepts that arose in the literature were also used to interpret and understand the nGAP.

Chapter 3 discusses the framework that the study drew on, the capability approach, which provided ontological and epistemological perspectives.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology followed by the study.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the data collected from the interviews conducted with the three categories of participants, the nGAP lecturers, the managers, and the mentors.

Chapter 8 provides an analysis and discussion of the study's data collected through interviews.

Chapter 9 presents the study's conclusion and recommendations.

1.16 Concluding remarks

The introductory chapter provided a background to the study by placing the nGAP in the broader context of research capacity development in South African higher education. The

chapter provided the context and history of how research capacity development is supported and funded in South African higher education, through policy, strategies and funding at both government and institutional levels. It also provided insight on how the nGAP was conceptualised and how it is implemented. It was demonstrated that the nGAP is one of the many programme interventions initiated by the government over the past 25 years. Since the advent of democracy, various policies and programmes have been initiated and implemented with the sole aim to advancing, redressing and seeking social equity in higher education; particularly for designated groups who suffered injustices of the past apartheid government. The nGAP is a bold transformation programme that boasts attractive and important features that are geared towards developing the research capacity of a young/emerging/new generation of academics by providing them with funding to pursue and acquire PhDs, with a reduced teaching and administrative workload to focus on their research, mentoring, funding to undertake international research mobility; as well as with funding for research-related expenditure.

In addition, the statement of the problem and a justification for the study were presented. Finally, the chapter presented a brief outline of what the different chapters offer, giving an indication of how the thesis is structured. In the next chapter, a general overview and assessment of the literature is provided and the main concepts at the core of this study are discussed.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the study and provided the background and context within which the nGAP is implemented, as well as the history of how the nGAP was conceptualised. The statement of the problem and justification for the study were also presented. Chapter 2 provides a general overview and assessment of the main concept at the core of this study. The review draws, as far as possible, on existing literature and on empirical research, both of which have focused on research capacity development in higher education, locally and internationally. The literature was also used to assist the study in interpreting and understanding the nGAP as a research capacity development programme.

2.2 Defining research capacity in higher education

Although the concept of research capacity development has become a popular subject in higher education worldwide, the literature reviewed for this study revealed that there has been insufficient research on this subject in South Africa. For this reason, there is not enough research about the critical issues that militate against the implementation of research capacity development programmes or the challenges presented by the implementation of research capacity development programmes, and there is still a need for research that investigates the factors that constrain and enable the implementation of research capacity development programmes in universities, especially on programmes focusing on developing young/emerging/new generation academics.

Most of the existing international literature focuses on capacity development and capability building in government and non-governmental organisations, with little of it focusing specifically on “research capacity development in higher education” (Toye, 2004). Other international and local research studies have examined the relationships between emerging economic trends and what research capacity development in Africa should entail. Some of the studies have focused mainly on defining the concept (Thomas & Day, 2014); others have attempted to highlight the different interventions higher education institutions implement to develop capacities in their campuses (Davison *et al.*, 2014); and a few studies have explored the achievements of these programmes (O’Rafferty, Curtis & O’Connor, 2014). There are several studies that have addressed the subject of research capacity development in higher education in South Africa, and the production of PhDs as a strategy to secure a competitive

advantage for the national higher education system, which is seeking to compete internationally. Such studies include research undertaken by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) (2010) and Kotecha, Walwyn & Pinto (2011), which looked at deepening research capacity and collaboration across universities, and research capacity development through PhD production.

These studies demonstrate that, for research capacity to be enhanced and institutions to undertake research, the following are necessary: university-based funding to support research projects, experienced staff to supervise research projects and doctoral or postdoctoral students who are interested and able to undertake the research. However, most these studies do not explore the factors that constrain or enable the effectiveness of research capacity development initiatives or influence the experiences of participants in these programmes, either negatively or positively.

Van Rensburg, Armstrong and Geyer (2019) explain research capacity development as “the improvement of the abilities of individuals, organisations and systems to conduct research and disseminate quality reports” (p. 9). It became clear during the review of other studies on this topic that the term ‘research capacity development’ is subjective, tends to be context-specific, and is therefore difficult to define (ibid). An initiative led by ESSENCE on Health Research (2011) indicated that there is frequently a lack of understanding of what is meant by ‘supporting capacity’ or of how it can be achieved in a viable and effective manner. Authors such as Blagescu & Young (2006), cited in Edwards, Kaseje & Kahwa (2016), suggest that there are no differences in the meaning between the terms ‘capacity building’, ‘capacity development’, ‘capacity strengthening’ and ‘capacity enhancement’. Edwards, Kaseje & Kahwa (2016) concluded that research capacity building is understood and approached in many ways.

Despite the lack of agreement among scholars on the definition of the term, their statements appear to indicate that the objectives for research capacity development have, over the years, evolved from generating and disseminating knowledge to addressing both the supply and demand aspects of research production and application. It is now becoming increasingly apparent that research capacity building should not only aim to enhance the capabilities of researchers and academics; in addition, it should aim to strengthen institutional systems and resources for sustained research productivity. It is clear from the literature reviewed for this study that there is no shortage of definitions of capacity development.

In some studies, there is a general definition of capacity and a research-specific definition: the generic description for the process of building capacity in different contexts, including development, health and education, while research-specific definitions indicate the type of capacity being built. In contrast, other definitions focus exclusively on the development of individual research capacities, despite the fact that an objective is to generate improvement in a whole group, as in the capacity of a discipline or professional group to conduct high-quality research. The majority of the definitions examined, however, included an element of strengthening individual, institutional, or even more broadly, system capacity.

Table 2.1, below, provides a list of definitions of research capacity development sourced from different literature. These definitions demonstrate that research capacity development is a complicated process that includes a variety of interventions, procedures and structures that are geared towards supporting academics in order to enhance their abilities to conduct quality research. Specifically, these research capacity interventions are intended to improve the capabilities of academics to perform research, change their behaviours and attitudes, empower them, establish effective linkages and promote sustainability (Cooke *et al.*, 2006). It has also been suggested by these authors that definitions of research capacity indicate that the development of this phenomenon occurs at individual, organisational and systemic levels.

Table 2.1: A summary of research capacity development definitions by different authors

Edwards, Kaseje & Kahwa 2016	An ongoing and iterative process of empowering individuals, interdisciplinary teams, networks, institutions and societies to identify challenges; to develop, conduct and manage scientifically appropriate and rigorous research to address those challenges in a dynamic and sustainable manner; and to share, apply and mobilise research knowledge generated with the active participation of engaged stakeholders and decision-makers.
Condell & Begley, 2007	RCD is a funded, dynamic intervention operationalised through a range of foci and levels to augment ability to carry out research or achieve objectives in the field of research over the long-term, with aspects of social change as an ultimate outcome.
Lombard (2006)	...a process by which individuals (potential researchers), researchers, groups of researchers, and research organisations/institutions improve their ability to perform research and achieve desired results and outcomes over time.
Cooke et al., 2006.	...research capacity development includes both research capacity building activities (which generally focus on novice or immature stages of research development) and research capacity strengthening (which provides more targeted support to improve capability to conduct research at more mature stages of development)
Albert & Mikan 2002	“an approach to the development of sustainable skills, organisational structures, resources and commitment to health improvement in health and other sectors to multiply health gains many times over.”
Breen et al. 2004	Capacity building is a commonly used term that holds many different meanings for different people. Generally, however, it is understood to be conditional upon improving knowledge and changing peoples’ behaviour so that they can make more informed decisions, adapt better to changing conditions and be more effective in carrying out decisions. a process whereby people are enabled to better perform defined functions either as individuals, through improved technical skills and or professional understanding, or as groups aligning their activities to achieve common purpose’
Dennis & Lansang 2004	Approaches to building research capacity are best viewed and understood within the broad framework of capacity building. As such, building research capacity can be defined as the ongoing process of empowering individuals, institutions, organisations and nations to: - define and prioritise problems systematically -

The definitions of capacity development outlined in the table provide some indication of the range of fundamental purposes and goals. They also imply that research capacity development should be prioritised by universities, since research is one of the most important components

of their operations. It is in this light that universities must continuously be engaged in processes of enhancing the competencies of individual researchers and creating supportive and enabling environments which allow the researchers and academics to advance and flourish. If universities need to increase their research productivity, they need to motivate their researchers and academics to engage in training and development programmes that provide them with the required support for acquiring research capability. The higher education institutions must always improve their internal competencies by providing the research infrastructures, training programmes and technologies that support researcher capabilities, which may not be adequate for the production of good-quality research.

Based on the above definitions, and in the context of this study, research capacity development means the development of the capacities of young academics who will, in future, be able to engage in the production of research that will be recognised both locally and internationally. The process of research capacity development, as outlined later in the chapter, involves the individual academic, with the universities and the government providing the necessary support and enabling environment through policies, systems, funding, leadership and management. Therefore, the programme that is at the centre of the study's investigation is focused on transformation and aims to ensure that young academics from designated groups are provided with the necessary support and enabling environments to accelerate their opportunities to become future world-class academics and researchers.

2.3 Why is it important to develop research capacity in higher education?

As highlighted earlier, along with teaching and learning, research is one of the core missions of higher education institutions, and the extent to which universities are engaged in research capacity development initiatives has a major influence in determining their position and the quality of their contributions. Bai, Millwater, Hudson, & Peter (2008), maintain that, in general, research is regarded as the most valuable form of producing knowledge. Its contribution to economic growth and social progress occupies a crucial position in this knowledge-based age. Research not only provides useful insights and original ideas essential to understanding various social, economic and cultural phenomena, it also contributes to solving practical problems and improvements to materials (ibid). In addition, these scholars view research as an important indicator of a country's current and future economic competitiveness.

For the purpose of policymaking, there is reliance on research in the fields of economics and politics. The impact of university research, in the form of either published papers or patent licensing, has substantial social and economic implications for society. It is for this reason that in recent years, international and local universities have prioritised developing their strengths and reputations based on the quality and quantity of research they produce, as well as on the extent to which their research output contributes towards solving societal problems in their own countries. Linking funding to university research performance in many developed and developing countries like South Africa has strengthened the research mission and capacities of the universities that have not been actively engaged in research, such as the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) and universities of technology (UoTs), and even of the well-resourced universities (HWUs) that have always been strong in research. According to Bai, Millwater & Hudson, (2008), research productivity correlates with the status of a higher education institution. Universities around the globe are ranked based on their research output. It follows that every country's research capacity can be interpreted as its capability to generate and utilise research knowledge and outputs relevant to their society's needs, such as developing innovations. In this regard, each country must have a long-term strategy for growing and strengthening research capacities with the view of enhancing these capabilities. This study has already highlighted that there is a range of activities and interventions that have been instituted at individual, institutional and national levels to develop capacities for research.

2.4 Research capacity in South African universities

It is common knowledge that South African higher education manifests diverse research capacities and capabilities as a result of apartheid policies that encouraged by supplying or withholding funding, some universities to engage in research while others were hampered from doing so. This diversity can be explained by the contexts and background of the universities in terms of types of institutions, such as university, university of technology, UoTs, HDIs, HWUs and their geographical locations. The preceding chapter described how, during the apartheid era, the former 'historically black institutions' were, for various legislative reasons, not permitted to fully engage in research. Consequently, institutions which historically catered for the white population could conduct research and have therefore become more research-intensive or leading in various fields of research compared to their 'historically black' counterparts. The HWUs were funded in a way that supported high levels of research function and productivity. The higher education system described above could only produce a system

that was deeply unbalanced in terms of the country's race and gender profiles, because the higher education participation of Black people, particularly women, was very low.

In spite of the situation described above, the current South African government has, since 1994, been trying, through policies and funding mechanisms, to encourage all public higher education institutions to engage in research and improve their research productivity. However, such productivity depends on the institution's research capacity, which can be measured through the availability of several factors such as research infrastructure, technologies, research management systems, leadership, and human and financial resources. Stewart (2015) emphasised that South Africa's reliance on donor funding for developing research capacity and stresses that this should not be the main and only source of funding.

A report published by ASSAf (2010) highlighted the urgency and need for the government to develop strategies to increase the number of well-trained PhDs in South Africa, as a way of fast-tracking national research capacity. The report argues that achieving such a goal will not be possible only owing to the way universities operate today. It cannot be achieved by simply increasing the number of PhD candidates enrolled in South African universities. As noted in the report, to move the entire science system in the direction of these ambitions, a clear assessment of existing production capacity, a realistic assessment of the financial resources available to do so, and a plan for coordinating the different elements of this system are necessary. In response to this and to many other requests for government to intervene and acknowledge its role in the development of research capacity in higher education, the South African government introduced a programme that focuses solely on the development of research capacities of young/emerging/new generation academics in the South African higher education system, the nGAP, amongst other initiatives.

As indicated earlier, the different levels of institutional capabilities emanate from their different histories, which came about because of the apartheid system. The current situation is that some of the formerly disadvantaged universities have made significant advances in terms of developing the teaching and research capacities of young and emerging academics; however, these advances do not imply that transformation is taking place. It should be acknowledged that the South African government has made attempts to redress the imbalances and transform the higher education sector. However, despite the progress made, more work still needs to be done to firmly and completely rid the system of these imbalances and inequalities.

The policies implemented after 1994 have improved access to higher education for both students and academics from previously disadvantaged groups. Currently, according to the Higher Education Management System (HEMIS), 43% of academics in the system are designated academics, and the majority of students pursuing post-school education are from previously disadvantaged groups. However, this does not imply that being given access to the systems means these groups of students and academics are successful. The system itself needs to provide enabling and supportive environments that encourage participation and yield success for these groups of students and staff. The data presented in the study demonstrates that there are academics who are still confronted with issues of subtle racism, unwelcoming institutional cultures, gender discrimination and bullying, even though the national policies have given them legitimate access to the system. This is an indication that the transformation project should not be viewed only as a national responsibility; universities ought to root out cultures that inhibit the participation of staff and students once they have gained access to the system.

2.5 Structural levels of research capacity development

Research conducted by researchers such as Lombard (2006) and Sawyerr (2004) has shown that, in addition to the individual academics involved, there are other elements associated with successful research: notably the nature and quality of the research environment, the facilities and other resources available to researchers. The 'environmental' component includes social, institutional, and material variables that influence individual preferences, as well as the physical and social conditions that determine whether a research project succeeds. Further, it is argued that, while the individual level involves the development of researchers and teams through their training and scholarships, so that they are capable of designing and conducting research, writing up and publishing research findings and influencing policymakers, the organisational level involves the development of research departments in universities, research institutes and think tanks that are able to maintain and fund themselves, manage their resources and collaborate with others.

Even though the study's focus is on the individual and institutional levels of research capacity development, it was deemed imperative to discuss the three levels at which research capacity development occurs. It is important to note that these three components are continually interacting, and this should be taken into consideration when implementing any research capacity development programme or intervention. The figure below illustrates the three essential levels of research capacity development.

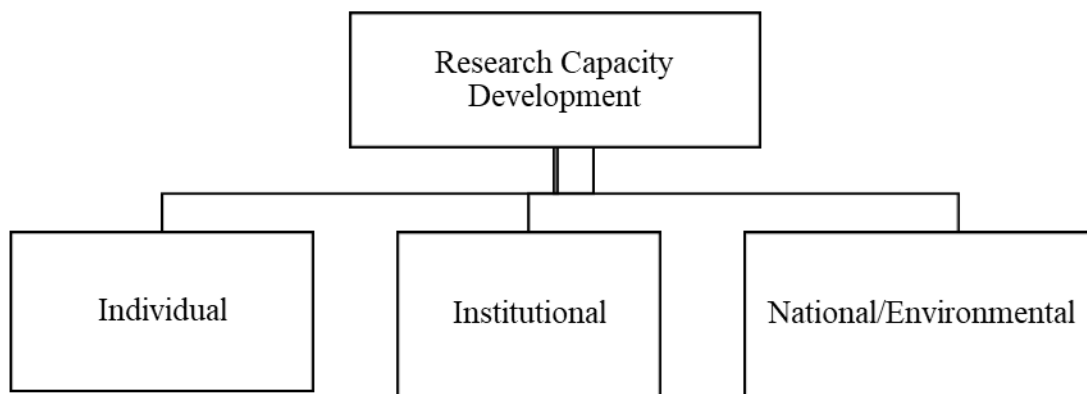


Figure 2.1: The three levels of research capacity development

According to Sawyerr (2004), the three levels coincide significantly, with no clear restrictions between them. This implies that although research capacity development interventions may not be implemented simultaneously at all three levels, they may consciously or unconsciously spill over to effect change (both positive and negative) at different levels.

In light of the above, ‘research capacity development’ is deemed a broad term encompassing a range of interventions, processes and structures supporting both the consumption and production of research (Pighills, Plummer, Harvey, & Pain, 2013). Conceptually, research capacity development includes both research capacity building activities, which generally focus on emerging and novice stages, and research capacity strengthening which provides more targeted support to improve capability to conduct research at more mature stages of development (Cooke *et al.*, 2006). Strategies for research capacity building generally target activities associated with utilising evidence in practice. These strategies aim to increase research skills and output; they can be targeted at the individual, team and organisational levels (Cooke, 2005; Cooke *et al.*, 2006; Pickstone *et al.*, 2008), and can use supra-organisational structures such as networks and support units to provide support and infrastructure (Cooke, 2005; Farmer & Weston, 2002; Pickstone *et al.*, 2008).

In acknowledging that research capacity development occurs at different levels, higher education institutions implement a range of strategies to develop and strengthen their research capacities and capabilities, and these are often tailored to individual circumstances. For example, as indicated earlier, the South Africa higher education institutions are at different

stages due to their different histories. Some universities have advanced in terms of developing their research capacities and capabilities, while others are still lagging. Therefore, each institution is compelled by these circumstances to develop research capacities at their own pace, while they are guided by their different mandates and missions, as well as taking into consideration the availability of government funding.

In addition to the interventions and strategies that have been put in place by higher education institutions, as well as the capabilities individual academics may possess, it is important that the broader national policy environment is enabling and supportive towards both the individual researcher and the institution. RAWOO (1995) defines an 'enabling environment' as one that is conducive to promoting and maintaining research capacity. It is also stated that such an environment involves external aspects, such as support at the national level, mechanisms for steering research towards relevant topics, relations between research and policy, and a professional environment and tradition of research. Furthermore, an enabling environment can enhance opportunities for the development of researchers and influence the sustainability of research infrastructures such as research networks, thus facilitating collaborations, supporting, and funding initiatives (RAWOO, 1995).

Based on the above, it can be argued that research capacity development is an ongoing process that takes place within a continuously changing policy environment involving various actors, and requires a range of interventions. For such research capacity development interventions to be successful and viable, various needs must be met by different actors at different levels. It must also be acknowledged that each situation, whether at individual, institutional or national/international levels, might present its own challenges, opportunities and constraints, and might therefore require its own unique intervention.

2.6 Individual, institutional and national research capacity development

For purposes of this study, the concept of research capacity development was approached from two levels, the individual and the institutional. The one level focuses on the individual researchers, and involves nGAP the lecturers, the managers and the mentors, some of whom undertake a capacity development process as a researcher in a specific discipline or research area. The second level highlights the university and the context that it offers to support research capacity development for the individual researcher. It is necessary to discuss in detail the

different levels at which research capacity development occurs, in order to demonstrate how the levels interact.

2.6.1 Research capacity development at an individual level

Several research studies have demonstrated that, over the years, research development has become an attractive activity for academics with a view of improving their chances of being permanently employed at a university and of becoming eligible for promotion. Higher education systems typically measure academic performance by research outputs and encourage academic contributions to research through reward systems such as appointment, promotion and tenure (Bai, Millwater & Hudson, (2008). MacGregor, Rix, Aylward and Glynn (2006) note in their analysis of factors associated with research management in Australian economic and business faculties, that since the mid-1980s, the academic's role has expanded greatly, both as an indicator of how well the institution is perceived and as an indicator of how well the individual academic is compensated.

As indicated earlier, research capacity at the individual level includes skills, competencies, attitudes and values, which are acquired mainly through targeted training programmes and courses, and participation in various research endeavours (Fowler *et al.*, 2009). Research capacity at an individual level also fits neatly with the concept of capability, outlined earlier by Kumar and Seth (2001), who argued that a capability reflects a person's ability to accomplish a given purpose, and that capability development involves a collaborative process through which individual competences can be developed and improved. For example, individual researcher capabilities may include but are not limited to the ability to conceptualise a research programme and implement the entire research project and cycle autonomously, suitable postgraduate qualifications, enthusiasm, the ability to create and maintain external collaborations and linkages, grant writing and fundraising, managing research and resources, writing and publicising research discoveries for different audiences and the ability to access information and research equipment. The concept of capability is expanded on later in the chapter when discussing the capability approach as one of the frameworks informing the study.

In addition to the above, Lombard (2006, pp. 2-12) have identified the following factors that are important to the individual researcher:

- **Personal motivation:** The individual researcher should be driven to explore, understand and follow their own ideas and have a sense of responsibility to advance and contribute to society through innovation, discovery and creative works.
- **In-depth knowledge of the research area:** The individual researcher should be familiar with all major published works in the area, current major projects being conducted, differing theories, key researchers, predominant funding sources.
- **Basic research skills:** This includes skills such as basic statistics, study design, data collection techniques, as well as advanced ones applicable to the research area (such as specific equipment usage; statistics design, etc.).
- **Socialisation:** This refers to the process of learning the values, norms, expectations and sanctions affecting researchers.
- **Advisory/Mentor functioning:** Young/novice researchers need to be involved in a process of receiving assistance from and collaborating with established researchers.
- **Work habits:** Early in the researcher's career, productive scholarly habits need to be established.
- **Professional network:** Researchers need to maintain contact with a network of research colleagues, both within and outside the institution.
- **Productive local peer support:** The productivity of peers sets the norms for others and continued reinforcement and recognition of work by colleagues stimulates productivity.
- **Simultaneous projects:** Evidence suggests that scientists are more productive if engaged in simultaneous projects.
- **Sufficient work time:** There must be uninterrupted time to devote to scholarly activities; productive researchers should devote approximately 10-80% of their total time to research, with the ideal being about 40%.
- **Orientation:** Productive researchers are committed to both external activities (attending regional and national meetings and collaboration), and internal activities.
- **Autonomy/Commitment:** Productive researchers have academic freedom, plan their own time, and set their own goals. At the same time, they play a meaningful role within their organisation and are valued as important contributors to the organisation.
- **Supportive environment:** Research productivity requires an environment that provides necessary resources (Lombard, 2006).

The individual level of research capacity development, as depicted in the discussions above, focuses only on the academic/researcher. However, for this study, the individual level has been

expanded to include the individuals that are critical and central to the implementation and support of the development of the nGAP at institutional levels: the nGAP managers and mentors.

2.6.2 Research capacity development at an institutional level

It was demonstrated earlier that there are no clear definitions of what constitutes research capacity development in higher education, in the sense that for some institutions the focus is on supporting the production of quality research, while for others it is about tackling the immediate environment that supports research. Earlier discussions about research capacity development at the individual researcher level bear testimony to the fact that such development is not only about recruiting sufficient staff to conduct research; it also involves empowering them to progress, so that they are able to develop and maintain their academic career, both in the present and in the future. A reasonable work environment, adequate training, and the necessary physical infrastructure are all requirements outlined by RAWOO (1995). In addition, the institution must have the ability to raise and manage research funds to support policies for developing research programmes that are relevant to society; and, of course, the institution must monitor and evaluate research.

Sawyerr (2004) also suggests that universities, as centres of innovation and knowledge production, are critical to the advancement of national research. Among the many critical features of research capacity development, he identifies the following as the most critical: infrastructure, such as laboratories, equipment, libraries, information storage, retrieval, and utilisation systems, effective management systems, strong postgraduate programmes and policies that facilitate and support the research enterprise, along with incentives that reward high-quality research (Sawyerr, 2004)). The implications of this are that in any higher education institution, research capacity must be nurtured continuously through policy and strategy, government funding, infrastructure, appropriately designed training and development initiatives and participation in regular research activities.

Further to Sawyerr's list of requirements, the Global Forum for Health Research (2000) posits that a key component of institutional research capacity development is to have a sufficient number of qualified research and support personnel. The forum contends that at the institutional level, a research management system should encourage academics to engage in scholarly endeavours, without neglecting other forms of excellence such as teaching. Institutions must

create an enabling environment in which researchers can develop and produce quality research, as well as ease academics' work and make conducting research more enjoyable. It is also crucial that institutions provide the resources and collegiality for staff to work together, engage in regular interactions with one another, and of course, demonstrate a commitment to the institution and its mission, goals, and purpose.

The lack of mentorship provided to researchers at an early stage prevents them from setting clear career goals or advancing professionally (Sharma and Razzaque, 2017). Mentoring is therefore one of the important services that universities should provide, especially to young and mid-career researchers, who often need guidance to develop and manage their careers.

The above discussion demonstrates that universities play a significant role in ensuring that academics and researchers are provided with the necessary infrastructure and resources to support their research endeavours. Figure 2.2, below, provides a general view of the kinds of capabilities required by universities to play an effective role in providing support for research capacity development. It shows that, for research capacity at an individual level to succeed, a strong supportive institutional environment is required, that supports and enables research. This is because there is continuous interaction and some form of interdependence between the two levels. The figure also demonstrates that the institutional and environmental factors described above are instrumental in providing access to resources and experiences that can develop individual capacity.

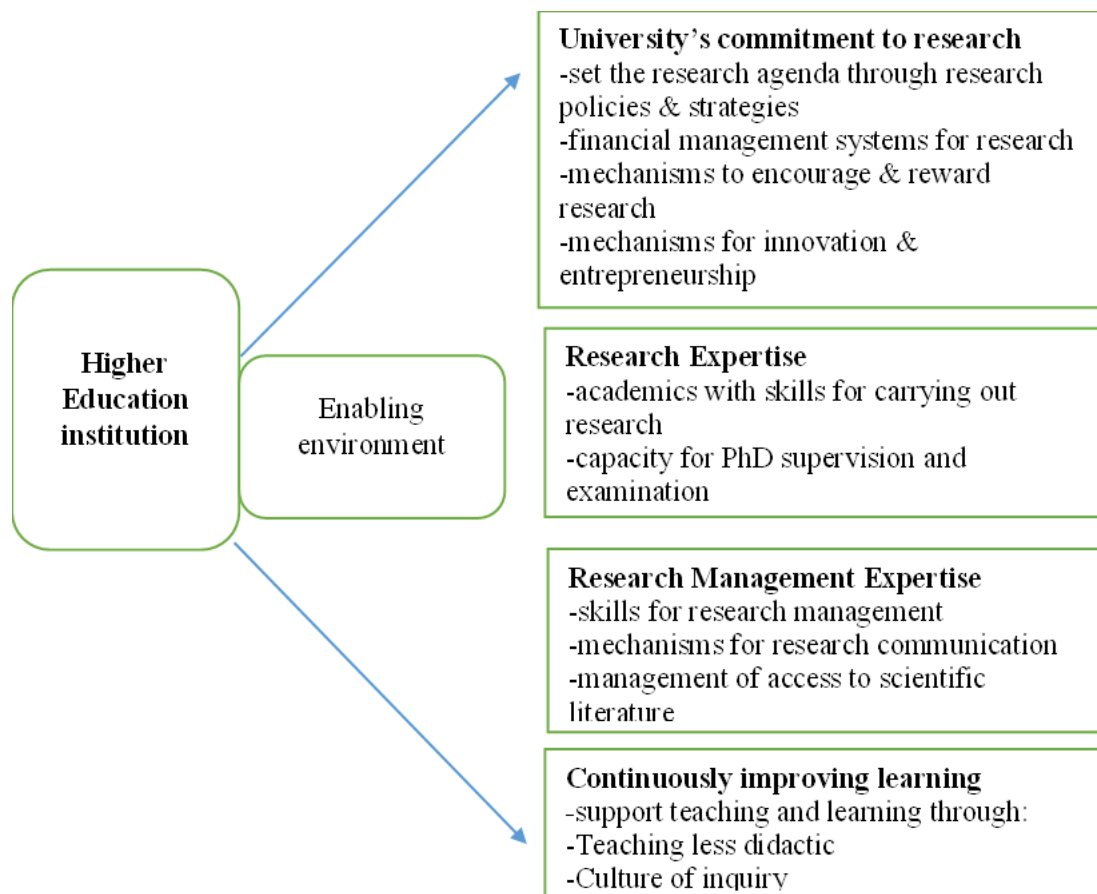


Figure 2.2: Institutional research capacity

The figure supports the arguments of Van Rensburg, Armstrong and Geyer (2019) that appropriate infrastructure is necessary to support research and capacity development. Furthermore, research infrastructure must also consist of human resources such as supervisors and administrative support, specific time schedules, research positions and funding opportunities.

Edwards *et al.* (2016) have identified leadership as another dimension of research capacity development. They specifically mentioned ‘servant-leadership’ approaches, which they say are essential in ensuring the success of novice researchers, both individually and as a team. In the words of Laub (1999), servant-leadership means that the leader places the good of those led ahead of his or her own self-interest. A leader in this spectrum is needed to champion the research, ensure dedicated time for research, provide funding and administrative support and support ethical clearance processes, as well as develop and train staff.

Even though the above figure presents an ideal picture of the kind of support required for research capacity development in universities, there are universities in South Africa, some of which are part of this study, that are unable to provide these requirements due to some of the barriers referred to earlier in the study, such as:

- limited or inadequate infrastructure and resources to support research capacity development;
- a lack of training opportunities;
- inadequate access to research networks, mentoring;
- little or no research culture, due to the historical legacies;
- a scarcity of research leadership.

Most capabilities outlined in Figure 6.2 are still concentrated in a few mostly formerly white universities, which were favoured and enabled by the policies and funding structures of the apartheid government. Because of their different histories and contexts, each South African higher education institution appears to have inherent factors that could have either a positive or a negative impact on their ability to develop their staff's individual research capacities. At a higher level, it is therefore necessary for government to provide financial and legislative environment that enables all higher education institutions to develop their human resources. The government must ensure that the national policy and legislative environment is enabling and conducive for research capacity development in higher education to take place.

2.6.3 Research capacity development at a national level

After 1994, the changes in the South African government's research funding policies were combined with the desire to transform the higher education research landscape and achieve international recognition. By and large, these efforts seem to have motivated local universities to improve their research statuses by:

- increasing their research productivity;
- improving their research management systems;
- setting up research centres
- developing institutional research plans;
- establishing research reporting mechanism;
- creating research committees to set research agendas;

- appointing research managers in the form of deputy vice-chancellors and deans responsible for research;
- allocating scholarships to encourage academics to engage in research.

In countries such as South Africa, research conducted by higher education institutions is primarily funded by government, therefore it is imperative that universities assist the country in accomplishing its research objectives. For research to flourish and produce quality results, it should be prioritised and given a more prominent role at a national government level, which should be enabling. Furthermore, Lombard (2006) was of the view that any research capacity development initiative takes place within a policy context which can either nurture or restrict such initiatives. He argues that the ‘external environment’ could:

- provide strategies for influencing and developing researchers;
- encourage research collaborations;
- provide financial support to initiatives; and
- have an impact on the viability and existence of supportive infrastructure such as research networks.

In South Africa, after 1994, competition for research funding among universities increased, especially because the government had to fund universities differently to try to correct the imbalances created by the apartheid system, in which previously white universities were well funded by government, while those that catered for Blacks were under-funded. This was done by introducing the new funding formula, which was generally geared towards attaining the goals of transforming the higher education sector. All universities therefore became eligible for funding for research outputs and research capacity development. The competition for government research funding became even more intense when the former technikons were re-designated to become universities of technology, and after the mergers their missions were reviewed to incorporate both research and teaching. It was hoped that by doing this, government would encourage and strengthen university-based research and direct resources to areas that needed to be prioritised.

However, in recent years, funding for research in South African higher education is often of concern, as it depends to a great extent on the amount of funding available for research as

compared to the funding for teaching and learning, the level of research activity and the productivity of universities. Even though South African universities have guaranteed funding in terms of block grants and earmarked funding for academic staff research and teaching development programmes, the issue of decreased funding for higher education has become particularly prominent due to the Fees Must Fall protests that have erupted in universities since 2015/16, and funding cuts for higher education. These concerns stem from the understanding that higher education institutions must have guaranteed funding for research from government to create some form of financial stability and certainty. Research is one of the core missions of universities, therefore they need to have access to funding that is consistently available to cover the costs of research development and research development support for academic staff.

It cannot be denied that research capacity development also takes place because of government policy and legislation; however, the prevailing legislation or policy can either nurture or constrain its progress or impact. In other words, there is a possibility that government legislation and policy could influence opportunities for developing researchers either negatively or positively, facilitating or hampering collaborations in research, supporting or discouraging research careers, facilitating or blocking funding for research development, and promoting or hampering the sustainability and the very existence of supportive infrastructures at institutional level. In order to maximise the impact of research on economic and social development, it is important for government policy and legislation to ensure that the research sector, which consists of higher education institutions, research entities and stakeholders, can be empowered to make a more substantial contribution to economic and social development through the development of a policy context and leadership which enables our universities and our individual researchers to address related national issues.

The South African government has demonstrated its support for research capacity development in higher education by crafting a long-term vision of becoming a knowledge-based economy in which research capacity development should play an important role. The White Paper on Higher Education and Training acknowledges that research plays a critical role in the production, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge, as well as the development of high-level human resources (DHET, 2014b). According to this legislation, research is the most important tool for creating new knowledge. It also acknowledges the importance of research in providing a mechanism for the dissemination of new knowledge through teaching, both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Moreover, the Department of Science and Technology

(DST) highlights the importance of research and innovation for South Africa, in its *National Research and Development Strategy and Ten-Year Innovation Plan: Innovation towards a Knowledge-Based Economy*, 2008–2018 (DST, 2008). Despite these policies and strategies for gearing the country towards becoming a knowledge-based economy, some quarters of the higher education system are of the view that funding for research capacity development across the system is still not being given the attention it deserves.

It can also be argued that the government, in the form of the DHET, has recently stepped up its efforts to support research capacity development in higher education through newly funded programmes that focus on development of young/emerging/new generation academics. The government also supports international research collaborations through its internationalisation policies and strategies. This is an indication that attempts are being made by government to strengthen policy and ensure that higher education institutions are provided with a supportive environment that enables research capacity development. Even though it is not perfect, the policy environment in South Africa is strong and seems to be enabling research capacity development in higher education. Figure 2.3, below, provides a diagrammatic representation and summary of the support that should be provided by national governments as a way of providing an enabling and supportive environment for research capacity development in higher education.

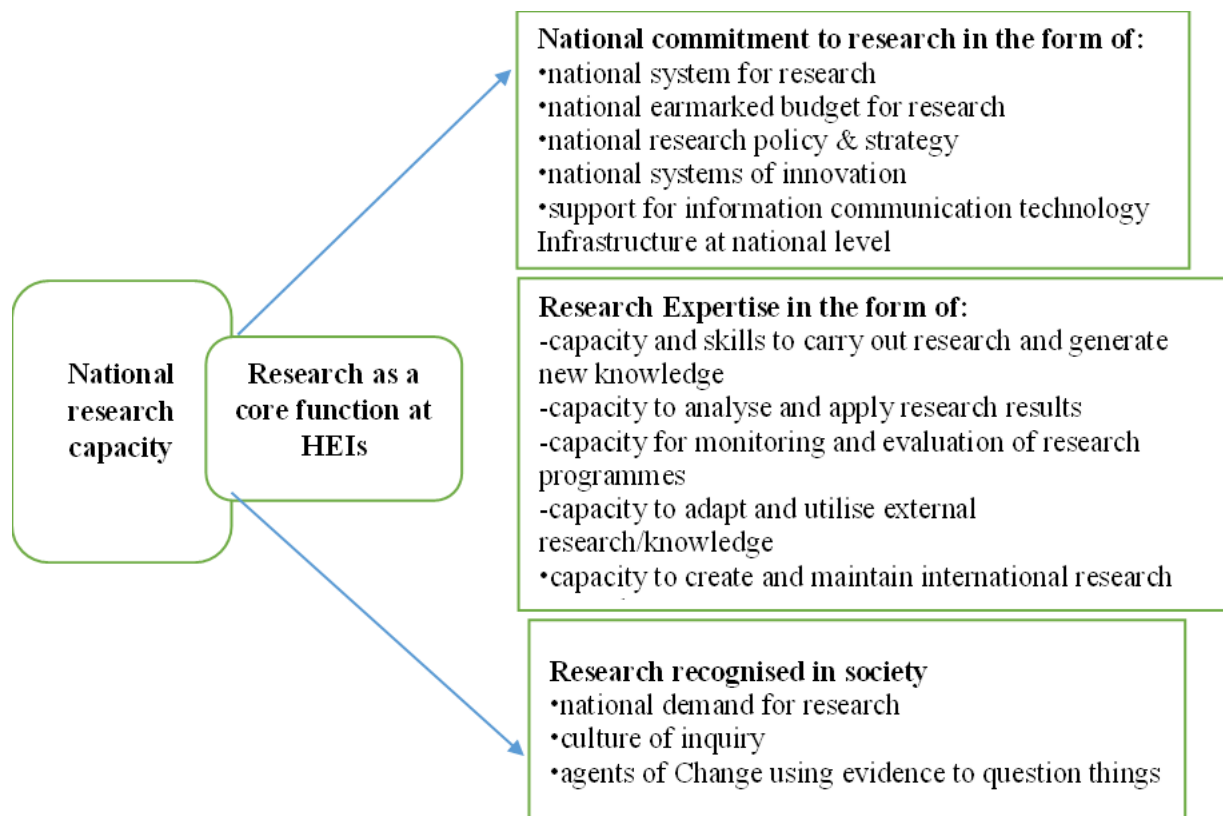


Figure 2.3: Research capacity development at national level

The above discussions indicate that research capacity development cannot only be attributable to one source, it is a result of a combination of services working at an individual, national and institutional spheres. At the national level, university research outputs have become an important indicator of the overall national capacity and higher education performance. At the institutional levels, universities and the respective departments and faculties are driven by the need to enhance their local and international recognition and stature, which are closely linked to the research accomplishments of their academic staff.

The literature reviewed for this study has revealed the multifaceted nature of research capacity development by demonstrating that it is multi-layered and multidimensional, and that many types of research capacities may exist at different levels. It is therefore true that when studying research capacity development, this should be done from a more holistic perspective. However, the investigation that was carried out focused mainly on the individual and institutional levels of research capacity development. The links between the three levels are highlighted and discussed throughout the study in order to provide the reader with a general understanding of the larger context within which research capacity development occurs. The fact that the study

focused on the two levels should not in any way suggest that the national government level is insignificant. The decision was informed by the fact that the study was aimed at bridging the existing gap in the literature.

2.7 Empirical research on research capacity development in higher education

It was demonstrated earlier that research capacity comprises the accessibility of research capabilities such as trained academics who are competent in conducting and producing quality research. In higher education, the most basic indicator of research capacity among the academic staff is the level of skill sets obtained through doctoral degrees and post-doctoral work. The training experience at the doctoral and post-doctoral levels exposes research academics to the skills and the basic research culture to publish and supervise postgraduate students. Edwards, Kaseje & Kahwa (2016) were of the view that traditional models of research capacity building focused largely on empowering individuals to become better researchers, mainly through graduate programmes, postgraduate training, mentoring and apprenticeship-type training. They also claimed that these resources were, in some situations, used in conjunction with the development of research centres or formal networks that mobilised the critical mass of specialists to facilitate research.

Other research by Baldwin & Chandler (2002); Schulze (2009); Geber (2009) presented evidence that although some the research capacity development strategies implemented to improve research productivity of academics and support novice academics had been successful, it was also clear that they had not been without challenges. Some of the well-known implemented strategies included activities such as writing retreats, mentoring sabbaticals, teaching relief and coaching sessions.

Dison (2004) noted that there is a widespread recognition of 'research capacity building' as a fundamental need in South African higher education research. The author argued that, even though the subject of research capacity development has become increasingly relevant for all researchers and universities around the world, discussions in the South African context have emphasised the development of research capacity among Black and female academics, at the individual level, or developing capacity in historically disadvantaged institutions. The negligible representation of Black and women academics within the sector, as well as by the employment equity legislation (RSA, 1998) has meant that initiatives intended to foster the development of the next generation of academics have had to pay particular attention to these

groups. Similarly, in the nGAP, the concept is not associated with the development of novice white staff, but Black academics from under-represented groups, with a particular emphasis on Black women. The study did, however, note that white females and Black males have been participating in the programme, as the programmes allows for 20% of the positions to be allocated to groups that are not specifically designated.

In the South African higher education system, the conversion of technikons into universities of technology created a serious challenge in terms of a shortage of research skills, as these universities have not been engaged in research at the same level as other traditional universities. As a result, there is insufficient quality infrastructure, resources, technologies, facilities, and equipment and library holdings. This has become a major constraint on the enrolment and production of postgraduate students, particularly at Master's and doctoral level. In addition, HESA (2011) has noted that institutions in rural or small towns experienced challenges in attracting academics, and there was emerging evidence of migration from these universities, as they pay lower salaries than their urban counterparts. It was further noted that these universities were battling to maintain doctoral programmes at all, let alone introduce new programme manage research and mobilise funding to support doctoral studies and students (ibid).

For instance, research conducted by Mlitwa and Ntuli (2016) to assess the development of research capacity among emerging researchers at the University of Zululand (UniZulu) established that a lack of mentorship of junior researchers by experienced academics, heavy teaching workloads, inadequate time for research, a lack of motivation and a limited culture of research in departments, as well as inadequate research support structures in departments, tended to militate against the research potential in many academic departments.

A study by Mugimu, Nakabugo & Katunguka-Rwakishaya (2013) explored the realities of ongoing capacity building for faculty in research and teaching at Makerere University, in Uganda. These researchers discovered that inadequate funding, insufficient workload, a poor research environment, and poor motivation were among the most important obstacles hampering the university's efforts to build the capacity of faculty members to undertake research. Furthermore, participants expressed concern about a lack of information due to inadequate access to electronic databases, e-journals and e-books, as well as the lack of faculty mentoring. They also reported that many academic units were lacking in senior academic staff at the level of associate professors or professors. The authors concluded that these results

indicate that Makerere University exhibited a somewhat unsupportive environment to encourage academics to participate in meaningful research and teaching programmes.

Van Rensburg, Armstrong & Geyer (2017), identified leadership as an additional element in fostering research capacity development. As these scholars explicitly state, servant leadership approaches are necessary to build confidence and competence among new researchers, both individually or as part of a team. In their opinion, such leaders should champion research, ensure that secure time is allocated for research, and provide infrastructure, including facilities, technologies, financial support, administrative support and experienced researchers. Van Rensburg *et al.* (2017) illustrated the need for strong leadership and sustained financial support from both the government and the university in order to develop the research capacity of /new generation academics and ultimately to advance research in higher education.

2.8 Conceptualisation of the nGAP as a research capacity development programme

Having considered various interpretations of the meaning and application of the concept of research capacity development, as well as the different levels at which it operates, this section focuses on the application of this concept to the South Africa's research capacity development programme, the nGAP.

2.8.1 The aim of the programme

Through the nGAP, the government currently seeks to provide an environment in which the recruitment and development of young and emerging academics is no longer implemented in a fragmented manner, in silos, by different universities. The government has realised that expecting higher education institutions to implement a range of competing programmes, often tailored to individual institutional needs, is not working, and delays the transformation of academic staff demographics.

As a national programme, the nGAP takes into account the reality that South African higher education institutions are at different stages of development when it comes to teaching, learning and research capacity. The programme is therefore intended to equalise these aspects of university functioning. Stewart (2015) argued that in South Africa there was high reliance on donor funding to promote research capacity development, hinting that this should be addressed in such a way that the main source of funding should not be from outside the country. Most existing studies, although very limited, have concentrated on research capacity development at

the national level. For this reason, the study examined the micro settings provided for the nGAP as a research capacity development programme within the selected South African public higher education institutions and their connection with the views and experiences of the individual lecturers, managers and mentors participating in the programme. It was also important to clarify the decision to only focus on a few institutions, as case studies, instead of on the entire higher education sector. It may appear that the study perceives research capacity development as an issue pertaining to a few institutions; however, this is not so as observations have been established that research capacity development is a phenomenon that affects the higher education sector as a whole, and there is no higher education institution that is immune to the challenges and issues relating to it.

The nGAP is a national programme that is systemic in focus and transformative in nature. Its main objective is to transform the staff demographics in the higher education system with a particular focus on the recruitment, development and retention of young and emerging academics into permanent positions in universities. The objective of transforming the system and ensuring the targets of the NDP, which have been discussed in section 1.2.7 are met, and that all parts of the system should meet their allocated responsibilities.

2.8.2 Partnerships within nGAP

The implementation of the nGAP is therefore a multi-layered process which is carried out at different levels of the system and involves different units within a university setting. As indicated earlier, the programme is a people-centred activity, focusing on the development of human capabilities. However, the programme is implemented in such a way that it is characterised by complex relationships between role-players such as lecturers, the nGAP managers, mentors, other divisions and units within universities, as well as in government.

The nGAP model provides a partnership model that may not be able to function properly and succeed in the absence of some partners, so the model forces every partner to play their part, failing which, the programme may collapse. The investigation conducted by the study has, however, revealed that there seems to be an understanding from all the parties involved in the nGAP that the programme is bigger than all of them, and the focus should be on the bigger picture, which is developing research capacities for the entire higher education system. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, understanding how the nGAP programme functions and how it is implemented required taking into consideration the broader environment or

context within which the programme exists, as well as how these contexts affect the individual participants. Consequently, for the nGAP to be effective and sustainable, all the relevant actors must perform their responsibilities irrespective of the challenges, opportunities and constraints they may be confronted with.

The diagram below provides an illustration of how the study views the nGAP as a research capacity development programme. The diagram also provides a general view of the capacities that the national government, the higher education institutions and nGAP participants require to perform each of their roles effectively in enabling the implementation of the programme.



Figure 2.4: Diagrammatic representation of the nGAP as a research capacity development programme

The figure above shows the three levels at which the nGAP operates are interrelated and interdependent. There is no nGAP without the government, which provides funding and regulation. The universities provide support and conducive environments and the lecturers are employed and participate in the programme. The government developed and is funding the nGAP for the benefit of the higher education system. Higher education institutions must provide individual lecturers with several support mechanisms, such as infrastructures and ICTs, leadership, vibrant research and teaching cultures, collaboration opportunities for the researchers, and so on. Lecturers must have the necessary qualifications, motivation, skills and passion for their area of study in order to take up the nGAP posts advertised by different institutions. However, if institutions are not able to attract lecturers into the programme, if the government is unable to provide sustainable funding to the nGAP posts, or if the lecturers do

not take up the posts offered to them by institutions, the universities may not be able to meet their partnership obligations and the programme will be jeopardised. Equally, should the institutions recruit lecturers and not provide them with an enabling environment and the required support, they will not succeed in the programme and it will collapse.

2.8.3 Emphasis on the research development component

The general theory of capacity development in higher education models the change process at the system level, the university level, and the individual level. The national level and university level factors constitute enabling conditions for the development of individual academics. However, when the national and university level conditions are not met, they do not necessarily support changes at the individual level and increase the likelihood that nGAP will meet its development and transformation objectives. When they are not met, these conditions convert into risks to the achievement of the outcomes sought by nGAP. Furthermore, even though the nGAP speaks about supporting both the teaching and research capacities of young/emerging/new generation academics in SA HEIs, the study has concluded that it conceptualises the programme as a research capacity development programme, due to its structural features.

Generally, in terms of its structure and features, the nGAP seems to prioritise research capacity development over other areas, such as teaching and community engagement. For instance, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the nGAP requires that lecturers receive reduced teaching and administrative workloads by allocating 20% of their time to teaching and 80% of their time towards their PhD research. In essence, the reduced teaching workload gives the lecturers dedicated and secured time away from their teaching responsibilities, which frees them to participate in research. This is an indication by the programme developers that research is a major component of the programme and should be considered a priority at both institutional and system levels. Even though the nGAP is about increasing the number of young/emerging/new generation academics in the system who also have PhDs, the emphasis on completion of a PhD could be with the understanding that in the South African higher education system, postgraduate output comes with additional funding, especially at Master's and PhD levels. Therefore, an increased postgraduate output means additional funding is available for further research capacity development. Postgraduate output is also an important gauge of improvement in research capacity of an institution and in the case of the nGAP this means research capacity for the entire HE sectors.

2.8.4 International mobility for nGAP scholars

The programme provides support towards an international mobility component, which is carried out through a partnership between the DHET and the British Council and the Newton Fund. For governments and universities to maintain global relevance, internationalisation of both teaching and research has become a policy priority. This is done by encouraging academics, through research grants, to collaborate with international colleagues and to form long-term international research networks. In this way, research academics are encouraged to spend a short time abroad as part of strengthening their academic profiles, focusing mainly on pursuing their research interests. National policies are designed in such a way that they facilitate joint research by facilitating the exchange of academic staff and increasing their mobility (Dodd, 2012).

There are benefits for countries and universities from engaging in international mobility programmes. Woolley, Turpin, Marceau, & Hill (2008) and Gaillard & Gaillard (1997) argue that researchers who return to their home countries after spending time in developed countries are perceived as providing their former hosts with a taste of local and regional knowledge networks which seemed to have been unreachable in the past. Accordingly, as Woolley *et al.* (2008) argue, researchers typically pursue scientific mobility as a means of upgrading their capabilities, which increases human capital for the country. They also become integrated into network connections, and collaborate in constructing them, which contributes to social capital. This also implies that there are other powerful motivational factors that drive researcher mobility.

Emphasis of the nGAP on this aspect of development indicates that the programme is more interested and focused on academics developing research networks and collaborations that will improve their research standing and profiles. This is because the main focus of most mobility engagements are about building networks with international counterparts and universities.

2.8.5 Partnerships with national bodies

In addition to the above, the nGAP provides funding towards research through a partnership with the National Research Foundation (NRF). It should however be noted that, as stipulated by the NRF Act, 1998,

“...the mandate of the NRF is to promote and support research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including indigenous knowledge, and thereby contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of all South Africans” (www.nrf.ac.za).

It is not surprising to see that the focus of funding allocations from the NRF is only on research capacity development. The intention of the NRF-nGAP partnership is to support the lecturers by assisting them in developing the skills that will enable them to embark on the early stages of their research and to place themselves in positions where they can apply for collaborative research support grants.

The nGAP also provides funding towards registration fees for a PhD and for the purchasing of research-related equipment to facilitate their research processes such as data collection, interpretation, and analysis for participating candidates. It is clear from the above that, without sufficient funding allocations to support programmes such as the nGAP, there would be a huge quantity of potential doctoral candidates who would decline such offers, and it would almost undoubtedly lead to a decline in the number of young academics that are being targeted for participation.

2.9 A general comment on the conceptual literature reviewed for this study

Although the existing literature indicates that there are a considerable number of recent contributions to research capacity development in higher education, there is still lack of in-depth qualitative analysis of the experiences of individual researchers and academics, which would prove valuable for the full understanding of the nGAP programme. It was interesting to note that most of the available literature on research capacity development focuses largely on the health science, agriculture technology and innovation sectors, with few sources documenting research capacity development of young academics in South Africa, especially focusing on those from designated groups.

2.10 Concluding remarks

The literature reviewed in this chapter provided a conceptual review of studies on research capacity development in higher education and offered insights into the current debates about research capacity development in higher education. The review revealed that, despite a growing

body of literature about research capacity development in higher education, less is known about how to assess whether efforts to build research capacity have been successful, and what higher education institutions and academics must do to achieve success in developing and strengthening their research capacities.

There is therefore still a need for more empirical research on research capacity development generally, and in the South African higher education context specifically. Most existing studies consider the important role played by the national government and the external environment, through legislation, policy, funding support and capacity development can be regarded as a form of broader development. Hence, it is hoped that this study will fill this gap.

A common theme in the existing literature, as acknowledged and agreed upon in most of the studies reviewed for this research, is the fact that research capacity development takes place at three levels: individual, institutional and national, and these are interrelated, and interact constantly. The review helped to conceptualise the nGAP as a research capacity development programme, with its implementation taking place at three levels, as well as being based on structural features which the previous chapter discussed in greater detail.

The chapter also indicated that even though the nGAP is a research capacity development programme implemented at three levels, the two primary levels that were at the centre of investigation in this study are the individual and institutional. This study, however, does provide a continuous illustration of how the national level impacts the other two levels.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter summarised the literature relating to the conceptual framework for this study of research capacity development in South African universities. These accounts revealed that, even though research capacity development has been a concern for many universities worldwide, there has been insufficient research on its facets and permutations. The discussions also demonstrated that the nGAP, as a research capacity development programme, is multi-layered and multifaceted: it results from a combination of factors arising at national and institutional levels. Therefore, for the programme's implementation processes to be properly understood, the study needed to adopt a holistic approach in examining its processes.

It is for this reason that the capability approach was considered the appropriate theoretical framework for interpreting and making sense of the different aspects of this investigation. The main purpose of this chapter is therefore to examine and clarify aspects of the theoretical framework that underpinned this study, namely the capability approach. This is done through a discussion of the approach and the way in which it has shaped the issues that were investigated.

It must be acknowledged that the most challenging aspect of qualitative research is understanding the connection between a theoretical framework and a research topic. The theoretical framework utilised in this instance allowed a richer understanding of the concept of research capacity development and the programme (nGAP) under investigation. It also offered explanations for some of the constructs that emerged in the data. After exploring the this approach in relation to the conceptualisation and implementation of the nGAP at different universities, it is hoped that the higher education system will begin to embrace and understand the nGAP as a people-centred, systemic intervention that should prioritise the human aspect of development rather than just the economic (the numbers) part of it.

3.2 The capability approach

3.2.1 The approach and its applications

As defined by Robeyns 2005, the capability approach is a broad, rational framework that enables evaluation of the well-being of individuals and social structures, the design of social policy and the proposal of changes in society. In addition to its general application in many

areas, the capability approach is primarily used in development studies, welfare economics, social policy and political philosophy.

Application of the capability approach draw their primary strength from their focus on people's abilities and capabilities, on what they are capable of accomplishing and being. The approach was pioneered during the 1980s and 1990s by Amartya Sen and developed further by Martha Nussbaum. The capability approach emphasises that institutional interventions should enhance academics' capacity for promoting value, liberating them to do valuable things. According to the capability approach, academics may be disadvantaged in achieving their ability, liberty and well-being if they lack appropriate support in the form of institutional policies, leadership, training programmes and funding opportunities. Robeyns (2003) was of the opinion that in academia, the capability approach is largely considered in abstract philosophical terms; however, it is also used to draw conclusions from applied and empirical research, while in the policy arena it has emerged as the foundation of the human development model.

Adapting the capability approach, Rajapakse (2016) argued that it has become a credible alternative to standard economic theory by incorporating ethical perspectives into the capitalist model, and that it has been successful in changing the context of poverty, inequality and human development. As a critic of traditional welfare economics, Sen built the capability approach by criticising utilitarian assumptions that have guided traditional welfare economics. As Rajapakse (2016) writes, Sen developed the "well-being" approach to counter the conflation of income and utility that forms the basis for great part of the human capital theory of education, as well as the neo-classical view of motivation and its implications for human behaviour that share aspects with Anglo-Saxon systems of higher education.

Moreover, Rajapakse (2016) argued that Sen's capability approach exemplified a critique of other approaches to human well-being in welfare economics and political philosophy; these revolve around commodities and a standard of living, as well as justice. Sen's work on the capabilities approach has gained regard for expanding the concept of a meaningful existence that puts the focus on human beings, who they can be and what they can do in leading a meaningful life, and he should get credit for broadening the scope of welfare economics. Furthermore, Sen's research has advanced human agency by recognising the difference between individuals and groups and offering support for both. Finally, through the capabilities approach, Sen suggests that participatory, public discussion, and democratic participation are

important in decision-making processes, as well as in formulating goals, deciding future directions and shaping public policy.

3.2.3 Core concepts of the capabilities approach

The fundamental concepts of the capability approach are functionings, capabilities, agency, and well-being. These are summarised below, and each of them is discussed in more detail in section 3.4:

- The concept of **functionings**: A functioning is something one does or becomes, and this reflects or otherwise represents part of a person's condition. Functioning and capability are two aspects of the same person that are closely related. An individual's capabilities are the functions they are capable of performing (Sen, 1999).
- The concept of **capabilities**: Sen defines a capability as the ability to perform valuable acts or to achieve valued outcomes; [it] represents the options people can choose from for combining things they know they can do or be (Sen, 1993a). Thus, capabilities are opportunities, or the freedom to achieve what an individual reflectively considers valuable.
- A person's **agency** is defined as their ability to pursue and realise the goals they value and are motivated for. It is the ability to act and create change that can be evaluated by assessing its achievement in relation to her own values and objectives, regardless of whether external criteria are deemed relevant (Sen, 1999). Furthermore, Sen asserts that this research helps to explore the agency of the individual, since he or she is a member of the public and participates in economic, social, and political activities (Sen, 1999).
- At the core of the capabilities approach is the notion that when assessing an individual's performance, they need to be evaluated on the basis of their overall **well-being**.

In summary, we are looking at the constituent components of the individual as they pertain to personal welfare. As such, the capabilities approach differs from quality-of-life measures that emphasise outcomes such as wealth generation and achievement, but which provide little insight into the wellbeing of individuals or the development of human potential (Sen, 1993a).

It is important to note that the capability approach incorporates a broad, rich, and multidimensional perspective on human well-being and gives attention to the interplay between material, mental, and social wellbeing as well as economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of human life (Crocker & Robeyns, 2009).

According to Robeyns (2005), the capability approach recognises that individuals have varying capacities to convert goods into valuable achievements due to their personal and locational factors, as well as their social context. Robeyns went on to make a distinction between functioning and capability, which is the difference between achieving something and being able to achieve it, or between achieving something and being able to take advantage of it.

This approach is centred around providing individuals with the freedom to pursue their own objectives rather than concentrate on individual utility. It was also asserted by Trani *et al.* (2011) that policies may be able to enhance these capabilities or, more precisely, affect the factors which enable individuals to transform resources into capabilities (i.e. those beings and doings that individuals value). The conversion factors can be individual or contextual (i.e. social and environmental). Trani *et al.* (2011) also asserted that the ‘internal’ conversion factors, which are personal characteristics such as physical conditions, sex, skills and talents, convert resources (or commodities) into individual functionings. For example, with regard to participating in the nGAP, functionings would involve being able to study towards a PhD, being able to take part in the academic and research activities, as well as being able to receive the qualification at the end of the six-year training. The following section explains these concepts and their significance and interrelations within the capability approach.

3.3 Detailed discussion of basic concepts of the capability approach

3.3.1 Capabilities

The capabilities, according to Nussbaum (2011), are the answers to questions that arise from what people are capable of being or doing in the sense of the concept of ‘substantial freedom’. As the term implies, the ‘capability’ of a person refers to the range of activities they may be capable of performing. Hence, capability may be viewed as a kind of freedom: the potential freedom to achieve other combinations of capabilities.

According to Nussbaum (2011), ‘combined capabilities’ refer to all the things that a person has available to them, both the inner (internal) capabilities and the resources (external conditions) that are connected to them. However, Nussbaum specifies that these are not innate capabilities, but develop through context, which defines and constrains them. In other words, we cannot distinguish between internal and combined capabilities with any degree of precision, because one typically acquires an internal capability through functioning, and loses it through inaction.

According to White, Imperiale, & Perera (2016), a capability represents a person's ability to attain a specific objective, which is the greatest distinction between capacity and capability. In his analysis, Frediani (2007) noted that while capacity is focused on strengthening skills and capacities, capability is seen as an idea that incorporates the concept of improving choices and enabling people to take advantage of opportunities. Moreover, Frediani (2008) postulates that the capability approach accepts the premise that, in the absence of appropriate opportunities, capacity-building programmes focused on developing new skills and abilities will not be sufficient to help people realise their well-being values. We may conclude from this that the idea of capability is closely connected to the principle of opportunity or advantage, and in this context it is essential to understand both the capabilities available to an individual and also those they were able to achieve. The difference between capabilities and capacities should always be taken into account.

3.3.2 Functionings

Alkire (2005) argues that functionings are many distinct activities or qualities that people may enjoy or value, such as being nourished, being confident, or taking part in group activities. To assess social arrangements would be incomplete if it were based only on what people achieve, because it would ignore their opportunities and freedom of participation (Alkire, 2005). To provide some perspective for these functionings, the capabilities approach is driven by the premise that not only can individuals identify what aspects of their lives are valuable, but they are also capable of doing and being what they regard as valuable, since these experiences may be assessed differently depending on the person, their interests and their value system. Lewin (2019) maintains that finding out what people value, deciding which priorities to expand, and finally evaluating their actual expansions (which may go beyond the priority functionings) are distinctly different considerations. In this sense, the capabilities are just one part of the picture when assessing social status.

It is important to highlight the difference between capabilities and functionings, as it is difficult to judge someone's success from looking only at the outcomes of their actions. Wilson-Strydom (2012) emphasises the need to highlighting this distinction, which is fundamental because it means that people are capable of achieving something and doing something else, and that they have the liberty to decide on how to exercise this choice. The distinction offers a theoretical ground for examining the influence of external conditions (e.g. organisational or institutional) on the ways in which agents can exercise authority.

3.3.3 Agency, well-being and freedoms

Taking a capability-based approach as his guiding principle, Robertson (2018) asserts that well-being is best measured in terms of the opportunities available to individuals and their substantive freedom of choice, taking into account external factors and their own characteristics, rather than focusing solely on what they do and the outcomes they achieve. Gasper (2007) points out that the capability approach is intrinsically partial, since it refers to a variety of types of information, most prominently, people's actual circumstances: what they do, and how they are able to live. It can be concluded that it is essential that individuals be assessed and studied, not only on what results or equity outcomes they achieve, but also on what opportunities they have to reach those outcomes.

Sen (1985) emphasised the importance of looking at an individual's opportunities to live a prosperous life when judging their well-being. Despite the fact that only some abilities will be realised as functionings, capabilities represent the freedom an individual has to achieve doings and beings they value. Sen (1999) also stresses the significance a broad agency freedom, but it must be continually contextualized in relation to social and economic considerations; in other words, we have agency but we are bound by the social, political and economic opportunities available to us. It is widely believed that social arrangements and individual agency complement one another. We must simultaneously acknowledge that individual freedom is central, while we must also acknowledge the influence of social influences on individual freedom.

In writings dating back to 1985, Sen considers well-being and agency as two different but equally significant and co-dependent facets of human life. Both elements ought to be respected and reflected in our consideration of how persons and clusters of people are progressing, which is reflected in the aid or protection afforded them (Sen, 1985a, pp. 169-221; 1992, pp. 39-42, pp. 56-72; 1999, pp. 189-91). In addition, Sen proclaims that the human being is a transforming instrument, while the term 'agent' refers to a person participating in economic, social and political activities (Sen, 1999). They act on their own initiative and motivations, both as individuals and collectively, in order to achieve their goals. Thus, it is necessary to distinguish between agents and patients; the term employed in the French philosophical and linguistic sense is *commandité*, which is a passive means to subordinate third parties (Sen, 1999).

According to Sen, an individual's agency's achievement

“...is success in the pursuit of the totality of her considered goals and objectives and the achievement of these goals may enhance or diminish one's own well-being, however, the goals must be those that the person autonomously chooses to pursue, and not simply the goals of others – even if others happen to share the goal” (Sen, 1992, p. 56).

These statements confirm that the capability approach is concerned with an individual's agency in all aspects of life, be it political, social or any other area, and not only in the economic realm. Also, an individual's attainment of agency is decided and acted based on what they regard as valuable and have reason to appreciate, whether that act will bring them individual benefits or not. In this sense, an individual's agency freedom is the ability to make decisions and to act efficiently. The concept of freedom refers to the ability to achieve systematically what one chooses, regardless of who controls the levers of operation (Sen, 1992). Being well means being fully able to function in a valuable way. The central feature of well-being is the ability to achieve valuable functionings. This simply means that we cannot avoid identifying and valuing the important functions by looking at something else, for example happiness, fulfilment of desires, opulence, or control over the primary good.

3.3.4 Conversion factors

Charles and Denman (2012) are of the view that the relationship between individual well-being and functionings can be influenced by three conversion factors, which may be personal, environmental or social. Conversion factors play a significant role in the capability approach by explaining how people's preferences, personal histories and social and working contexts affect their ability to exercise their capabilities.

- Firstly, an individual's capacity to convert a capability into functioning depends on several factors, including physical health, literacy skills and intelligence.
- Secondly, social conversion factors may also include factors such as public policies, social norms, discriminatory practices, gender roles, societal hierarchies and rules of authority.
- Lastly, environmental factors can include the climate and geographical location, which help determine the conversion of good characteristics to individual functionings.

As Robeyns (2005) argues, it is important to know which functionings a person achieves by knowing what goods they own or can use, but this knowledge is not sufficient in determining which functionings a person can achieve. Furthermore, Wilson-Strydom (2011) posits that within the capabilities approach, conversion factors play a crucial role in understanding how agency is interwoven with social context. Therefore, the ways in which people differ affect their ability to convert opportunities (capabilities) into achievements (functionings).

However, despite the fact that differences may not necessarily reflect inequality, they can indicate discrimination when they affect abilities negatively. Wilson-Strydom (2011) reminds us that “there is evidence that the ability to convert goods to capabilities varies from individual to individual substantially, and that equality of the former may still be a long way from the equality of the latter.” To illustrate this point, Wilson-Strydom uses the example of a learner who is blind being different from a learner who can see. The author argues that if braille textbooks and other learning aids necessary for blind learners are not made available, “blind learners will have a limited educational capability set compared to non-blind learners.” She thus concludes that paying attention to conversion factors allows us to better understand what is required to achieve potential outcomes (functions).

As Robeyns (2005a) points out, there are three types of conversion factors: personal factors such as metabolism, physical condition, gender, reading skills, intelligence, social factors such as public policies, social or religious norms, discriminatory practices, gender roles, social hierarchies, power relations, and environmental factors such as climate. It can therefore be concluded that conversion factors affect the manner in which an individual can use resources to become capable of doing something.

On the basis of these explanations, this study was important in examining how the participating universities are supporting the implementation of the nGAP and which factors the participants found to be enabling and constraining, both in their own experiences and in terms of the effective implementation of the programme.

3.4 Applying the capability approach to the nGAP

According to Claassen (2014), there are many contexts in which capability approaches are applied, from descriptive to evaluative to prescriptive. Consequently, the approach can be considered a more practical, everyday approach, emphasising what people can do to actually

solve problems, which means that it directly addresses the forms of inequality and injustice that affect everyday life. In the context of the nGAP, the focus should not only be about racing against equity targets and increasing the numbers of young academics with PhDs from designated groups. The nGAP is about transformation of the demographics of academic staff in the South African higher education system; however, transformation cannot be spoken about without understanding how the well-being of participants is being impacted by this initiative.

The capability approach was adopted for this study to analyse and understand the views and experiences of the three categories of participants (nGAP lecturers, managers and mentors) regarding the implementation of the programme at their respective universities. This was achieved by exploring the participants' motivation to be part of the programme, as well as the mechanisms put in place by the universities to support the programme, and how these constrain and enable their experiences as well as the programme's effective implementation.

The study utilised the capability approach to understand and analyse the experiences of participants in relation to the implementation of the nGAP in their universities, as well as to identify social constraints that influence and restrict both individual well-being and performance in evaluative exercises (Robeyns, 2003). In this case, the approach was used to explore the support provided by the participating universities in terms of the implementation of the nGAP, considering that these could constrain and enable the effective implementation of the programme. In terms of the nGAP partnership model, while the government provides the policy and funding of the programme, the universities must support the development of individual academics by means of several support mechanisms, including financial management systems, infrastructure and resources, leadership, culture and opportunities for collaboration.

In this sense, the capabilities are just one part of the picture when assessing social status. It is important to highlight the difference between capabilities and functionings, as it is difficult to judge someone's success from looking only at the outcomes of their actions. Wilson-Strydom (2012) emphasises the need for highlighting the difference between capabilities and functionings. As noted above, the distinction between functionings and capabilities is fundamental because it means that people are capable of achieving something and doing something else, and that they have the liberty to decide on how to exercise this choice. The distinction offers a theoretical ground for examining the influence of external conditions (e.g.

organisational or institutional) on the ways in which agents can exercise authority. On the basis of these explanations, the study was important in examining how the participating universities are supporting the implementation of the nGAP and which factors the participants found to be enabling and constraining for their own experiences and the programme's effective implementation

In the context of the nGAP, it was imperative for the study to explore the issues which influence how and in what ways the participants in the programme became part of it, and to distinguish between those who believe that they were enabled by their own personal capabilities (talents, hard work and so on) and those who were conditioned by their social or structural settings, for example, participants whose supervisors played a critical role, or those handpicked by their managers. This could assist in identifying areas of disparity and establish which conditions could work best to enable more people to participate in the programme, especially young academics from designated groups. In the case of lecturers, the question would be how the probable capabilities of persons who might like to go into academia be improved and transformed into tangible opportunities to accomplish a treasured outcome (becoming a successful research academic).

By focusing on the individual and institutional levels of the nGAP implementation, it can be argued that the study was aimed at exploring the personal, social conversion and institutional conversion factors. It examined the ways in which personal choices and agency, informed by personal and institutional factors, intersect and impact the ways in which the participants enter their workings in the programme. As argued by Wilson-Strydom (2015), the capabilities approach emphasises individual agency and choice, but stresses that individual freedom in participating in activities or in making decisions is constrained by circumstances, choices and social dynamics.

3.4. 1 Social contexts, agency and capabilities: Implications for the nGAP

According to Wilson-Strydom (2012), individual circumstances, relationships with others, and social contexts are instrumental in determining whether individuals are able to achieve their goals. This author is of the opinion that the capability approach provides a framework for linking individual histories to broader social structures, taking into account the underlying characteristics of individual differences. It is important to note from these discussions that social arrangements and individual agency complement each other in a profound way.

Additionally, it is crucial to acknowledge the centrality of individual freedom accompanied by the influence of social norms and opportunities on the extent and scope of freedom.

Alkire & Deneulin (2009a) support the statements above by asserting that social norms confer disadvantages in a wide range of instances, even when the distribution of public resources is equal, and that this inequality is evident when people have different capabilities". Thus, while agency is seen as an important element of the capabilities approach, it is clearly accepted that individual functionings (outcomes) are affected by relatively favourable conditions or stumbling blocks in their social settings. For example, an academic's prospects may be supported or impeded by the choices and actions of external things such as the quality of support being provided, productive mentoring relationships, and policies that enable their development. As a result, Sen incorporates the individual, as agency, and the social system in acquiring and increasing the freedoms within oneself and interpersonally (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

3.4.2 The nGAP as a transformation programme

As indicated in the introductory chapter, one of the most important transformational challenges facing the South African higher education is to produce and retain a new generation of academics from under-represented groups in order to change the historical imbalances in the composition of the academic workforce. Most challenging for South African universities has been encouraging young people to pursue academic careers, let alone obtain PhD degrees. According to Herman and Sehoole (2017), in various settings a doctorate is part of an academics' performance assessment, and a requirement for advancement in the form of promotion; this is a condition for many newly-appointed academic staff. The nGAP is envisaged as redressing the injustices of the past by facilitating the ability of previously disadvantaged, marginalised and excluded young academics to obtain PhDs and participate as academics in higher education. Therefore, the nGAP appears to have redistributive effects and transformative potential. By looking at the nGAP through the lens of the capabilities approach, the study sought to address the questions of whether there are any specific factors affecting the participants' ability to become successful as lecturers, managers and mentors in the programme. Impacts on the capability to efficiently participate in the nGAP can be found both within and outside of the institutions, and may include a range of personal characteristics and a host of environmental factors.

In the case of this study, the capability approach was clearly appropriate for exploration of the nGAP as one of the key strategies through which individuals and institutions can develop and strengthen their research capacities. It was demonstrated in previous discussions, supported by arguments from scholars such as Sen, Nussbaum, Robeyns, Lewin, and Wilson-Strydom, that the capability approach puts emphasis on the evidence needed to make assessments about personal well-being and social policies, and subsequently disapproves of other eccentric approaches that it deems normatively inadequate, for example, the human capital theory, which evaluates behaviour exclusively based on economic terms.

In addition, the approach recognises societal limitations that impact on and hamper well-being, as well as the evaluative exercises. Its application to the nGAP assists in highlighting the significance of adopting a nuanced approach regarding the elements that the participants in the programme view as important in terms of how they would like the nGAP components to be implemented, and the individual and organisational issues that can enhance or hamper participants' freedom to achieve their capabilities and participate in valued functionings. It has been established throughout the study that the capability approach provides a crucial structure for reflecting on factors associated with individuals, environments and circumstances that can enable prospects for improving the implementation of the nGAP. The implication of the capabilities approach for the evaluation of the nGAP is that it shifts the focus from normative and instrumental measures to an approach which evaluates policies and institutions by determining their implications for improving the lives of individuals (Walker, 2006).

The focus of the nGAP is on capabilities at the level of both the institution and the individual participants: the lecturers, managers and mentors. On the one hand, it is also a resource, i.e. a means for universities to achieve a transformed academic staff, and on the other hand, it is an empowerment and transformative opportunity for previously disadvantaged groups, particularly female academics, to gain access to full-time positions in academia and obtain a PhD qualification through dedicated training and support. However, the opportunities provided by the nGAP may be experienced differently because of the participants' diverse backgrounds and contexts. For instance, the emphasis of the programme is attainment of a PhD at the end of the six years. Even though the educational outcome is the same, the capability sets of the lecturers may differ tremendously because of the opportunities available to them to achieve this valuable outcome.

The capabilities approach recognises that people are diverse, and they will or will not be able to translate goods into valuable achievements because of personal, social and location arrangements in their lives. Hence, the approach implies that societal activities ought to be assessed based on the magnitude of the freedom individuals have to support or accomplish the functionings they find desirable. In terms of the capabilities approach, the nGAP should expand the choices and positive freedoms of participating academics or researchers. However, the way the programme is structured and implemented may positively or negatively affect the factors that allow individual researchers or academics to convert resources and commodities into capabilities - the beings and doings that individuals value. The capability approach requires that programmes such as the nGAP are designed in such a way that they provide the social and cultural basis for a researcher's capabilities, in terms of sense, perceptions and identities. Furthermore, even though the capabilities of research academics are shaped by their own conversion factors, they can also be influenced by external capabilities in the form of institutional policies and processes. In the case of the nGAP, the 'external capabilities' that play an important role in ensuring basic capabilities may include the leadership and senior management of universities and the administrative staff who provide essential institutional functions to ensure that the features of the programme are effectively implemented.

To sum up, if institutional policies hamper the participants' functionings and capabilities, their freedom to become distinguished academics and researchers who contribute meaningfully to the university's research agenda may not be realised. In view of the above, institutional support towards the nGAP must be designed in such a way that it allows for participants to receive continuous training and development, so that their research capabilities are enhanced and, in turn, strengthen institutional research capacities.

The capability approach assumes that in the absence of appropriate training opportunities aimed at the development of new skills, knowledge and abilities, the participating academics may be disadvantaged in achieving their well-being values. This implies that although the academics' capabilities may be shaped by their own conversion factors, these could also be influenced by external capabilities in the form of institutional policies, leadership, training programmes, funding opportunities and other factors. However, Robeyns (2005b) argued that even though institutional support in the form of policies, strategies and training programmes are meant to assist in expanding the choices and positive freedoms of academics and/or researchers; their impact on the researchers' ability to convert the resources provided for by

this support into capabilities could either be positive or negative (Robeyns, 2005b). Therefore, if institutional support hampers the individuals functionings and capabilities, their freedom to contribute meaningfully to the research agenda will be limited.

It should be noted that most empowerment and transformation programmes are quite inflexible in their design and nature, and therefore may not provide the agency and freedom participants' desire. According to Robeyns (2006), there is a danger that people in charge of planning programmes such as the nGAP (namely, the government) may enforce their own interpretations of which outcomes are beneficial. However, a key consequence of the capabilities approach is that governments must refrain from forcing their own practices on institutions and participants, and instead consult them prior to designing these programmes. The idea of imposing governments' value systems on end-users is not new to the nGAP but has been common practice in most of the government policies and programmes.

The nGAP is funded and controlled by government and driven by public policy objectives. The capabilities approach promotes the idea that "...there should not be a state-suppressed notion of the good life, promoting the possibility of viable alternatives to paid work that challenge the existing normative framework" (Deneulin, 2011; Orton, 2011). This implies that even though governments fund and control certain policy interventions, their conceptualisation must find a way to consider the views and ideals of the people who will eventually benefit from them. The capabilities approach implies the recognition that people have different needs, and thus may require different levels and types of resources to achieve the same outcomes.

The nGAP requires that candidates must have received 70% at Master's degree level to qualify for the programme. In the capabilities approach view, this requirement could suggest that there is a belief that high performers have relatively efficient conversion factors and are likely to succeed in the programme and as future academics. It is believed that such people require less funding than lower achievers and this avoids capability failure. It might also mean that focusing on talented candidates who are high achievers could improve the programme's performance, and that if lower achievers are considered, the programme might not succeed. This is based on the notion that lower achievers may require more years to complete the programme, resulting in more costs than necessary, with undesirable distributive consequences (Balestrino, 1994, pp. 400-401).

3.5 Critiques of the capability approach

Even though Sen has made vital contributions to the capabilities approach and to other areas, such as the theory of social justice, his approach has been criticised from different points of view. This section focuses on some of the major critiques of the capabilities approach.

According to Mafuso (2018), on several occasions, the key strengths of the capabilities approach are understood as potential weaknesses by critics, for example, the issue of conflicting opinions regarding the pros of incompleteness. Mafuso (2018) posits that the best-known set of criticisms of the capabilities approach are in relation to the issue of the extent this framework could be in operation. One of these remarks relate to the “identification of valuable capabilities”. Sen’s works have been criticised by several researchers such as Williams (1987), Nussbaum (1988) and Qizilbash (1998) for the inability to improve the framework with a reasonable list of important capabilities. Other scholars have expressed the view that Sen’s approach goes to the extreme with regard to maintaining that specific capabilities are merely important; this is given the extent of disagreement among rational people regarding the nature of a decent life (Sugden, 1993).

Mafuso (2018) argues that there are other scholars who are sceptical regarding the practicality of the capability approach “for making interpersonal comparisons of well-being in the presence of potential disagreements about the valuation of capabilities, including the relative weights to be assigned to these capabilities” (p. 98). Finally, according to Mafuso:

“The Marxist critique against Sen is based on two points: he is criticised for not putting sufficient emphasis on political processes and social movements when analysing development, and for being too enthusiastic with regard to the capitalist market mechanism and for being too enthusiastic with regard to the capitalist system and the ability of the market to promote the freedoms of different kinds (Mafuso 2018 pp. 98-99).

3.6 Summary of key issues emerging from the capability approach in relation to the nGAP

The value of the nGAP should not be only measured in terms of the resources or economic returns, but through the capability for the functionings that the participants achieve through the programme. This is because the resources only have value insofar as they enable a person to convert them into valued functionings. Regarding the nGAP evaluation, it should also be recognised that even though the government is obligated, through the provision of resources

and educational opportunities, to ensure that all at least have the basic capability to choose and pursue what they value in life, people have differing abilities to convert resources into well-being. Hence, inequalities in the ability to convert resources into valued “doings” and “beings”, means that income and commodities cannot be used to gauge well-being of the participants in the nGAP programme.

The approach makes us aware that in evaluating the nGAP, we should take into account that even though the programme may have provided opportunities for the development of the personal capabilities of participants, the manner in which it is implemented at institutional levels may deny them the opportunity to function in accordance with those capabilities. Even though they may be capable of becoming competent academics, managers or mentors, they may be denied the opportunity to do perform these roles by the constraining factors in their universities, such as the lack of capacity, resources, leadership, infrastructure and financial systems to support the effective implementation of the programme for their benefit.

3.7 Concluding remarks

The purpose of this chapter was to present the theoretical framework that was adopted for this study, and using it to understand the programme at the centre of the investigation, the nGAP. The chapter provided a justification for why the theoretical framework was chosen and began with a brief general discussion of the capability approach. The capability approach provided a structure for a greater interpretation of the nGAP as one of the key strategies through which individuals and institutions can develop and strengthen their research capacities.

The study argues that the application of the capability approach to the nGAP highlights the significance of developing a nuanced understanding of several issues, including what the participants in the programme value as being important and how they would like the nGAP features to be implemented, as well as the personal and structural factors that can promote, or hinder, participants’ freedom to realise their capabilities and engage in valued functionings. It was demonstrated that the capability approach represents an important framework for taking into account issues affecting people, environment and places that can assist with the improvement of the implementation of the nGAP.

The following chapter presents the research design and methodological approach which informed this study. The following are discussed in detail: the different methods and

instruments that were used to collect data, the process that led to the interpretation and analysis of the collected data, and how the trustworthiness and ethical issues were dealt with.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH PARADIGM, METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters presented and discussed the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that informed this study. This chapter begins by discussing the research paradigm and demonstrating how this influenced the choice of the methodology and design. The processes followed in carrying out the research are also outlined, as well as the methods used to collect, analyse and interpret data. In addition, this chapter discusses how the study ensured the trustworthiness and integrity of the data collected, and, lastly, issues relating to ethics are covered, as well as how they were addressed.

4.2 The research paradigm of the study

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) describe three paradigms: the positivist, interpretive and critical realism. These are described here briefly, so that the study can be located within its theoretical context and its guiding framework.

Mustafa (2011) suggests that positivity is hypothetico-deductive in nature, as it sets out to verify *a priori* hypotheses expressed statistically or mathematically in order to determine a certain relationship. According to Cohen *et al.* (2007), the interpretivist paradigm is composed of the subjective experiences of individuals who are involved in the action being studied, which implies that social worlds can only be explored and understood from their perspective. Mustafa (2011) identifies the critical paradigm as the third paradigm, one which aims to address transformation and emancipation. In the view of Cohen *et al.* (2007), the critical paradigm stems from the belief that research is conducted to provide an opportunity for emancipation for people and groups in an egalitarian society, and the goal of a critical educational researcher is more than to simply understand social behaviours, but to alter them, as well as provide informative accounts of these behaviours. Table 4.1, below, presents a summary of the most frequently used paradigms in research, and these are the three that the study selected for discussion; however, the list is not exhaustive.

Table 4.1: Summary of the dominant paradigms in research (adapted from Chilisa, 2011)

	POSITIVIST PARADIGM	CONSTRUCTIVIST/ INTERPRETIVIST PARADIGM	CRITICAL/ TRANSFORMATIVE PARADIGM
Reason for doing research	To discover laws that are generalizable and govern the universe	To understand and describe human nature	To destroy myths and empower people to change society radically
Philosophical underpinnings	Informed mainly by realism, idealism	Informed by hermeneutics and phenomenology	Informed by critical theory, Marxist theories
Ontological assumptions	One reality, knowable within probability, external, objective and independent of social actors	Multiple socially constructed realities, subjective, may change, multiple	Multiple realities shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, race, ethnic, gender and disability values
Place of values in the research process	Science is value free, and values have no place except when choosing a topic	Values are an integral part of social life; no group's values are wrong; they are only different	All science must begin with a values position; some positions are right, some are wrong
Nature of knowledge	objective	Subjective; idiographic	Dialectical understanding aimed at critical praxis
What counts as truth	Based on precise observation and measurement that is verifiable	Truth is context dependent	It is informed by a theory that unveils illusions
methodology	Quantitative; correlational; quasi-experimental; experimental; causal comparative; survey	Qualitative; phenomenology; ethnography; symbolic interaction; naturalistic	Combination of quantity and qualitative action research; participatory
Techniques of gathering data	Mainly questionnaires, observations, tests and experiments	Mainly interviews, participant observation, pictures, photographs, diaries and documents	A combination of techniques in the other two paradigms

Among the above specified qualitative research philosophies or paradigms, the study adopted the interpretivist paradigm; it was deemed the most appropriate for the study since it focuses on investigating human experiences within a specific context. The study was thus guided by the insight that, when reality is founded on subjective experience, the social world can only be comprehended in relation to the individuals directly involved in the action being studied. The selection of interpretivism is in line with the qualitative methodology adopted in this research to gain insight into research capacity development in South African public higher education through the investigation of issues enabling and or constraining the implementation of the new Generations of Academics Programme (the nGAP) at selected universities. The study achieved its main objective by:

- exploring the motivations for participants to be part of the nGAP;
- exploring the mechanisms put in place by selected universities to support the implementation of the nGAP, as well as their effectiveness;
- analysing the views and experiences of lecturers, mentors and managers regarding the implementation of the features of the nGAP in their respective universities.

As highlighted in Chapters 1 and 2, there are no studies conducted on the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of a programme such as the nGAP. Furthermore, programmes similar to the nGAP have been implemented by individual universities, but few qualitative academic studies have investigated the challenges associated with their implementation.

4.2 Research methodology, design and sampling

4.2.1 Research methodology

A qualitative and interpretivist approach was employed in this study, wherein the researcher attempted to understand people's perspectives and how they felt about their own worlds, developing an appreciation of their differences and similarities. In interpretivism, reality is conceptualised as a product of subjective experience. Accordingly, we can only understand the social world from the perspective of individuals who are part of the ongoing action under investigation. Guided by interpretivists' principles, it was therefore imperative for the study to capture the participants' perceptions and behaviours, as well as their relationships with the systemic and institutional contexts within which the nGAP is functioning. The researcher subscribes to the notion that where reality is a product of subjective experience, the social world can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated (Cohen, et al., 2007). As a result, it was imperative that the researcher engage with participants' perspectives and actions, as well as how they relate to the structural and social context in which they operate.

Qualitative research is based on the socially constructed nature of reality. Essentially, the researcher and the participants co-create reality as it exists in specific contexts and times. Research methods used in qualitative research are said to allow the researcher to collect emergent information "with the intent of developing themes" (Creswell, 2003).

4.2.2 Research design

A research design is an outline of the process to be followed to conduct the study (Mouton, 2001). In the view of this writer, the research design helps the researcher to plan, structure, and execute his research to maximise validity of the findings and to provide directions from underlying philosophical assumptions to research design and data collection (Mouton, 2001).

There are currently several qualitative research strategies that have been used by scholars, and from a qualitative research perspective, these are commonly accepted research methods. In this instance, a multiple case study design was employed. Several meanings of the 'case study' research methodologies were conceptualised. According to Dison (2007), a case study is an empirical inquiry that aims to examine a contemporary phenomenon within the context of its social setting, particularly because the conditions of the surrounding context are of direct relevance to the study of this phenomenon.

In essence, case study research provides a rich framework for explaining what is happening in a specific case which provides an instrument to generalise to other cases. In his definition of the case study method, Jupp (2006) describes it as conducting in-depth examinations of one or more examples of current social phenomena, using a variety of data sources, a 'case' being a person, event or social activity, group, organization or institution that is being examined. Creswell (2007) argues that in case study research, the researcher investigates a large, bounded system (a case) or a variety of bounded systems (cases) over time, by gathering detailed, in-depth information from several sources, such as observation, an interview, audio-visual material, documents and reports, and by reporting case descriptions and themes derived from the data.

To meet the objectives of the study, a multiple case study method was employed. The study collected data from eight universities, using interviews from lecturers, mentors and managers participating in the nGAP. The eight universities comprised full universities, providing a good mixture in terms of their types and programme offerings. The list comprises a mix of universities which fall within the categories of historically advantaged or disadvantaged institutions. The HDIs are located in rural areas and as indicated earlier, they still reflect the legacy of apartheid in terms of infrastructure, capacity, resources, location, student and staff composition and so on. This mixture provided rich and diverse responses related to the different areas that were explored. The universities that participated were included, firstly, because they

are all public universities and have been part of the nGAP since its inception. They are all faced with the challenge of recruiting and retaining a new generation of academics, even though some are worse than others.

It was indicated in earlier chapters that all South African universities struggle to recruit and retain young academics and are therefore participating in the nGAP. This makes the selected universities relevant for the kind of questions this research endeavoured to answer. The central questions are:

- What motivational factors influenced the lecturers to participate in the programme?
- What mechanisms have universities employed to support the implementation of the nGAP, and to what extent do these constrain or enable its implementation?
- What are the views and experiences of participants in relation to the implementation of the different features of the nGAP at their respective universities?
- What recommendations can be made based on the findings of the study?

4.3 Population and sampling

4.3.1 Population

According to Casteel & Bridier (2021) A study's population consists of the individuals, dyads, groups, organizations, or other entities one seeks to understand, and to whom or to which the study results may be generalised or transferred. Populations help define the scope of a study and give readers context and environmental cues. The general population for this study included all the lecturers, mentors and managers at twenty-six South African public universities who have participated in the nGAP to date. In selecting this sample for the study, the researcher selected from a population of the 26 public universities that were part of the programme. At first all 26 were invited to participate, but only eight agreed to do so.

Public universities in South Africa are divided into three groups: traditional universities, which offer theoretically oriented university degrees; universities of technology (former technikons), which offer vocationally oriented diplomas and degrees, and comprehensive universities, which offer a combination of both. In this study, all the participating universities were comprehensive universities. Three of them were historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs), five were previously white universities, either historically or through the merger process. As explained earlier, universities that fell within the categories of HDIs were previously not

allowed to conduct research, and this was controlled through the apartheid funding policies. This legacy is still discernible at these institutions in terms of management and leadership, research, teaching and learning capacities, infrastructure and resources. In contrast, the previously white institutions, which were advantaged by the apartheid system, are well off in terms of resources, infrastructure, research and teaching capacities. It was against this background that data was collected from participants based in vastly differing institutional contexts, therefore their experiences of participating in the nGAP programme were often extremely varied.

From each university, a sample of lecturers, mentors and managers was selected to participate in the study. They were of all ages and diverse in terms of gender and racial groups. They had been part of the nGAP since its inception in 2015. After several attempts to recruit more universities, it was evident that the researcher might experience some constraints relating to accessing other public universities in South Africa because of their number and widespread locations. It was therefore decided to focus only on the eight universities, also taking into consideration the lack of sufficient funding for a wider study.

4.3.2 Sampling

Sampling is the process of choosing elements of the population to be included in a study (O'Leary, 2010). According to Kumar (2001), sampling occurs when a few individuals (a sample) are selected for analysis from a larger group (the sampling population), in order to estimate or predict the prevalence of some unknown information, issue, or outcome concerning the larger group. Therefore, a sample is a smaller group of the population a researcher is interested in. Page and Meyer (2006) identify two general methods for choosing a sample in the social sciences: probability and non-probability.

A probability sample is comprised of every individual or unit in the population who has the same probability of being chosen to participate in the study. A probability sample can be obtained in a variety of ways, including simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, panel sampling and cluster sampling (Maphalla, 2013). In support of the above statements, Kurian (2011) argues that it is essential that each element of the population has an equal and independent chance of selection. 'Equal' implies that each element in the sample has the same probability of selection; that is, selection is not influenced by other factors within the sample, such as personal preference. As such, autonomy/independence implies that

the choice of one element does not necessarily depend on the choice of another element. This means that the rejection or selection of one element has no impact on the inclusion or exclusion of another.

According to Seaberg (1988), judgmental or purposive sampling, quota sampling, snowball sampling and accidental sampling are the most commonly used methods of obtaining non-probability samples. In purposive sampling, participants are deliberately selected based on their qualities and characteristics (Casteel & Bridier 2021).

The sample for this study was chosen based on who, in the researcher's judgement, would be best placed to provide the relevant information and respond to the questions that were posed. This sampling method is referred to as judgemental or purposive sampling. For this study, selection criteria for participants included previous involvement in the nGAP of lecturers, mentors and managers since the inception of the programme. Therefore, all those already involved in nGAP in the participating universities stood a chance of taking part of the study. The researcher realised that, to get a complete picture of how the nGAP is implemented, and to properly explore the factors that constrain and enable its processes, all three categories of participants should be involved.

4.3.3 Procedure for recruiting participants

After being granted ethical clearance by the university, the researcher communicated with all the universities, requesting permission to conduct the study on their campuses. The communication clearly indicated the aim of the research, as well as providing a clear indication of the researcher's position in the DHET at the time. Purposive sampling was then applied to choose participants for the study, according to the criteria appropriate for the research questions (Maree *et al.*, 2007). Lists of lecturers, mentors and managers who had been part of the nGAP for the two years since its inception were requested from these universities. A computer was used to select five people: two lecturers, two mentors and one manager, from each university, affording everyone a chance to be selected. Forty candidates were approached to participate in the study. The response rate was close to 50%, with a total of 19 participants agreeing to be interviewed for the study.

A snowball sampling method was also used to try to increase the number of participants. As Mlambo (2017) points out, snowball sampling relies on participants and other contacts

referring people who meet the sampling criteria to the researcher. The final sample for the study comprised eight lecturers, six mentors and five managers participating in the nGAP, across the eight universities. The sample size of the study was not large and this confirmed that the purpose of the study was not to generalise but to provide a deeper understanding into the issues and conditions that constrain and enable the implementation of the nGAP in selected universities. Permission was not granted to disclose the names of the universities; as part of the ethics permission, the researcher was committed to protecting the identity of the participants, as well as their universities.

4.3.4 Profiles of sample groups

In total, nineteen in-depth interviews were conducted. Eight of these were with nGAP lecturers; six were nGAP mentors and five were nGAP managers from eight South African universities. Below is a brief description of the study's sample:

- *Lecturers*

Six of the lecturers were Black Africans and two were Indians. Of the participants, five were female and one was male. All lecturers were under the age of 40. A total of six lecturers held Master's degrees and were pursuing doctorates, and two had recently completed doctoral studies. They were all at different stages of their research, some in the early stages and others near completion.

- *Managers*

One manager was male, and the other four were female. In terms racial classification, two were Coloured, two were white and one was Black African. Their ages ranged from 29 to 55 years old. In their respective universities, the nGAP managers occupy different positions; however, for the purposes of this research, they will be referred to as nGAP managers, since one of their responsibilities was to coordinate and manage the implementation of the programme.

- *Mentors*

The mentors occupied different positions: two were recruited externally but were still affiliated with the universities in terms of research, one was retired, and another was working in industry in the private sector. The additional two mentors were recruited internally and occupied professorial positions. In terms of gender, five were males and one was female. Their racial

classification comprised three whites, two Black African and one Coloured. The mentors' ages ranged between 48 and 65 years.

4.4 The data collection process

The study employed both primary and secondary methods of collecting data. These included document analysis and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Methodological triangulation was utilised when analysing responses to the interview questions. According to Alexander (2001), triangulation refers to the use of more than one method of gathering data. Research has shown that the use of methodological triangulation increases the trustworthiness of the research and its results (Alexander, 2001).

4.4.1 Document analysis

Bowen (2009) asserts that document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which the researcher interprets documents to provide context and meaning to an assessment issue. Bowen (2009) further clarifies that document analysis can be used in conjunction with other qualitative research methods as a method of triangulation. For the study to establish how the selected case studies understand, conceptualise and implement the nGAP, documentation such as DHET nGAP policies, strategies and institutional nGAP reports were analysed. The nGAP reports were those that the universities submitted to the DHET as part of their annual reporting. These reports covered narrative reports based on progress on their studies as well on expenditure of allocated funding.

Some participating universities shared with the researcher their internal guidelines outlining the facilitation of the release of funds and the purchase of equipment, the appointment of mentors, the payment of fees, authorisation of international travel, internal recruitment processes, and so on. Not all participating universities were willing to share their documents, and during interviews with the managers' it was clear that some universities were struggling to implement the programme effectively. The findings from these documents are summarised in the Chapter 5.

4.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to obtain the oral accounts of lecturers, mentors and managers, who related their views and experiences of the implementation of the nGAP in their respective universities. According to Mathers, Fox and Hunn (1998), interviews are

important qualitative data collection techniques that involve verbal communication between the researcher and the subject and are commonly employed in survey designs and in exploratory and descriptive studies. These authors argue that semi-structured interviews involve questions that are open-ended and related to the areas the researcher seeks to cover. The open-ended nature of the questions built up a description of the topic under investigation by allowing both interviewer and interviewee to elaborate as appropriate.

The interviews contribute to the study by soliciting answers from the lecturers, mentors and managers that relate to their motivation for participating in the programme, the mechanisms employed by the universities to support the implementation of the nGAP. They also explore the factors that constrain and enable implementation of the features of the programme at these universities. The semi-structured, in-depth interviews, with open-ended questions, allowed the researcher to probe further. Bryman and Bell (2003) support this approach, claiming that the interviewee's response could raise new questions and issues that could be explored further. According to Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003), in-depth interviews allow one to combine structure with flexibility and they enable researchers to understand how the interviewees relate with other people around them.

According to Ts'ephe, (2014) the ability of an interviewer to adapt during the interview process is essential because they can observe clients' facial expressions, body language and tone of voice and know when to probe more deeply. In addition to the other advantages of interviews, as pointed out by the author, they can also get a higher response rate than self-administered questionnaires, since the researcher can converse directly with the participant to obtain the necessary information, and ensure privacy by arranging a time and date that are convenient and preserve the privacy of the interviewee.

In terms of the preparatory process followed for data collection through interviews, the researcher developed and followed an interview schedule. Although the researcher was guided strictly by the schedule the freedom not to have to ask only prepared questions allowed for flexibility. Other issues were raised by participants and some of these developed into additional themes for data analysis. The researcher used the interviews to obtain a face-to-face accounts and views on the factors that enable and constrain implementation of the nGAP. The sample for the study comprised eight lecturers, six mentors and five managers participating in the nGAP at the eight public universities. A total of nineteen semi-structured interviews were

conducted with participants, with the purpose of understanding their views and experiences, and the contexts within which they operate, as well as how the implementation of nGAP functioned. It is worth noting that, at the time of collecting data for this study, the nGAP was already in its fourth year of implementation across all the public universities.

4.5 Data analysis and interpretation

4.5.1 The researcher's positionality

In section 1.4 of the study, the issues of researcher positionality were reflected upon in detail. Researcher positionality is important to the conducting of the research: the researcher's status, either as an insider or an outsider, can be biased. In this study, the researcher therefore acknowledged that her positionality may affect the research and impact on the understanding, interpretation and acceptance of the research by participants. The researcher therefore considered it essential to adopt a reflexive approach and to disclose herself in the research, with the aim of understanding the influence that her previous position at the DHET may have had during the research process. Being an employee of the DHET at the time may have made the researcher fundamentally an insider or an outsider at the selected universities.

The researcher might have been perceived by the participants as having insider knowledge of the complexity of the nGAP, as well as of the universities as entities, and this could have earned her the status of a member of the community, or an insider. Additionally, as a DHET employee, there was the possibility that the researcher could have been seen as an outsider and this could have raised some issues of power. As a result, there may have been perceptions of unequal power relations between a staff member at a university and a government employee who could be considered an overseer. In this regard, the researcher had to ensure that issues of power were addressed throughout the research process, to give the participants a 'voice'. At the introductory stages of the interviews, she indicated that she was not directly involved in the running of the universities, and that her involvement in the DHET did not have any bearing on the internal politics of the universities.

As described previously, the empirical data for the study was collected through face-to-face interviews across the three categories of participants, based in ten universities across the country. The most important part was gaining the consent and approval from the universities to conduct research in their campuses. The study received consent or gatekeeper access from ten universities who were supportive in allowing participants to be interviewed. Some of the

universities were flexible, allowing participants to take time away from their work responsibilities to participate in the interviews. This made it easy for the researcher to access most of the participants during working hours. Still, the researcher had to respect their work schedules and other responsibilities by ensuring that the interviews took place within the specified time. Most interviews lasted for a maximum of an hour, as stipulated in the participant leaflet documents.

Another aspect that worked in the researcher's favour was that she had pre-established relationships with some of the participants, mainly the nGAP managers, through the work she did at the DHET, which involved the coordination of the nGAP, among other duties. This required regular communication with the managers and interaction with them when undertaking monitoring visits to the universities. Therefore, to most participating nGAP managers, the researcher was not a total stranger. The advantages of these relationships were that they helped the researcher gain access to some participants more easily, particularly the lecturers and mentors whom she had not had prior direct contact with. The researcher was cautious not to take advantage of this privilege. Most of the managers ensured that the information about the study was disseminated to interested participants. It can therefore be argued that the researcher somehow enjoyed an insider status even though she was an outsider, but it was necessary for her to be consistently respectful and conscious of her positionality.

The above account might create the impression that the interview process proceeded smoothly; however, this was not the case. One of the main challenges was that participants agreed to be interviewed and then did not respond to follow-up communications to finalise appointments. The subjects would keep quiet and behave as if they the communication had never taken place. This was annoying and detrimental to the research, but the researcher had to respect the rights of participants to opt out of the study and then begin looking for new participants again. In contrast, other participants were responsive and co-operative.

Another challenging aspect of the interview processes was getting participants to trust the researcher and engage with her openly and for long enough to answer the questions. This behaviour was prevalent among the nGAP lecturers. Some participants immediately opened up and provided rich responses to the interview questions, while others were not prepared to even elaborate on their answers and would just give terse answers. This made the researcher understand that the participants needed to be continually assured that nothing that was being

discussed would be divulged to other parties at their universities and that the information would be kept confidential in order to protect their identities.

4.6 Data interpretation and analysis

According to Cohen *et al.* (2007), qualitative data analysis refers to the analysis of the participants' views and opinions, corresponding patterns, themes and patterns of similarity. In qualitative data analysis, phenomena are classified, explained, and linked to the researcher's concept (Graue, 2015). Qualitative data analysis, as Gibbs (2007) points out, is a process of converting qualitative data, as gathered through analytic methods, into a simple, understandable, reliable, trustworthy and even original interpretation. It can therefore be assumed that data analysis requires some type of reasoning to be employed in any enquiry.

Even though the data analysis did not follow a linear fashion, the study followed the six-step process proposed by Creswell (2012) as a guide and reference point. Following these steps allowed the study to explore the strengths of each data analysis tool involved in order to better understand the phenomenon being investigated. The table below presents the six-step guide that is usually followed by researchers when analysing and interpreting qualitative data.

Table 4.2: Six-step guide in the process of analysing and interpreting qualitative data

Source: Creswell (2012)

Steps	Process
1	Prepare and organise data for analysis The data gathered can be extensive and initial data management consists of organising the data, transcribing interviews and typing field notes. Researcher must adhere to the transcription conventions such as giving each speaker a pseudonym, record hesitations, small to long pauses, recording inflections and tone of voice (Cohen, et al., 2011). Data can be analysed by hand or computer.
2	Explore and code the data Read through the data to obtain general sense of it in preliminary analysis. Major analysis consists of coding the data. It involves examining the text database and reflecting on what the participant is saying and trying to generate initial code label.
3	Coding to build description and themes Codes are used to develop themes and help the researcher to identify shared/common information. Themes may be interconnected to portray the complexity of the phenomenon. (Cohen, et al., 2011) state that the code or label that the researcher gives to a piece of text contains an idea or a piece of information.
4	Represent and report qualitative findings Findings from interview and journal extracts can be represented through visual displays such as maps, diagrams, figures, comparison tables and demographic tables.
5	Interpret the findings Interpreting the patterns and connections that emerge after organising the data. Data interpretation involves attaching meaning and significance to the collected data. The interpretation includes advancing personal views, making comparisons between findings and the literature, and suggesting limitations and future research.
6	Validate the accuracy of findings Researcher employs validation procedures, for example triangulation, member checking, and auditing.

McNabb (2004) is supported by Gibbs (2007) in pointing out that data analysis does not always follow the logical sequence presented in Table 4.1, and that some activities may occur at the same time. This was the case with this study because the data collection processes involved using multiple sources such as interviews and the review and analysis of documents such as nGAP policy documents and institutional reports submitted to the DHET. These produced enormous amounts of information so it was important to organise data into a set of relevant

categories, which were based on key themes of the research. The analytical process, according to De Vos *et al.* (2005) is not linear or neat but is more of a spiralling process. It involves sorting relevant facts from irrelevant ones, identifying patterns and trends, and building a framework to explain the essence of the information revealed by the data.

Peer debriefing was another strategy employed in this study to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. This allowed other scholars to interrogate the data and findings of the study. It is described in detail in the section 4.7, which follows.

4.7 Ensuring the trustworthiness of the study

According to Gunawan (2015), trustworthiness becomes a matter of persuasion whereby trust is viewed as being fostered by transparency, with openness being an inherent property of research and validity being associated specifically with value or truth. For ensuring the trustworthiness for this study, methodological and data triangulation was employed. As described by Saunders *et al.* (2012), using multiple methods or triangulation is an approach that elevates the researcher above the personal biases that are generally associated with single methods. As emphasised earlier, different sources were utilised to gather data for this study; these included document analyses and in-depth interviews with lecturers, mentors and managers involved in implementation of the nGAP at the eight selected universities.

Peer debriefing was also utilised: this meant that the researcher allowed other scholars to interrogate the data and findings of the study. Peer debriefing allowed the investigator to ask for assistance from fellow researchers who were keen to offer scholarly advice, such as members of the academic staff, fellow students, and the postgraduate dissertation committee. The researcher participated in postgraduate research forums and made regular presentations to fellow PhD students and academics at the University of the Witwatersrand, until the finalisation of the study. The researcher utilised this platform as a peer debriefing exercise, with a view to exposing her work to scrutiny.

According to Sandelowski (1993), there are four aspects to trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, or more accurately, reliability, transferability and confirmability. These are fined as follows:

Credibility is measured according to whether the study embodies a faithful description of the phenomenon under scrutiny and assesses the degree of consistency between the

participants' viewpoints and the researcher's interpretation (Coughlan, Cronin, & Ryan, 2007). Adding credibility to a study can be achieved by describing and interpreting the researcher's experiences and by consulting with participants and allowing them to consider results.

- **Dependability**, as defined by De Vellis (2003), is the assurance that in the case of repetition of the study in the same circumstances with the same respondents, the findings would remain the same. In other words, a research study may be deemed to be 'dependable' if the researcher is able to produce a trail of evidence at every step of the research process. Therefore, Coughlan, Cronin, and Ryan (2007) state that dependability is what indicates to the reader the rationale behind the choices and decisions made throughout the study. It also entails detailing the reasons behind these choices and decisions. It is for the reasons stated above that the researcher ensured that at every stage of the research, evidence is observable and is certainly documented and verified.
- **Transferability**, according to Guba & Lincoln (1994) and Mertens (2005), is the degree to which a study's conclusions can be applied to different contexts and respondents. As a way to increase transferability, Jenson (2008) advocates focusing on two key factors: how closely the participants are tied to the research context, and the research context of the findings. As Jenson points out, the researcher has a responsibility to illustrate the context by drawing a complete picture. This is so the reader can determine whether the work will have universal application.

To increase transferability, the researcher used purposive sampling and an interpretive approach to data analysis. The study addressed the first consideration by selecting participants from participating institutions who participated in the (nGAP) (lecturers, managers and mentors). By providing a full discussion of how nGAP is implemented at national and institutional levels, the researcher ensured that the research questions are able to generate relevant responses to the study.

- **Confirmability** is defined by Coughlan, Cronin, & Ryan (2007) as the process in which the researcher must demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached and the process of assuring that findings are justified by the data. This statement is supported by Guba & Lincoln (1994), who state that the level of confirmability can be understood as demonstrating a degree of neutrality or how much the findings of the

study were shaped by the interviewees and not by the researcher's interests, biases, or motivations.

4.7.1 Security for the storage of sources and data

The documents collected for analysis, such as policies and reports from the participating universities, were safely stored, and the contents of these will be kept confidential and will be used only for this study. All the recorded interviews were transcribed and translated, and electronic records of all the data from different sources have been safely stored. This is to ensure that the researcher can account for all the research decisions and activities, as well as being able to demonstrate how the data was collected, recorded and analysed.

The data was stored in a Google Drive storage space with folders created for each type of document; it is also accessible on a removable hard drive, which is stored safely. The folders and files are properly labelled and dated, so the information can be verified if needed. The raw data and interview notes were recorded using an Excel spreadsheet.

4.8 The process of data analysis

Once the data was gathered and safely recorded and stored, the researcher took time to get acquainted with it and work with it, constantly brainstorming and recording ideas to identify possible themes. The researcher drew sketches and diagrams in order to understand the material and work out what connections existed. A great deal of 'back and forth' thinking occurred at this stage, as concrete information needed to be checked against raw data.

This was followed by the organising of the data for analysis using the Nvivo software. This was a challenge, as the researcher was encountering the software for the first time. She undertook intensive online training in its use, mainly through watching YouTube videos and contacting colleagues with experience with the software to solicit advice.

4.9 Ethical considerations

According to Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden (2001), fear of violating ethical processes becomes overwhelming when conducting face-to-face interviews with people sensitive participants who are liable to becoming anxious as they communicate their emotions. The study took the following five important ethical issues into account.

4.9.1 Ethical clearance

According to Schurink (2003, p. 43), research ethics refers to ethical considerations and dilemmas associated with the appropriate methods of conducting research. These concerns are to avoid creating conditions that may adversely affect the participants. The researcher was mindful of the obligation of being caring and considerate of participants and of observing their basic human rights during and after the research. She therefore felt obliged to abide by the ethics code of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Prior to conducting this research, the study received ethical clearance and the approval of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the university. In addition, the researcher approached all 26 universities, requesting permission to conduct the research on their campuses. As indicated earlier, only eight responded positively and granted the relevant gatekeeper letters after ethical clearance was obtained from the participating universities. The researcher then began setting up appointments for to interview the nGAP lecturers, managers and mentors.

4.9.2 Utilising existing contacts

As indicated earlier, the researcher was already involved with the implementation of the nGAP as part of her previous employment at the DHET, so there working relationships already existed with the main contact people, who put the researcher in touch with suitable participants. Through these contacts, the researcher gained access to the participants by establishing initial communication, coordinating meetings and setting up interviews. According to French (1993), this stage of research is important for creating a common environment in which participants willingly provide their time to assist the researchers. The initial communication with participants enabled the researcher to discuss the aims of the research to ensure that the contact persons as well as the participants understood the overall objectives and intentions of the study as well as discuss all the critical issues relating to ethical considerations.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) recommended that the interview be framed by a briefing before the interview commences, as well as a report afterward; ideally, an information package would be provided in the introductory meeting or sent in advance via email. In preparation for the interviews for this study, the researcher used a participation leaflet (see Appendix X) and an interview guide to facilitate a more focused exploration of the topic at the beginning of each

interview. The researcher was flexible and made the interviewing process convenient for the participants in terms of location, time and the language we used

4.9.3 Informed consent

Neuman (2011) defines informed consent as an agreement, usually written, to participate in a study in which participants are informed about specific aspects and agree voluntarily to participate. For this study, participants were asked to complete and sign a consent form. The consent form should only be signed if the potential participant feels confident that his or her confidentiality will be protected and knows that they have the right to withdraw (Petrova, Dewing and Camilleri, 2016).

Each of the interviews conducted were audio recorded, with the approval and full consent of the participants. As indicated earlier, prior to conducting the actual interviews, participants were forwarded several emails in which the researcher elucidated the aims and objectives of the study, issues of confidentiality and other ethical considerations. The gatekeeper letters were also shared with the participants prior to the interviews and their signed participation forms signalled consent.

4.9.4 The right to withdraw

Lutabingwa and Nethonzhe (2006) advocate informing human subjects that they are free to withdraw at any time from studies involving them, so they can choose or refuse to be involved in the research. This information was shared with the participants during the initial conversations. In this study, the participants were informed of that their decision to be part of the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time, if they felt that responding the interview questions and talking about their feelings might affect their emotional well-being negatively. Some participants were quite emotional when speaking of their experiences; in such cases, the researcher offered participants the opportunity to take a break or to discontinue the interview and reschedule it for another day. In all cases, the participants opted to continue with the interviews. Orb *et al.* (2001) posits that discontinuing the interview and seeking reasonable explanations for the participants' concerns shows that the researcher is mindful of the susceptibility of participants and their rights. None of the participants withdrew from this research, which is an indication that they were satisfied with the ethical considerations.

4.9.5 Confidentiality

According to Savin-Baden & Major (2012), the principles related to confidentiality include anonymity, discretion and keeping a pledge. However, applying these principles requires that the researcher demonstrates sincerity and respect for the participants in the study. During the research process, the researcher explained that their wishes would be respected, and that she valued the confidence they placed in her as a researcher. This required creating sincere and mutual relations with participants and conforming with the ethical principles laid out by the university.

The researcher made sure that the study complied with standard procedures to avoid compromising the participants' identities, since the individuals participating in the nGAP could be easily identified if their personal information were disclosed. Institutional identities were also kept anonymous and confidential by allocating pseudonyms to protect all the participants and their universities.

All files containing the information gathered through the interviews is stored in a secure location, separately from all other data. The researcher has also tried to ensure that data presented in the study is accurate and is a correct reflection of the responses provided during the interviews.

4.9.6 Beneficence

According to Beauchamp & Childress (2001), the principles of 'beneficence and nonmaleficence' involve a responsibility to offer assistance for the participants and to alleviate the risks against such assistance. Tuxhill (1994) posits that beneficence necessitates that the researcher cause the participants no harm, prevents harm to them and removes any threats against them. However, when seeking permission for a research interview, it is often difficult to truly assess threat, in terms of emotional harm, but it is possible to foresee its potential and take relevant measures to avert it.

As indicated above, the researcher attempted to recognise when it was unsuitable to probe further, and to circumvent the possible risk the questions might pose to the participants' emotional well-being. This helped to calm the situation down and avoided questions that could elicit emotional responses and jeopardise the interviews.

4.10 Delimitations and limitations of the study

4.10.1 Delimitations

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001), delimitations of the study refer to “what the researcher is not going to do” (p.31). The two authors also maintain that delimitations are boundaries that are set by the researcher to control the range of a study and they are created before any investigations are carried out, in order to reduce the amount of time spent in certain areas that may be seen to be unnecessary, and perhaps even unrelated, to the overall study (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001).

While the nGAP is relevant to and implemented at all the 26 public South African higher education institutions, the researcher focused the investigation on only the eight universities that accepted the invitation to participate and granted her permission to conduct the study in their campuses. Even though the scope of the study may have been limited, the results could apply to all the public universities in the South African higher education system, since they are all faced with the challenges associated with the implementation of the nGAP. The decision to only focus on the eight universities and only on the staff participating in the nGAP was due to several issues that the researcher perceived to be delimitations.

Firstly, all 26 universities were requested to participate in the study and only these eight universities granted permission for the research to be conducted in their campuses. Secondly, the limited funding allocated to the study, proximity and accessibility made it difficult for the researcher to reach all 26 universities, which are situated across the country. Thirdly, focusing on all 26 universities would not have been possible within the time frames allocated for the study. Lastly, the researcher’s decision was influenced by the multifaceted and broad nature of the implementation of the nGAP at institutional levels, which would have made it even more difficult to collect data from more universities, especially because of the lack of studies documenting the challenges and opportunities presented by the nGAP since its inception.

4.10.2 Limitations

The study is based on a multiple case study method, and this was a limitation in itself, in the sense that some of the findings generated from the case studies might not be generalisable to other, similar cases that did not participate in the study. The nGAP issues and experiences of lecturers, mentors and lectures, uncovered through this study at the eight universities, may not be a clear reflection of what is happening at other universities that were not part of the study.

Although a general perspective on the analysis of the challenges and opportunities presented by the nGAP could have been gained by collecting data from all universities, it is important to remember that such experiences and issues in one institution may vary greatly from another, therefore studying all of them at the same time might still not have yielded the same results. Additional research would have to be conducted at the remaining 18 universities to verify whether or not the findings from this study could be generalisable in other universities.

4.11 Concluding remarks

This chapter has outlined the research methodology utilised for this study and the rationale for choosing it. This study focused on investigating the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of the nGAP by exploring the experiences and views of participants in relation to the implementation of the different components of the programme in their respective universities; therefore, how their experiences are understood and interpreted is important. The research design was explained, justifying the study's choice of participants, as well as the sampling strategy used. The study adopted an interpretive approach which, according to Myers (2009) assumes that societal realities are not isolated; however, they are moulded by individual practices and social environments, so they must be investigated in their socio-historical settings by consolidating the personal understandings of the different participants.

The significance of the interpretive approach for understanding the personal experiences and the day-to-day working environments of the participants is that it could result in an awareness of the social context itself. The rich narrative data produced by the study was analysed through the systems, human capital and capabilities lenses.

This chapter also provided the researcher's reflections on the data collection process and outlined the process of obtaining ethical clearance and permission to conduct research at the selected institutions. The subsequent chapters present the data analysis and findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS FROM THE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AND INTERVIEWS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research paradigm and outlined the processes followed in carrying out the research for this study, as well as describing the research design, the methods used to collect data, and those used to analyse and interpret it. The issues relating to trustworthiness and ethics were also addressed.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from data collected through document analysis, as well through the interviews from the three categories of participants. This chapter is the first of three chapters that discuss the findings from of the three categories of participants who were nGAP lecturers, managers and mentors. It begins by presenting the data collected through document analysis, then the responses from lecturers' interviews, based on the research questions and the questions asked during the interviews.

The central focus of the chapter is to investigate the views and experiences of the nGAP lecturers on how the different components of the nGAP have been implemented at their universities. The chapter then discusses the process followed for the analysis of data, before presenting the analysed responses based on the study's research questions.

The broad objective of the study was to investigate the factors that affect the implementation of the nGAP in selected South African higher education institutions, noting that these factors could be constraining and enabling. Five research questions guided the study:

- What motivational factors influenced the lecturers to participate in the programme?
- What mechanisms have universities employed to support the implementation of the nGAP, and to what extent do these constrain or enable its implementation?
- What are the views and experiences of participants in relation to the implementation of the different features of the nGAP at their respective universities?
- What recommendations can be made based on the findings of the study?

5.2 Findings from the document analysis

The documents analysed for this study assisted in gathering background and information on the strategic approach adopted by government to develop the nGAP, as well as information on how participating universities have implemented and supported the programme. This was done prior to conducting the interviews. For this purpose, the government's research capacity development policies, strategies and progress reports were analysed. Information derived from these documents was utilised to corroborate or refute data collected from interviews, as well as assist in responding to other questions posed by the study.

It was evident from the DHET policies and programme documents reviewed that the nGAP is a well-orchestrated programme that seeks to drastically transform the academic staff in the higher education sector. The nGAP is intentional and well-funded. It was impressive to note that each nGAP position is attached to funding of R2.5 million, even though funding at a later stage is shared with the hosting institution. The review of the nGAP policy documents also revealed that the programme is carefully structured and administered, in such a way that funding is allocated for specific items.

From the institutional nGAP reports that were reviewed, it was clear that there were different contexts and backgrounds within each of the participating universities. These were instrumental in shaping how the nGAP was conceptualised and implemented on their campuses. Some universities, specifically the HDIs, highlighted the challenges they faced with regard to implementing the programme. These were mostly related to the issue of human resources and financial capacities.

On the other hand, universities that fell within the spectrum of well-resourced and previously advantaged universities mostly reported good progress in establishing systems and processes for the implementation of the programme. It could be deduced from the reports that these universities were able to appoint dedicated staff to support the implementation of the programme, and that leadership in these universities was at the forefront of ensuring that the programme was supported, at all levels. For instance, in some of these universities, measures were put in place to ensure that the nGAP scholars were provided with additional support and funding on top of what is allocated: their salaries were topped up to be on par with their counterparts. It was also noted that these universities were able to adapt their existing systems to accommodate the programme, and that because of additional funding from their reserves,

they were in a better position to implement the programme successfully and provide the nGAP scholars with an enabling and supportive environment that would allow them to succeed.

In universities on the other spectrum (HDIs), they reported that they only utilised the funding allocated for the scholars by the DHET, as well as using it to support the implementation of the programme. It was clear that these universities relied entirely on what the DHET was providing. It was clear from the reports that it would take these universities a while to confidently implement systems for the effective running of the programme, due to their underlying challenges, which have spanned decades.

5.3 Conducting and analysing the interviews

The study conducted 19 in-depth interviews; eight of these were with nGAP lecturers, six with nGAP mentors and five with nGAP managers from the eight South African universities. As indicated in Chapter 4, these participants were selected through purposive sampling. Even though the researcher was guided by the schedule, she allowed herself some flexibility during the interviews, so that she was not confined to asking prepared questions only. Once the interview process was completed, the researcher ensured that all recordings were safely stored. A few weeks after completing the last interviews, the researcher took time to listen to the recordings, to familiarise herself with the responses and to begin establishing recurring concepts. Once this process was completed, the researcher began to transcribe the recordings into Word documents.

According to Oliver, Serovich and Mason (2005),

transcription is undertaken in multiple ways, often using naturalism, in which every utterance is captured in as much detail as possible, and/or denaturalism, in which grammar is corrected, interview noise (e.g., stutters, pauses, etc.) is removed and non-standard accents (i.e. non-majority) are standardised (p. 1273).

The study's recorded data was transcribed using a denaturalised transcription method (Oliver *et al.*, 2005) because the focus of the study was on perspectives and meanings created and shared by the lecturers, managers and mentors regarding the implementation of the nGAP and its various components within their respective universities. Denaturalism allowed the focus of the transcription to be on the content of the interviews. This meant that it was on what was said

and not on linguistic features, accents, grammatical errors or verbal idiosyncrasies. Each transcript was assigned a unique name or case identifier.

The transcribed interview recordings went through a verification process which involved checking and confirming. The researcher forwarded the transcripts to the participants by email and asked them to read them carefully to verify whether their responses had been captured accurately and whether they agreed with the researcher's descriptions and interpretation of the responses. This process encountered some challenges and delays, since not all the participants responded to the request.

While awaiting the remaining verifications, the researcher began to organise all the data collected through the interviews. Both manual and Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), N-vivo were used to organise the data collected from interviews. All the summary transcripts were transferred to the N-vivo software on the researcher's computer, where the coding process began. This involved putting together extracts based on the responses and making sure that all the different issues that were raised were documented. It was therefore important for the researcher to organise data into a set of relevant categories, based on themes guided by the study's research questions.

5.4 PRESENTATION OF DATA FROM THE NGAP LECTURERS' INTERVIEWS

The questions asked during the interviews are presented in the interview schedule attached at Appendix D.

5.4.1 Biographical information of lecturers

Table 5.1 below presents a summary of the demographics of the eight lecturers interviewed for the study. Six of the lecturers were Black African and two were Indian. Five of these participants were female and one was male. The lecturers were all younger than 40 years of age. Six of the lecturers were in possession of Master's degrees and were pursuing their doctoral studies, while two had recently completed their doctoral studies. The lecturers were at different stages of their studies, some in the early stages and others nearing completion. Six lecturers were from the universities that were previously white, either by merger or historically, and two were from the HDIs. This explained the different contexts within which these lecturers experienced the nGAP.

Table 5.1: Lecturers participating in the nGAP

Position	Lect. 1	Lect. 2	Lect. 3	Lect. 4	Lect. 5	Lect. 6	Lect. 7	Lect. 8
Inst. type	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.
Racial classification	Black African	Indian	Indian	Black African	Black African	Black African	Black African	Black African
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female
Qualifications	All were in possession of a master's degree and at different levels of the PhD. Some at the beginning and some at an advanced stage							
Age range	Between 30-40							

5.4.2 The lecturers' roles before joining the nGAP

Generally, in South Africa, young, emerging academics begin their academic careers without a PhD, and in most cases, they are carefully selected by means of different strategies. One of these is the 'grow your own timber' strategy, where established academics, who are often supervisors and mentors, identify outstanding postgraduate students for teaching, tutorship and research assistant posts. This is carried out as a litmus test to ascertain their interest and likelihood of subsequent assimilation into academia (Schoole & Ojo, in Yudkevich *et al.*, 2015). It is argued that, by maintaining outstanding academic records, these postgraduate students have better prospects of being recruited for junior lecturer positions under the tutelage of their supervisors. In most universities, these posts are made on a renewable contract basis, depending on departmental needs and responsibilities. It is during this period that some develop a clearer understanding, passion and vision for an academic profession and end up enrolling for a PhD.

Based on the above observations by Schoole and Ojo (2015), it was not surprising that the majority of the lecturers indicated that at some point in their careers, and before joining the programme, they worked as tutors, research and teaching assistants in their respective departments. Some had full-time jobs; one was employed in the private sector and another occupied a non-academic post in a university. However, they also worked on a part-time basis as tutors and teaching assistants. Most of the lecturers started doing tutoring and other academic work on a part-time basis while they were still busy with their Honours or Master's degree studies. As indicated in their biographical information, at the time of the interview the lecturers were at different levels of their PhD studies. It should be emphasised that enrolling for a PhD is one of the requirements of participating in the nGAP.

The study established, through a simple Google search, that the responsibilities of research, teaching and tutoring included but were not limited to assisting with conducting workshops; preparing practical sessions, tutorials and lecture notes and assisting with consulting with students.

It was clear from the responses that the participating lecturers entered these preparatory programmes for both personal and professional reasons, citing enjoyment of teaching and research, as well as aspirations to work permanently in academic positions, as their primary reasons: (Thaver & Holtman, 2015).

“Because I always wanted to be a research academic, I sometimes volunteered as a tutor and eventually go a part time lecturer post in the department. I also worked with my supervisor on some of her projects...” (Lecturer 2).

“I’ve been working here part time as a tutor and teaching assistant just to gain some experience because I knew I would one day become a researcher and lecturer...” (Lecturer 1).

“I worked as a part time lecturer and assisted my supervisor with some research work to improve my research skills...” (Lecturer 6).

One of the lecturers, who left a full-time job in the private sector so that he could become part of the nGAP, indicated that he also worked as a tutor on a part-time basis in the same university because he loved working with people and engaging with students to share knowledge with them:

“I had a well-paying job in the private sector and did some part-time tutoring here on weekends...I have always been in touch with my supervisor, so when the post came up he told me to apply for it” (Lecturer 4)

5.4.3 Previous training in research or teaching

The lecturers were asked if they had undergone any training to develop their research or teaching skills prior to participating in the nGAP. The majority indicated that they had

undergone research training through workshops and seminars, but had not undergone any training related to teaching:

“I attended a few training programmes and workshops as part of my master’s degree training where we underwent various research and writing related sessions...I was not trained how to teach though...” (Lecturer 5)

“I attended a few research training workshops and seminars for postgraduate students focusing mainly on research writing. I was not trained on any teaching practices though...” (Lecturer 3)

The above responses relate to the concept of preparation and socialisation of postgraduate students into academia. It can be argued that during their appointment as tutors and assistant researchers/teachers, these nGAP lecturers were, in a way, being socialised into departmental and disciplinary cultures and being provided with the platform to learn and prepare for permanent careers as academics and researchers.

According to Gardner (2007), the department and the discipline serve as the graduate student's home and focal point. It was also apparent from the responses that the lecturers were initially integrated into these tutoring/research/teaching assistant roles by virtue of the relationships they had with their supervisors, HoDs or deans. It is also argued by other scholars that these introductory programmes are motivated by a belief that targeted support is necessary to pave the way for succeeding in academia, and has been proved to be valuable (Cloete & Galant 2005; Quinn & Vorster 2012; Sutherland & Petersen 2009). It is important, however, to highlight the reality that being admitted into these kinds of empowerment programmes is not common across the higher education system, and that there are many young academics from disadvantaged and under-resourced universities who begin their academic careers without any formalised preparatory platforms (Simmons, 2011), hence the introduction of the nGAP by government in an attempt to level the playing field.

Collings & Mellahi (2009) define talent management as the identification, development and maintenance of a talent pool of high-potential and high-performing incumbents, capable of filling key positions that differentially contribute to sustaining competitive advantage within an organization, as well as the development of a differentiated human resource architecture that

enables the organization to fill these key positions with competent incumbents and continue to retain them as organisational assets. As indicated in the introductory chapter, the DHET views the nGAP as a transformation-focused programme for recruiting, training and supporting talented young staff members by employing them in permanent posts that will be vacated by senior professors, most of whom are approaching retirement. It is therefore not surprising that some universities view the nGAP as part of their ‘talent management’ strategies, and only focus their lecturer recruitment on internally prepared candidates.

The nGAP was found to present universities with opportunities to implement their own talent management strategies and use them to identify, recruit and retain talented young academics who could be developed into future senior academics. Details concerning the issue of internal recruitment is provided later, when discussing the lecturers’ responses on how they were recruited into the programme.

5.4.4 Lecturers’ motivation for joining the nGAP

Nevid (2013) explains that motivation involves the biological, emotional, social and cognitive forces that establish a person's behaviour as it induces, guides and sustains an output-driven behaviour, leading to action such as getting a glass of water to quench thirst or visiting a library to access knowledge. The term ‘motivation’ is generally used to define the reasons why people engage in certain behaviours or activities. It is basically the main inspiration behind individual behaviours.

The lecturer responses highlighted the different motivational factors that they thought played a role in their journey to become academics, in this case, utilising the nGAP as a vehicle. These factors appeared in the form of individual and institutional factors, as well as the capabilities offered by the nGAP. From the conversations with the lecturers, it was evident that some of them seem to have carefully constructed their own career plans by maintaining their affiliation with their alma maters through part-time tutoring and assistant work within their departments, as well as by pursuing senior postgraduate qualifications such as Masters or PhDs. However, these strides cannot be credited only to the lecturers’ own efforts: their responses illustrate that their various role models, who were supervisors and mentors, played a crucial role by affording them support and guidance as well as organising tutoring and assistant positions as part of the preparation, socialisation and talent management processes.

One of the lecturers indicated that she was driven by the passion to be an academic, and by the fact that there were few women in her field. This response indicates that she understood the overall objectives of the nGAP and therefore seized the opportunity to participate in the programme, thereby contributing towards growing the participation of women in her field.

One of the main motives for pursuing a PhD was that it would provide the lecturers with better opportunities for full-time employment in academia. A doctorate was considered to be an essential requirement for individuals who were pursuing a career in academia:

“Becoming an academic has always been my passion and I have always been driven by the fact that in my field of study there are very few women academics. I wanted to do a PhD so that I can stand a great chance of getting into the academic profession. So, the nGAP post came just at the right time...” (Lect. 2).

It should also be emphasised that the nGAP prioritises the recruitment of women, with a particular focus on Black African women. Since some of these women had participated in the talent management programmes as tutors and assistants, it was not surprising that they got recruited into the nGAP posts. They believed passionately that they were suitable and qualified to participate in the programme. They emphasised that their motivation was the fact that they met all the basic requirements for the posts, such as being young, confident, qualified, and having the right attitude and motivation:

“...when I applied, I knew that I stood a very good chance of making it into the post because I met all the requirements of the post...” (Lect. 4).

“I met all the requirements for the post, I mean I’m young, black female, am qualified...” (Lecturer 6).

“I thought I have the right attitude, confidence and motivation to become a good lecturer...” (Lect. 7).

In addition to their qualifications, age, gender, attitude and other attributes, the majority of these lecturers also ascribed their participation in the nGAP to their supervisors, HoDs or deans, whom they said provided them with the necessary support and encouragement:

“I always had a great relationship with my supervisor, he is the one that introduced me to tutoring...My plan was to also to work for him again when I enrol for the PhD. He always provided me with a lot of support. He encouraged and urged me to take advantage of internal training opportunities provided to young researchers. I think the nGAP post just came at the right time for me...these are exciting times...” (Lect. 5).

The above responses demonstrate that lecturers had every reason to believe that they would realise their aspirations of becoming full-time academics because of the way they were socialised, supported and trained by their respective departments and supervisors. As articulated in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, some of the requirements for participating in the nGAP included being in possession of a Master’s degree or in a position to enrol for a PhD in a relevant field; being younger than 40; being female, in particular Black/African. According to HESA, 2011:

A structured, well-supported programme can provide opportunities for newcomers to experience the many very positive aspects of an academic career – from the personal rewards associated with successful teaching to the pleasure of achieving a published journal article or attending an international conference or participating in an intellectually stimulating community (www.universitiessa.ac.za).

In a study conducted by Morrison, Rudd, Zumeta and Nerad (2011) investigating motivations to pursue a PhD by emerging academics, it was found that a main motivation was to engage in a career in higher education, mainly in research and teaching. Morrison *et al.* (2011) also found that the motivations for young academics to pursue a PhD were the interests the participants had in a certain field, and that doctorates were important for the participants to be promoted to the positions they aspired to in academia. Purcell, Elias, Davies and Wilton (2005) established various reasons for young academics to study towards a doctorate. For instance, for participants in the social sciences, the top three reasons were: “to develop more specialist skills/knowledge; to develop a broader range of skills/knowledge; to improve their employment prospects” (p. 14). Seeing that ‘enhancing employment opportunity’ was cross-cutting across the above stated studies, it can therefore be considered the most important driver of doctoral study for the majority of aspiring young academics (ibid).

Some of the lecturers also indicated that they found certain the features of the programme attractive because they presented them with excellent opportunities. Others emphasised having a full-time job, earning a salary and being supported to study for a PhD:

“(I) was attracted to the programme by just the possibility of being able to study for a PhD, work full time and actually be paid...” (Lect. 1)

“...being afforded time to focus on my research is just amazing for me... for me just the opportunity to focus on my PhD is a blessing...” (Lect. 2)

Other lecturers indicated that they found the structure of the programme perfect as it aligned well with their career plans and strategy of working while pursuing a PhD. They also cited the reduced teaching load and the idea of having both a supervisor and mentor at the same time as some of their motivational factors:

...the structure of the nGAP is very attractive, it aligns so well with my career plan because I always wanted to do a PhD while working as a lecturer...this programme is perfect for me...” (Lect. 4).

“I can’t imagine a better way to be supported, so the idea of teaching workload being reduced to 20% in the first three years while doing my PhD was a big motivation for me...” (Lect. 5).

“... being supported by a mentor while I have a supervisor are very important factors for me...” (Lect. 3).

Some lecturers indicated that an important motivational factor for them was the idea of being eligible for international mobility while studying:

“...the cherry on top was the reality of being able to undertake an international mobility opportunity during the six years of training...” (Lect. 6)

Apart from the individual capabilities the lecturers cited as motives for wanting to participate in the nGAP, the above responses highlight that the structure and features of the nGAP were

additional factors that contributed to their desire to be part of the programme. Section 1.5 outlined the structure and features of the programme, which included training and development for a six-year period, full-time employment at a university, allocation of a mentor during the first three years, participation in a once-off international mobility programme, allocation of funding towards research study equipment, a 20% reduced teaching and administration workload, with 80% of one's time allocated to completion of a PhD.

From the above responses, the 'capabilities' construct emerged; this can be explained and interpreted using Sen and Nussbaum's definitions, as outlined in Chapter 2. For Sen, 'capability' refers to the variety of prospects from which an individual can choose (Sen, 1999; Alkire & Deneulin, 2009a). Accordingly, capabilities can be described as "the degree to which a given individual can accomplish something achievable" (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009a). Nussbaum distinguishes between collective capabilities and innate capabilities: collective capabilities comprise the wide range of opportunities applicable to an individual, while innate capabilities comprise the fluid and dynamic character of an individual. The internal capabilities of individuals are distinct from innate equipment, as internal capabilities are acquired through training and education, and are, in most cases, "developed in interaction with a context of economic, social, and political influences" (Nussbaum, 2011). This distinction is particularly important for this study, since it clarifies the kind of preparation that goes into becoming an academic or researcher in higher education in a manner which does not only involve academic qualifications and skills. In the case of these lecturers, the universities have supplied them with capabilities such as infrastructure, resources, funding, technology and support for professional development.

The lecturers' responses also point to the issue of functionings, indicating that they were able to accomplish (what is what they are able to do and to be that they consider of value) (Alkire, 2005; Hart, 2009). Compared to capabilities, functionings are varied, as they may characterise very varying treasured experiences, depending on what is valued by individuals, and on the context. People value multiple, diverse aspects of life "as they encompass various aspects of life (Alkire, 2005).

In this case, lecturers who had well-paying jobs in the private sector or at the university used their agency or freedom to leave the jobs in order to be part of a developmental programme to pursue their ambition to acquire their PhDs and become academics. For example, someone who

values being an academic but does not have freedom to just quit a job and follow their passion; they may have opted to stay in their job, even if it meant not pursuing their passion. This demonstrates that people have different conversion factors, which is another important idea in the capability approach. The lecturer who left a well-paying job in the private sector may have opted to access the system through the nGAP, not because it is the best programme offering great features, but because it would assist him to have quicker access to a full-time job as an academic in the HE sector and pursue PhD research, than if he applied for an academic post through the usual recruitment process.

These are characteristics of a resource (the nGAP) that enables or contributes to a functioning. The conversion factors thus represent how much functioning one can get out of a resource; in the case of this study, how much value the lecturer can get out of the nGAP. In other words, an action or situation ‘counts’ as a functioning for that individual only if they respect it.

According to the definitions of capabilities provided by Sen and Naussbaum, the nGAP features listed by the lecturers are the actual capabilities provided for by the programme. These features were designed in such a way that they should provide lecturers with opportunities for development as well as the necessary support by the universities. However, according to the definitions above, even though the lecturers may take advantage of those capabilities, they might not have been beneficial to them if the parties (the universities) that were responsible for implementing them did not provide an enabling environment through infrastructure, resources and support. In a way, the notion of capabilities encompasses the concept of expanded preference and preparing people to grasp opportunities. In this case, what the capabilities theory highlights is that it would defeat the purpose of the entire nGAP if the capabilities it presents are not enabled, by the universities, for lecturers to take advantage of and pursue their passion of becoming academics with PhD qualifications.

It was indicated in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 that the study conceptualised the nGAP as a research capacity development programme because of its features, which include the priority of obtaining a PhD as an outcome for lecturers at the end of the six-year training, the priority of research productivity by allowing lecturers to dedicate 80% of their time to focus on their PhD research and providing them with an opportunity to undertake an international mobility activity for research purposes. This analysis was carried out with this understanding in mind.

As outlined in Chapter 2, the implementation of a research capacity development programme such as the nGAP occurred at three integrated and interrelated levels. These are the individual (lecturer), organisational (universities), and the environmental/national (government) levels. The focus was on only two of the levels, the individual and the institutional. In the case of the nGAP, the individual level involved the development and support of lecturers through PhD training, so that they were able to undertake and produce research. The organisational level involved the provision of support to lecturers at departmental and faculty levels through resources, technology, policies, infrastructure, administration, leadership and coordination and management of the nGAP. (Sawyerr, 2004).

Kumar and Seth (2001) posit that research capacity development at an individual level fits very neatly with the concept of ‘capabilities.’ They state that capabilities reflect a person’s ability to achieve a given function, and that capabilities development involves a collaborative process through which individual competences can be developed and improved by providing support. In the case of the nGAP, as a research capacity development programme, two key components should be considered: the development of capabilities at individual lecturer level and the support provided by the ‘organisational’ component, which comprises the institutional and material factors that provide a setting for the research enterprise and condition of its success or failure (Kumar & Seth, 2001). Therefore, from the research capacity development point of view, the implementation of capabilities provided for by the nGAP as a resource depend very much on the universities’ ability to provide opportunities for the career development needs of participating lecturers. It is also important that the various lecturer needs are properly acknowledged and attended to in specific ways, in order for these individuals to realise their functionings, in this instance, the achievement of doctoral degrees and become fully fledged academics who can undertake and produce research. It is important to also note that the achievements of these lecturers may, in the long term, lead to the advancement and growth of other research capabilities for the universities (Sen, 1999).

Later in the chapter, as the study looks at the experiences of lecturers during the implementation of the nGAP, the study will discuss the notion of capabilities in detail and demonstrate how the nGAP lecturers’ capabilities are enabled or not by the manner in which the programme is implemented at their universities, thereby impacting, either positively or negatively, on the programme’s effectiveness.

5.4.5 The recruitment of the lecturers into the nGAP

According to Bennion & Locke (2010), a nation's higher education system's history, resources and governance are the primary factors that influence the early career paths and employment conditions of its academics. The system regulates the methods of training and development for academic careers, staffing practices, employment policies, labour relations, forms and patterns of compensation, and the reputation and security of different sectors of the profession. Over the last decade, the attraction, development and retention of young academics has continued to capture the attention of scholars, academic administrators and academic development leaders in higher education.

The responses from the participating lecturers highlighted some differences in how they learnt about the nGAP and how they were recruited to participate in the programme. Six out of the eight lecturers became aware of the programme through people they had worked with since the early stages of their careers, such as their supervisors, HoDs or deans. The other two learnt about the nGAP through advertisements in the media. Even though, for purposes of filling the posts, all the universities publicly advertised the posts and lecturers went through interview processes, the responses highlight some differences in the initial awareness and recruitment practices of the nGAP lecturers at both the individual and institutional levels:

“My PhD supervisor, who is a senior professor in the department recruited me...”
(Lect.1).

“The Dean in our faculty who’s also my supervisor told me about the programme...”
(Lect. 3).

“I was employed in a full-time administration job in the university when my supervisor and HoD in my department told me about this post...” (Lect. 2).

“My Masters supervisor knew that I wanted to return to the university to be a lecturer, so he basically recruited me to come back, and he is the HoD so I knew I’ll make it...”
(Lect. 4).

These responses echoed the findings of a survey conducted by Locke, Freeman and Rose (2018) investigating the experiences of early career researchers in the UK: respondents were

asked to comment about where they had requested career guidance and preparation before, during and after their doctoral studies. Participants commented on the critical role played by individuals such as their supervisors and other academic colleagues in their training for employment as academics. Locke, Freeman and Rose (2018) concluded that the respondents' doctoral supervisors and colleagues were the most likely source of career support, advice and training at all three stages of their studies. The responses by the lecturers in this study support the notion that at the beginning of their careers, many young academics in research and/or teaching explore different opportunities to promote their career development (Ansmann *et al.*, 2014).

The lecturers who indicated that they were approached by senior leaders, namely, their supervisors, to apply for the nGAP posts, cited different reasons for their recruitment. Some of the most common of these included the candidates' research being aligned to departmental plans to expand a research area, and the candidates being suitable for the posts. One of these lecturers indicated that there was a plan in her department to recruit certain young academics; however, due to lack of vacant posts, the process got delayed.

"...The Department had been looking for ways to employ a few young people who have been part of the department for a while now, but posts were not available, you know... So, when this post came up, I became the first person to be approached...I was actually encouraged to apply..." (Lect. 1).

Another lecturer indicated that her supervisor, who is also a dean in the faculty, is the one that brought the nGAP post to her attention and, in fact, encouraged her to apply for the post when it was advertised.

"I had already registered for a PhD, working him...so he told me that there's going to be a post in the department which is linked to my area of PhD research and asked me to apply for the post when it's advertised..." (Lect. 3).

One lecturer talked about how the dean, his supervisor, always knew about his plans to enrol for a PhD and become a lecturer in the university. The lecturer had a full-time non-academic job at the university, but it was too demanding and threatened her chances of pursuing a PhD. The nGAP post therefore afforded her the opportunity to study and get into an academic post:

“...I always spoke to her about my frustrations with my previous job, it was just too hectic for me. I could not register for a PhD while in that job. My supervisor always knew that I wanted a job would allow me some time to study. Long story short, I applied for the post and resigned from my other job after I was offered this nGAP post” (Lect. 2).

The lecturer who had previously had said that he had a full-time job in the private sector, indicated that he was recruited into the programme by his PhD supervisor, whom he had worked with during his Master’s studies. He also indicated that he had a passion for teaching and research, and that the supervisor was well-informed about his plans for returning to academia:

“...I quit a well-paying job in the private sector so that I can pursue my passion for academia. I am a people’s person and always wanted to work in a university - teaching student and sharing knowledge with them...” (Lect. 4).

The above response contradicts the widespread belief from some quarters that young Black graduates in South Africa are more attracted to lucrative careers in the public and private sectors than they are to academic careers. The lecturers in the study were motivated by the desire to become knowledge producers and lecturers within the higher education sector, and therefore considered themselves ideal candidates to participate in the nGAP. There is no doubt, however, as argued by Anderson, Richard & Saha (2002), that academic career prospects in higher education institutions in South Africa and in the rest of the world are largely under pressure for a variety of reasons, and that a decline in the image and status of academic careers are also visible. Moreover, Pienaar & Bester (2006) emphasised the fact that in South Africa, an academic career is perhaps no longer as desirable and attractive as in the past, which increases the challenge of retaining young academics in the country’s higher education.

The responses above suggested that there were different levels of awareness about the nGAP in participating universities: some were well informed, and some lagged, therefore some were more prepared for its implementation than others. It can be argued that, in the universities of lecturers who reported being recruited by supervisors, HoDs or deans, there was a higher level of awareness about the nGAP, and that, in preparation for its implementation, their faculties and departments began, comparatively early, to recruit and to encourage lecturers to apply the posts. It can also be argued that the practice of senior lecturers approaching lecturers to apply

for nGAP posts manifested itself in what other researchers refer to as ‘gatekeeping’ by supervisors, so that the recruit becomes a member of their professional and research community (Lee, 2010, p. 22). Supervisors serve as gatekeepers at every level of a post-graduate programme, but their influence and power increase when they are also some of the few sources students can turn to for information about opportunities (Boden, Borrego, & Newswander, 2011).

Another lecturer indicated that she learnt about the nGAP through the media:

“I was job hunting at the time and as I was reading a newspaper. I came across a job advertisement labelled as nGAP lecturer...I applied, and I got the job” (Lect. 7).

What was striking about her response was that after she had seen the advertisement, she asked some senior people in one of the faculties at her university whether the university had similar posts, but the response she received revealed that no one had any knowledge of the programme, so she conducted her own research to find more information about the it:

“...(A)fterwards, I started enquiring about the programme in the university and realised that people were not aware of it...I called DHET, and they explained to me how the whole application process works...I then applied for the post at this university...” (Lect. 7).

When asked if they would have stayed with their former university should similar posts have been available there, she said:

“...no, I wouldn’t have stayed at university Y because my area of research is not well developed there...I always wanted an environment that embraces my field of study, and this post came just at the right time...” (Lect. 7).

Another lecturer, who also learnt about the post through media advertisements, indicated that she would have stayed in her former university if there had been an nGAP position in her field. She had already registered for her PhD with the university and the only reason she left was that she was desperate for a full-time job:

“Honestly, I would have stayed with university X because I had just registered for a PhD at the time of getting into the nGAP post. The main reason I left was because I was really desperate for a full-time job, I had just started a family. So, I need a stable income...”
(Lect. 8).

The above responses demonstrate that lecturers were, to a certain extent, able to exercise their freedom in order to achieve the academic careers that they valued. They were able to use opportunities available to them to achieve their functionings.

Sen (1985) argues that the concept of functioning is the act of doing or being; commodities are merely tools for carrying out other actions. Basu and Lopez-Calva (2011) also maintain that although functioning is fundamental to the concept of human well-being, it is not simply the achieved functionings that matter, but the freedom that an individual has to select from the set of practicable functionings, which is referred to as the person’s capability. In other words, access to the nGAP lecturer posts could be a form of capability that can enable an aspiring young Black person to escape unemployment and gain access to a full-time job in the higher education sector.

Although it was reassuring to learn that some lecturers were, in fact, not approached or scouted by supervisors or senior leaders in their departments, it was concerning to learn that some universities may not have been aware of the nGAP at the time of its inception. This might be an indication that even though the DHET engaged in awareness campaigns and marketing of the programme in the sector, these may have been insufficient and therefore left some universities behind, uninformed and unprepared. From her experience as a former DHET employee who also worked on the programme, the researcher is aware that the level of knowledge and understanding of the nGAP by universities was what determined their ability (or lack of it) to effectively implement and support it. In universities where there was a perceived lack of understanding or an accurate interpretation of the programme, there were challenges with regard to its implementation and support.

What emanated strongly from the lecturers’ narratives and cannot be downplayed was the strong influence of academic departments and disciplines where supervisors, HoDs and deans identified, nurtured and socialised talented young research academics into departmental and research cultures. This is not surprising and aligns with the preparation practices outlined earlier, in which universities focus on ‘growing their own timber’. Postgraduate research

contributes significantly to a university's profile, consolidates research partnerships, introduces engagement in new fields and incubates the establishment of intellectual networks that would otherwise not exist (Cyster, 2019). The apparent influence of supervisors regarding identification of talent for nGAP posts should therefore not be frowned upon as "postgraduate students usually turn to their supervisors for assistance in integrating into the research and academic culture, as well as for support and career advice" (Duke & Denicolo, 2017).

The lecturers' responses also demonstrated that the nGAP posts were perceived by departments and disciplines as potential drivers of research productivity, since the recruitment of lecturers was based on the supervisors' and the departments' research interests. The above supports Duke & Denicolo's (2017) assertion that research development and productivity are driven by departments and faculties, that the establishment of research communities and professional support networks is critical to the development of researchers, and that integration is therefore advisable within a variety of these communities, including but not limited to those within a home department.

The DHET emphasised that the nGAP focused on both teaching and research development; however, its allocation of 80% of the lecturers' time during the first three years towards working on a PhD as the only possible outcome for participating lecturers may contribute to the universities' interpretation of it as a research capacity development programme, resulting in supervisors and departments using it to pursue their own research interests. It can thus be concluded that the way the DHET interpreted the nGAP in its official documentation has had a bearing on the seemingly inward-looking approach followed by universities when recruiting and appointing nGAP lecturers, as opposed to the envisioned systemic approach.

Another construct that emerged from the lecturers' responses was which they referred to as 'academic or institutional inbreeding'. During the interviews, it appeared to the researcher that the supervisors and HoDs had the power to determine who got into the nGAP through what could be considered 'inbreeding' practices. According to the lecturer responses, senior staff members were, by virtue of their positions, the custodians of the nGAP posts at departmental and faculty levels. Chapter 1 and 2 provided context around the application and planning process for nGAP posts at universities, which developed and submitted proposals for posts to the DHET. According to the guidelines, these proposals should have been accompanied by

motivations demonstrating how the proposed posts were aligned to three-year student enrolment and staffing plans, and to faculty and departmental staffing plans.

Essentially, putting together such an application required consultations at both faculty and departmental levels - an administrative function that should involve senior leadership, which is mostly made up of DVCs, deans and HoDs, who were, in most instances, the research supervisors and mentors to the young and emerging research academics. The researcher wishes to illustrate that the senior leaders were actually the ones who were in charge of the process and had the power to influence the recruitment process to favour their preferred candidates. They knew in advance which posts would be available and when, and were able to identify the candidates that would occupy the posts when they become available. As argued earlier in this chapter, these were not surprising developments, as universities seemed to be approaching the nGAP from a talent management point of view.

Altbach, Yudkevich & Rumbley (2015) state that ‘academic or institutional inbreeding’, involves the recruitment and selection of academic staff members who graduated from the same institution. Inbreeding is rarely spoken about; however, it is quite common and has become the standard practice in many higher education systems across the world. Altbach *et al.* (2015) argues that in many higher education systems, the custom of employing graduates from the same university where they graduated has been practised for many years and is believed to be neither uncommon nor detrimental. “The practice is held in high regard by universities, as they can claim to be able to retain their best intellectual talent through inbreeding” (Altbach *et al.*, 2015). The study conducted by Horta & Yudkevich (2015) in Russian and Portuguese institutions argued that ‘inbreeding’ may actually be an inevitable and rational choice where higher education systems are in the process of building their research and knowledge capacities, where academic job markets are not open or developed, and where universities are developing new research areas or expanding departments, particularly in scarce skills areas where it is difficult to find excellent candidates at the national level. It is argued that in this way, strong and stable research teams can be developed because supervisors and senior leaders know exactly what they are bringing in. According to the latter authors, senior leaders often recognise the potential of internal candidates from early stages of their studies and endeavour to include them in teaching and research activities from the beginning of their educational path in preparation for an internal university career.

The above finding by Horta & Yudkevich (2015) is in line with the practice described through the lecturer responses, and this may actually suggest that the nGAP post application processes might unintentionally be further cementing the culture of inbreeding which was already occurring in the universities; it appeared to be happening at the planning and conceptualisation stage of the nGAP, where posts were customised for certain candidates and motivated for by the faculties' and departments' senior leaders. 'Academic inbreeding' is bemoaned in South African higher education and in many other countries, and the situation described above demonstrates that it might be an unavoidable recruitment practice for the nGAP, as the long-term success of the programme would be dependent on the support and value placed on those lecturers by departments. The nGAP targeted candidates who had just completed their Master's degrees and were in the early stages of their PhDs, which meant that they were still developing their research experience and would therefore require a great deal of encouragement and support from the senior academics within their respective departments. In cases where lecturers were recruited into the nGAP by the senior leaders in their departments, the situation may in fact have been favourable for them, as they were likely to benefit more from these senior leaders with regard to research and teaching support, expanding their research and professional networking opportunities. This would then mean the programme would be valued, have buy-in internally from senior managers and that the participating candidates would be prioritised for support because the doctoral supervisors and HoDs often become 'role models' for young academics who were still pursuing PhDs (Heath, 2002).

This clearly underlines the importance of academic inbreeding and the relevance of being integrated into social networks that demand strong identity and sense of belonging. The arguments advanced here do not in any way seek to insinuate that participating universities had been engaging in unfair recruitment processes in relation to the nGAP, but are intended to highlight employment practices that might have already existed at some universities, and have now become prevalent with the introduction of the nGAP.

There are negative effects commonly associated with 'academic/institutional inbreeding'. Altbach *et al.* (2015) are of the opinion that it is problematic because, where practised, it restricts the possibility of employing the best possible candidates for academic positions, both nationally and internationally. In the same breath, Padilla (2008), cited in Altbach *et al.* (2015), argues that inbreeding has a tendency to reinforce the prevailing academic culture in institutions where the practices occur, and this makes change and transformation even more

challenging than would generally be the case. Graduate schools are central places for the training of future academics and therefore seen to be playing a critical role in reproducing inbreeding practices. As demonstrated by the responses provided by lecturers, this practice of inbreeding may be widespread in higher education systems such as ours, where Masters and PhD candidates are also employed as teaching assistants in their respective departments.

For the purpose of recruiting nGAP lecturers, the DHET guidelines were very clear in emphasising that the recruitment should follow standard university processes which were transparent and which should allow for the participation and selection of external candidates. This clause was intentionally and specifically highlighted by the DHET to discourage universities from engaging in inbreeding practices. The DHET's argument, which they usually put forward in their presentations to universities, was that inbreeding limited outside experiences for emerging academics. This argument is supported by Altbach *et al.* 2015, who found that inbred academic staff members tended to be more 'local' in their orientation and to display allegiance and commitment to their university rather than reflecting a 'cosmopolitan' orientation, typified by a greater focus on their discipline and a broader identification with the academic profession in general (Altbach *et al.* 2015).

The nGAP was initiated on the understanding that almost all academic posts within the universities are tenured and, making new posts available becomes slow and difficult because posts only become vacant when someone leaves the university or retires. The programme was introduced to fast-track the planning and filling of vacant posts. As argued by Altbach *et al.* (2015 p. 317), "the interests of senior faculty in hiring their own former students or assistants can be a critical factor, influencing recruitment decisions." As was understood from the responses, supervisors, HoDs and deans have become instrumental in identifying and scouting for talented candidates and ensuring that they are considered for the nGAP posts. The DHET processes require all universities to undertake and carry out all the recruitment processes, including advertising posts externally. However, the responses agree with Altbach *et al.* (2015) when they argue that academic or institutional inbreeding can take place even if universities think that their hiring of staff is fair and competitive.

According to Horta & Yudkevich (2011), some of the negative effects of inbreeding were visible where the prestige of an institution was the priority in its hiring practices, so that the doors of opportunity were tightly closed to non-alumni. In the case of the nGAP, this could

mean that the programme became a mere catalyst for fast-tracking the appointment of internal candidates, thereby excluding externally deserving individuals, not because they lacked the required talent or qualifications, but simply because they had been bred at a ‘wrong’ institution. Therefore, with regard to the nGAP, it is argued that universities should continue their important roles of identifying, nurturing and recruiting young, talented academics who are internally based; however, this should not be to the detriment of the majority of aspiring and deserving young academics in the country, who should rightfully benefit from a transformation programme such as this.

It cannot be denied that recruiting early career academics is not an easy task for universities all over the world, and specifically for South African universities in relation to the recruitment of lecturers participating in the nGAP. However, difficult as it may be, the negative effects that come with academic inbreeding make it a potentially unfavourable approach for the nGAP programme.

The intention of the study is not to generalise its findings across the higher education system; however, it is important to highlight the apparent ‘academic/ institutional inbreeding’ practices in the recruitment of nGAP lecturers. It is therefore recommended that further investigation into this practice be conducted, especially regarding how it links to the nGAP application process. Of course, some of the positive effects yielded by these practices, as outlined by different researchers, cannot be ignored. However, if completely ignored, the practice has the potential to undermine the whole purpose of inclusion and transformation that the programme seeks to promote. The important message coming out of this discussion is that although the nGAP is a government-initiated and partly-funded programme, its implementation is not immune to exploitation and to being used to serve selfish institutional interests. As observed from the discussions and responses from lecturers, the exploitable nature of the nGAP's post application process may have inadvertently given some senior faculty members enormous power and influence, and this could be dangerous for the future of the programme.

5.4.7 Lecturers’ opinions about the features and structure of the nGAP

As the DHET asserts, the SSAUF-nGAP:

...recognises the need for more explicit attention to be paid to creating much wider awareness of academic work as a career that is both attractive and attainable for those with ability and sets out pathways for new and existing staff through which staff can be effectively developed,

inducted and supported to embark on and succeed in an academic career (DHET, 2016, p. 19-20).

There was agreement among all the lecturers interviewed that the nGAP was an essential and beneficial national programme that provided the necessary platform for young academics from under-represented groups to be employed and become part of the academic workforce in higher education. The lecturers were also of the view that the programme would be of assistance to young people because they seldom selected academia as their career of choice.

According to Lecturer 3, *“one of the best programmes the government has ever initiated. it focuses on real transformation...”* which the researcher interpreted to imply that the transformation of staff demographics in higher education has not really been given attention and that the nGAP would be a necessary vehicle to ensure it was carried, since it ensured that *“young people who do not usually consider becoming academics”* gain access and hopefully the programme actually *“...succeeds in transforming the academic staff ratios...”* (Lect. 5).

While acknowledging that the nGAP is a necessary and significant programme, some lecturers also emphasised that the programme would address the difficulties faced by aspiring young Black academics in gaining access to permanent positions in the South African higher education sector, particularly in universities and disciplines that are still not transformed.

“This is a great opportunity for young a black person like me to get a full-time job in these universities. I mean, we know how difficult it is for someone like me to just get a full-time lecturing job in a university like this that still require a lot of transformation to happen, let alone in my field and as a woman...” (Lect. 8).

The responses demonstrate that there is some level of understanding among the lecturers of what the nGAP is about and what it seeks to achieve in the long term. There is a sense among some of the lecturers that a programme such as the nGAP was long overdue and that it would play a major role in fast-tracking transformation in the sector and creating opportunities for young people to replace the ageing and soon to retire academics:

“I’m not sure why government took so long to come up with such a fantastic programme that is solely focusing on getting young people into academia. We have many academics in the system who are incredibly old. Honestly, I feel like we have wasted a lot of time

since 1994. We are in a very urgent situation right now. Young academics need to start occupying professorship positions...” (Lect. 3).

It should be highlighted that the emphasis of the nGAP on the attainment of a PhD is not only about building research capacity among young academics, but is also about the pursuing the transformation agenda for the higher education system by focusing mainly on redressing the skewed racial and gender imbalances in current academic staff. It can therefore be argued that, in the participants’ view, the nGAP has the potential to create a pipeline of young Black female academics with PhDs, who could develop into the next generation of academic researchers, to take the higher education system forward.

Furthermore, while they acknowledged its significance and urgency, some of the lecturers expressed their scepticism about the nGAP’s long-term sustainability. They indicated that they were worried that funding for the programme might be affected as funding for the sector as a whole decreases annually. There is a notion that the reduced funding for the sector may be worsened by the recently introduced fee-free higher education, and could, in the long term, affect the funding allocations for the nGAP negatively by affecting the sustainability of the programme. These observations are consistent with Halalisani, Mlambo, Hlongwa, and Mubecua (2017) and Godsell, Chikane, & Mpofu-Walsh (2016), who have reported that governments across the African continent are experiencing fiscal constraints as a result of uncertainty in global financial markets and weak local economies, further straining the ability to fund higher education.

“Its emphasis on giving young people full time jobs in the universities is very important. I think the nGAP is by far one of the greatest programmes ever to be initiated by government...it would be such a pity though if government can’t continue funding it because of other funding demands in the sector such as free fee higher education...I mean, what will universities do? I just hope and pray that government is able to sustain it...” (Lect. 7).

This response also shows that the lecturers are aware of the larger financial and political environment within which higher education operates, the nGAP's significance and its role in the sector’s transformation agenda, as well as understanding the implications for the programme should its funding be withdrawn. The lecturers also reflected on the actual features

and structure of the nGAP. There were diverging responses among the lecturers, with some indicating that it features of the nGAP were perfect as they are, and that the structure is comprehensive enough to accommodate everyone. Others thought that it seemed to be following a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach and that it was therefore not differentiated.

The lecturers who thought the structure and features of the nGAP were inflexible and uniform argued that the programme did not take into consideration the different circumstances and issues that confronted universities and individual lecturers. The aspects of the nGAP that were strongly criticised included the financial allocations, the reduced workload allocation and the mobility component. One of the lecturers said she believes universities were “*forced to implement*” the nGAP, as it took place without universities being given the opportunity to make input into its structure. She said the following:

“The structure of the programme is comprehensive because it provides everything we need as young lecturers who are entering the system for the first time, reduced workload, mentoring, international travel, funding for equipment, salary. I mean, it considers everything we need. But I don’t think the DHET should have forced universities to implement it as is. Some of the nitty gritty should have been left to universities to interpret and individualise according to the needs of lecturers...” (Lect. 8).

Another lecturer was of the view that the nGAP's approach does not recognise that not all lecturers would require reduced workload during the period specified by the DHET, and that this feature should be negotiable at the institutional level. He had already been exposed to a full teaching load as a part-time lecturer and was comfortable with it. Now that he has joined the nGAP, his load was reduced without his consent, but because it is what the DHET requires, not what he wants.

“The way the programme is structured, is so inflexible. The DHET concluded that everyone, irrespective of the field and level of study needs a reduced workload in the first three years of their PhD and this is fixed and non-negotiable. I mean there are lecturers like myself who entered the nGAP at advanced stages of the PhD and have been doing research and teaching temporarily, so I have experience of how this whole thing works. I’m now given a reduced workload when I’ve been on a full load as a part-time lecturer, I feel disadvantaged in so many ways. I don’t even want it; this needs to be flexible in

application. The DHET must leave it for universities to decide who needs it and who doesn't and when...” (Lect. 6).

Other lecturers spoke about how the funding allocation does not take into consideration the different fees charged by universities for different fields of study. The nGAP SoP document outlined fixed financial allocations for each activity; however, what the lecturers may not be aware of is that the DHET makes provision for funds to be moved around, provided that the university follows the prescribed change request process. The process of moving funds around is undertaken through the nGAP manager and it requires approval by the relevant deputy vice-chancellor (DVC). This response points to the management and coordination of the programme:

“The nGAP approach inflexible, it's like a one-size-fits all...The funding allocation assumes that every lecturer will need the same amount of money for salary, equipment and registration...the programme is too fixed, the DHET needs to adopt a more differentiated approach when it comes to implementation of these allocations...” (Lect. 1).

Others spoke about the allocation for international mobility, indicating that the funding does not take into account the fluctuations that occur in relation to the exchange rates, due to unstable currencies. During the six years of training, the lecturers are given the opportunity to undertake one international mobility placement within a university based in the UK, in line with the lecturer's research area. The placements are partly funded by Newton Research Travel Grants, under the auspices of the British Council (Newton Fund, 2014). Lecturers apply for placements in these international universities, which serve to provide the nGAP lecturers with research enhancement and capacity-building opportunities, as well as opportunities to establish networks and relationships, with a view to longer-term or ongoing research collaborations. The allocated amount is a blanket R30 000 and is considered by many as insufficient because of the rand/pound exchange.

“...the international mobility component is a great idea, but the financial allocation is insufficient and inconsiderate of other factors such fluctuating exchange rates and the process of applying for the mobility component cumbersome, unaccommodating...” (Lect. 5).

The lecturers felt strongly that the programme was too prescriptive and should be differentiated so that it provided some flexibility for universities and individual lecturers. There was a feeling among the lecturers that the current structure did not allow them the freedom to make certain choices and alter some of the prescribed features:

“The nGAP features are great, but it could have been greater if there was enough flexibility for universities to play around with. Remember universities are the ones who know what is needed and what is not when it comes to supporting academics. So, the structure is too prescriptive and leaves no room for lecturers and universities to use their freedom or independence when implementing some of these components, in fact the programme is too rigid...” (Lect. 7).

Other lecturers argued that even though the structure of the nGAP is standardised and sort of fixed, it is comprehensive enough and addresses most of their needs as young academics. However, the lecturers are of the opinion that the fixed structure does not mean that universities should fold their arms and not use their autonomy to align the programme with their internal operations. The response highlights the important issue of institutional autonomy and the ability of universities to make decisions and exercise their freedom as granted by law. However, it appears there are feelings of frustration and helplessness among lecturers as they are unable to make changes to the features of the nGAP and influence the way these are implemented.

“Even if the nGAP was initiated by government, the universities can actually exercise their autonomy to make it favourable to their circumstances, they just need to be creative. But, I don’t there’s commitment to making such efforts. People are always hiding behind the DHET as if they do not their own brains...” (Lect. 4).

The above response speaks to the issue of clarification of lecturers’ expectations about their participation in the nGAP and in turn becoming members of the higher education academic fraternity. According to Kori (2016) academics should be able to express themselves freely, individually or collectively, about the institution or system in which they fulfil their functions, without discrimination or fear of repression by the state or any other actor, to participate in professional or representative academic bodies, and to enjoy all the international legal rights applicable in the same jurisdiction that applies to other persons” (Kori 2016). However, in the case of the nGAP, the universities are dependent on government for the programme’s funding,

therefore government has considerable power to influence, through the SoPs and financial regulations, how the programme is implemented in universities, thus leaving the participants in a dilemma. It can therefore be concluded that it might not be possible for the nGAP to offer the lecturers the kind of flexibility they need because of its nature and structure, which is more about steering the system in a certain direction.

5.4.8 How the universities supported or failed to support the implementation of the nGAP

As part of the arrangement they have with government in relation to the implementation of the nGAP, universities have an obligation to facilitate its implementation by providing, among other things, training, professional development opportunities to support research and teaching, coordination, administration, management and leadership, infrastructure and resources. Meeting this obligation implies that there needs to be clarity about the programme's fit with the institutional mission and goals, and clarity about institutional responsibilities. There also needs to be collaboration between the different units within the university. It should be emphasised that the implementation of the nGAP at institutional levels requires capacity and expertise within the responsible units to execute the delegated tasks.

During the interviews, the lecturers were asked to reflect on the mechanisms that their universities have employed to support implementation of the nGAP and to indicate how they thought these constrain or enable its implementation. There was agreement that mechanisms to support the nGAP exist within their universities; however, there were differing views regarding how they promoted or hampered the lecturers' participation. The lecturers listed mechanisms and structures such as human resources policies and practices, finance and procurement departments, academic and research support policies as some of the structures that provided support. Others indicated that at their universities the DVCs academic/ teaching and learning staff were the ones overseeing the programme's overall implementation:

“The DVC teaching and learning is the active agent in making sure that the programme is properly implemented and that its implementation aligns to existing university policies...” (Lect. 5).

Some pointed out that there are dedicated persons responsible for the coordination and management of the programme within their universities, working in collaboration with other units:

“There’s an nGAP manager who is responsible for making sure all the lecturer needs are taken care of...” (Lect. 1)

“The nGAP coordinator in our university ensures that all the responsible departments do what they are supposed to do...” (Lect. 4).

“Our nGAP coordinator is the link between all the responsible units such as finance, HR, procurement services and so forth...” (Lect. 2).

Lecturer 6 pointed out that even though there are mechanisms and structures to support the nGAP, she witnessed confusion and unpreparedness within some of the units that were delegated to support the lecturers. Her first impression was that the university was not properly prepared to implement the programme because none of the responsible offices could assist or answer her questions when she arrived. This suggests a possible communication breakdown between the responsible units:

“There was so much confusion when I arrived here...I don’t think there was any proper understanding on how to manage lecturers’ appointment...HR people didn’t have any answers to my questions...the departmental people were surprised that my appointment was finalised...no preparation whatsoever...” (Lect. 7).

Lecturer 5 mentioned a perceived lack of commitment by the university management to reviewing some of the existing internal policies in order to align them with some of the requirements of the nGAP. The policies relating to promotion, performance appraisal and evaluation of nGAP lecturers were listed as some of those that had not been prioritised for review. As a result, the lecturer felt that some of these leaders had a ‘low regard’ for the programme. The lecturer also mentioned that there was a notion among some of the senior staff that reviewing certain policies to favour nGAP would be unfair for other lecturers who were not part of the programme.

These responses highlighted a perceived lack of leadership in certain policy areas, as well as possible competing interests and needs between the ordinary lecturers and those who participated in the programme. It can be deduced from the response below that some universities appear not to have supporting policies to create enabling conditions for effective implementation of some features of the nGAP:

“I have a bad feeling that the review of policies relating to remuneration of lecturers, promotion, performance appraisal etc. and many other policies that affect lecturers participating in the nGAP is not prioritised...in my opinion there’s no leadership and support to advocate for policy changes...in fact, I think there’s low regard for the nGAP by these leaders...some of them will tell you how it would be unfair for other lecturers if policies are reviewed to favour “a few” nGAP lecturers...” (Lect. 3).

One of the lecturers spoke about the challenges she experienced regarding accessing things like a computer, office space and funding for travel. She linked these to communication breakdowns between the relevant offices. She also pointed out the lack of understanding and poor interpretation of the DHET guidelines and processes, resulting in unnecessary delays in accessing resources and funding to support her activities:

“I struggled to get the simplest things when I arrived here, no office space or equipment to operate with...” (Lect.7).

“(The) finance and procurement division not communicating important information to relevant officials...” (Lect. 2).

“...struggled to access money for travelling to see supervisor...” (Lect. 3).

“...no clear understanding of the SoPs and main guidelines for the implementation of the programme...” (Lect. 8).

The above responses point to the issues of capacity, or the lack of it, to coordinate and manage the implementation of the nGAP. The lecturers’ perceived lack of capacity points to a number of constraints in some universities and in the higher education system in general. For instance, as someone who worked with universities on the nGAP, the researcher is aware that in most

universities there is no dedicated person responsible for coordinating and managing the programme. The majority of the so-called nGAP managers have other responsibilities apart from coordinating and managing the implementation of the nGAP, and these come with several challenges, as witnessed from the above responses.

The responses also support the findings of the study conducted by Temwa Moyo analysing the implementation of the Teaching Development Grant in the South African Higher Education sector. The TDG, similar to the nGAP, is one of the earmarked grants provided by government. His study found that the influence of institutional conditions and cultures on the conceptualisation of the nGAP was evident, and that understanding these contexts and conditions would lead to a better characterisation of the programme, and, hopefully, lead to a sustainable practice of it.

Universities that typically had weak administrative systems and structures were severely constrained in the implementation of the TDG. The absence of basic operational structures for project implementation seemed to be a system-wide constraint amongst these universities. Also noted from the data was constrained corporate agency, as there was an absence of a dedicated office or units to regulate, monitor and oversee directed TDG implementation (Moyo, 2018, p. 139).

5.4.9 Problems in reporting

Issues relating to evaluation, monitoring and reporting were also strongly ventilated as lecturers continued to speak about mechanisms supporting the nGAP. There was general agreement among some of them that the annual reporting mechanism for the nGAP is insufficient and limiting for them. Overall, there was a feeling that their universities had not been able to develop reporting processes that would ensure protection and allow them to carry out useful reflection when reporting on their experiences. The lecturers were also of the opinion that the reports submitted to DHET were mainly for compliance or monitoring, and not necessarily for appraisal of the programme:

“The current reporting process does not allow for freedom of expression...” (Lect. 1).

“The reporting process is very tedious and does not allow for proper reflection...” (Lect. 3).

“I think the template is mainly for compliance and does not allow lecturers to report honestly about their experiences...” (Lect. 5).

One of the lecturers pointed out that the lack of confidentiality and protection in the reporting process has the potential to allow victimisation of lecturers by some senior managers in the departments and faculties, and therefore lecturers always have to be cautious about what they write in their reports:

“I do not feel any sense of protection in the reporting process, there’s no confidentiality whatsoever...I often found myself not being honest in reporting because it’s not easy to be honest with some of the things that are happening that need to be brought to the attention of the DHET such as racism and other forms of discrimination...” (Lect. 8).

Another lecturer was of the view that the university was trying to police and control the information that goes out to the DHET through the reports. She indicated that she would like to see a situation where lecturers are allowed to report separately from the managers, supervisors, mentors and HoDs, and directly to DHET, so that they are able to reflect on the pertinent issues that affect them and the programme. She thought that the current reporting denied the lecturers the opportunity to formerly voice their concerns in a more confidential and protected reporting process:

“...I feel like the reporting structure neglects pertinent issues that have the potential to jeopardize the programme...I feel that there’s so much shadiness and policing that goes on here with the university trying to control information that goes out to DHET...there needs to be a separation of reporting, one must come from the lecturer and straight to DHET and one must follow the current structure...otherwise people will not know what exactly is going on in these universities...” (Lect. 7).

The responses above presented a picture of lecturers who are disgruntled, who felt controlled and were in desperate need of a platform to vent and to talk openly and formally about internal institutional issues that affect them and, in their view, had the potential to influence their experiences in the programme negatively. The responses also indicated that the nGAP was a ‘top-down’ initiative that did not allow lecturers sufficient autonomy to identify and determine their own professional requirements, with which to guide and inform the implementation of the

programme at institutional levels. From the above discussions, there was evidence suggesting that the implementation of the features of the nGAP, from funding allocations and workload to the reporting processes, did not take into account their voices or inputs. This trend was consistent with studies by Brancato (2008) and Hunzicker (2010), who found that the imposed professional programmes were irrelevant and even completely incompatible with the participants' needs.

The studies by the latter two authors showed that non-inclusive professional programmes will suffer from low motivation and a lack of commitment among participants. McKenney *et al.* (2004) assert that standardised approaches result in “a non-inspiring, less motivating program”, which would lead to an inefficient programme since it would have missed the opportunity to capture lecturer input on what and how they have experienced it, as well as the pace at which they have learned. Evidently, the programmes are ineffective and the project might not bear any fruit in relation to enhancing the quality of lecturers. Instead, it is possible that such professional programmes could, in future, experience little uptake among aspiring young academics.

5.5 Experiences of lecturers in relation to features of the nGAP

The lecturers could speak freely about their experiences of being part of the nGAP. The discussions focused mainly on implementation of the programme's different components within their respective universities. Many issues were raised; however, this analysis will only focus on the issues and themes that dominated the discussions. Lecturer responses focused on the features of the nGAP which they believed were vital for the success of the programme and the achievement of its intended objectives. Some of the lecturers were of the view that the implementation of some of the nGAP features constrained the programme's effectiveness in their universities and some thought these were implemented in a manner that enabled the programme.

The lecturers' responses are presented under the five themes that emerged during the discussions. These constructs were considered important by the lecturers and emphasised that they should be consulted by the universities to enable effective and successful implementation of the nGAP.

5.5.1 Reduced teaching workload

During a workload analysis study conducted by Cawood, Yilmaz, Musingwini & Reznichenko (2008) academics highlighted “the consequences of role overload on their development, performance, productivity, remuneration and the finalisation of research, motivating the need for a scientific academic workload model” (pp. 153-179). Literature indicates that many academics are concerned about time constraints and difficulties in creating a balance between teaching and researching (Adcroft & Taylor, 2013; Fitzmaurice, 2013; Korhonen & Törmä, 2014; Matthews *et al.*, 2014; Rice, Sorcinelli, & Austin, 2000; Vajoczki *et al.*, 2011). This is perceived to be a common source of stress for early career researchers. As reported in such studies, the notion that research and teaching are competitors in higher education frequently reinforces the notion that teaching is detrimental to other activities, such as research and writing (Korhonen & Törmä, 2014).

In order to try to alleviate some of the workload-related challenges highlighted above, the nGAP model allows for lecturers participating in the programme to allocate 20% of their time to teaching and administrative duties during the first three years of their training, while 80% is allocated to their PhD research. From the fourth year onwards, the lecturers are still allowed to have a reduced teaching and administrative workload; which is 50%. They move to 100% in their fifth and sixth years. By affording the nGAP lecturers the reduced load, the programme acknowledges that the lecturers are generally new academics who would be involved in undergraduate teaching, which comes with a lot of administration, while also having to contend with the pressure to complete their PhD research and build a research and teaching profile within a specified period. It was therefore not surprising that the issue of teaching workload featured strongly in the lecturer responses as it is one of the essential features of the programme.

There was general agreement among the majority of the lecturers that the opportunity to be allocated a reduced teaching and administrative workload was an excellent feature of the nGAP, and that this had afforded them additional time to adapt to their new academic careers and to organise and balance their work and personal lives:

“The reduced teaching workload allows added time to focus on PhD research...was able to spend more time in the lab and the library...” (Lect. 1).

“The reduced load helped me with adaptation to my new role as a lecturers and the new environment...” (Lect. 2).

“Less teaching load helped ease the time pressures and to balance teaching and research time, other work and family life...” (Lect. 5).

“I was about to start with data collection at the time of my appointment. So, I was able to take time out to collect data, spend time in the lab and the library. I don’t know how I would have coped without this relief...” (Lect. 4).

The above responses resonate with the findings of a study conducted by Sutherland and Petersen (2009) investigating the success and impact of early career academics in two New Zealand tertiary institutions. The study found that participants established that the barriers to their success as researchers included the issue of working out how to balance the demands of teaching and research:

Where academics did experience a lower teaching or administrative load, they recorded significantly higher levels of current involvement in research; but those whose department offered them time release/reduced teaching felt more positive about their prospects for a research career (Sutherland & Petersen, 2009, p. 24).

Although the lecturers in this study generally agreed that the reduced teaching workload was a good feature that afforded them time to focus on their research, others disapproved of the timing of its implementation. Some indicated that this was not suitable for them and they were therefore unable to fully benefit from it, and others were of the view that this feature should be applied according to each lecturer’s unique circumstances, and not as prescribed by the DHET. As indicated above, the DHET prescribes the implementation of the reduced teaching and administrative workload in the three to four years of the lecturers’ training. However, Meyer, Houston and Paewai (2006) recognise that the allocation of academic workload in universities is a difficult job because faculty member roles are not only in the primary domains of teaching and research, but also in administration and academic services (Bernasconi, 2003).

One lecturer indicated that he felt that the reduced teaching workload might disadvantage him when it comes to performance evaluation as he seems to have downgraded his workload since joining the programme. The response agrees with Barrett & Barrett (2007) who discovered that academic staff prefer transparency in the allocation of academic workloads either on the basis

of their knowledge or by information on work allocation schemes of the universities that are published in the university handbooks.

“Like I indicated before, the nGAP model for the reduced workload didn’t work for me specifically. Before joining the programme, I was already exposed and used to what a full teaching load was like. Now that I am in the programme, I was forced to go into a reduced load because the rules say so. I’m now worried as to how this whole thing will negatively affect my performance evaluation. I’m happy to be in a structured programme, but I feel like I can’t make any input, it’s a take it or leave it situation...” (Lect. 6).

One of the lecturers pointed out that the period within which one gets ones teaching load reduced, should be negotiated at institutional level with the supervisors and mentors and not be imposed by DHET. The lecturer believed strongly that there needs to be a consultation process that takes place prior to implementation of the reduced workload so that its timing is aligned with the lecturer’s circumstances. Acton, Chipman, Lunden & Schmitz (2015) advise that university authorities have to intervene in the implementation of balanced workload distribution schemes to reduce the stress of academic staff.

“I think we lecturers should be given the flexibility to determine when the reduced workload should be effected...well, we can consult our supervisors and mentors first, but this shouldn’t just be about the DHET guidelines, universities must have a say on this one....” (Lect. 5).

Others emphasised that the implementation of the reduced workload should take into account the different fields of study and the level at which the lecturers are with regard to their research: it should not be a blanket approach. An example was given of someone who is pursuing a social sciences degree, indicating that such a person may actually prefer this feature to be implemented at the write-up stage of their thesis, as opposed to the proposal stage, as is currently the case.

This lecturer supported the suggestion by Hull (2006) that universities have difficulties in identifying choices for reasonable workload distribution among academic staff because of factors such as increasing academic workload every year, assignment of new tasks to existing faculty members, rising quality standards, and the demands to perform in specialised tasks:

“The reduced workload is well and good, but I think it should be reviewed and implemented based on the different fields of study and level of research...people should be able to say when and how they want this because sometimes it’s just a waste of time if you can’t actually make full use of it...” (Lect. 7).

Other lecturers provided worrying responses regarding the implementation of the reduced workload, indicating that this feature appeared to be subject to exploitation in their universities. One of the lecturers stated that she taught large classes, and with this came huge amounts of administrative work, which took up a lot of her time. She felt that this feature was not properly implemented at her university, and that she was afraid to question the process for fear of victimisation. As a result, she said, she had not been able to fully benefit from the reduced load. This response echoes the argument that if there was any mismanagement in the distribution of academic workload, the academic staff felt more stress in teaching than in research or administrative work. This occupational stress affects the overall performance of academic staff (McLaughlin, Montgomery, Gravely & Mahan, 1981; Parveen 2013; Adrian, Cox, Phelps, Schuldt & Totten, 2014).

This response also confirmed the findings made in a report commissioned and recently published by the DHET providing a midterm review of the nGAP (DHET, 2020). The report found that the interpretation of a reduced teaching workload in the first four years of the programme was a serious challenge in the sector. It argued that there was little concrete guidance on what constituted the 20% or 50% of teaching and related activities, including serving on committees and postgraduate supervision. The report further recommended that more data be generated on this issue, to better inform institutions that were not consciously engaging with quantifying the 20% workload or considering the demands placed on the shoulders of a lecturer who was probably working in their first permanent academic role (ibid).

“...I’m teaching big classes and this amounting to added admin workload...not benefiting from the 20% reduced load...afraid to question the abuse/ exploitation of reduced load because am afraid of being victimised...” (Lect. 8).

Another lecturer felt that the reduced workload looked good on paper but was poorly handled and managed at her university; as a result, she struggled to create a balance between her work

and her studies. She said that this was an institutional competency, and that the university administration seemed to be failing at it:

“...I feel like the reduced workload is only reduced on paper and is not being properly applied in reality...it’s the universities who know how this thing works...I must tell you, I have not been able to fully benefit from it because I don’t even know what it should look like...I feel so discouraged right now...” (Lect. 3).

It cannot be denied that the reduced workload is a great feature of the nGAP; however, it was apparent from the responses above that its implementation at institutional level was highly controversial. There was dissatisfaction among some lecturers regarding the way it was structured and implemented, as well as the timing of its implementation. The lecturers also seemed to be frustrated by the reality that they were not being allowed the freedom to decide when and how this feature should be applied.

Dennison (2012) contradicts the nGAP for a one-size-fits-all approach in terms of workload allocation, revealing that the planning of workload distribution schemes varies from one institution to another because the workload distribution is mainly intended to stabilise the academic activities of institutions, based on the planned instructional hours, research works, creative endeavours, scholarships and community services (ibid).

The constructs of agency, freedom and well-being, as outlined by the capability approach, emerged yet again from the interview responses where the lecturers felt that they were being denied the freedom and agency to make changes or give input on this important component of the nGAP. As interpreted from the lecturer’s responses, the way this workload feature was implemented in some universities had the potential to affect their well-being negatively. Since people see a valued life differently, the capabilities approach acknowledges that individuals must have the freedom to decide what is valued in their own lives” (Robeyns, 2005a 6).

People are naturally capable of becoming active agents, but actually doing so depends on their social, political and economic opportunities. The responses of the nGAP lecturers in this study indicated that their freedom to become agents of change and make their own choices in relation to the workload implementation was constrained by the same structures and processes that were expected to protect and support them. This also points to the critical reality that accessing a full-time academic position in a university through a tailored programme such as the nGAP

might not be a solid confirmation that once appointed, the lecturers would be afforded a freedom-based approach to engage in deliberative processes that include the design and implementation of training programmes (Crocker, 2008).

The lecturers' dissatisfaction is consistent with the argument made by Nussbaum (2011), who states that

...if people are adequately fed and educated but are not empowered with adequate knowledge and tools to exercise rational decision-making about their health and nutrition or education and learning, Then the situation is not commensurate with their human dignity: they are being held hostage the way we would hold babies hostage.

Participating as an engaged member of the institution enables freedom and doing that is different from forcing someone to function in a particular way. Consequently, it seems clear that when evaluating whether or not academics have the freedom to participate in decision-making in their universities, it is crucial to emphasise the stage at which they gain access to these processes. According to Crocker and Robeyns (2010), the earlier the individual enters into decision-making, the higher the quality of participation and agency.

In this context, it is important to understand that 'voice' refers to the capacity to express concerns, viewpoints, and interests, and to be heard and understood, according to Ongera (2016). Therefore, even though the capabilities approach stresses the importance of individual agency and choice, the lecturers' responses are a reminder that individuals' freedom and agency can, in reality, be constrained and qualified by economic, political, and social factors.

Conversion factors are another construct which emerged from the lecturer responses. Based on the capabilities approach, conversion factors are individual, societal and environmental distinctions that describe why individuals benefit in different ways from similar resource platforms (Robeyns, 2005a). Robeyns expresses the view that the capability approach considers personal and socio-environmental factors that impact the conversion of commodities into capabilities, because it focuses on the many ways in which people make choices, and the factors affecting these choices. Regarding the nGAP lecturers' experiences in relation to the timing of the reduced workload, conversion factors explain why some lecturers have been able to benefit from this feature and some have felt deprived.

5.5.2 Mentoring

According to Baugh & Sullivan (2005), mentoring is not a new concept in higher education; however, in South African universities the concept has recently been revitalised owing to the implementation of the nGAP. It is a known reality that in general the mentoring process in South African universities has been conducted informally and haphazardly, and is embedded within institutional cultures of daily experiences that incorporate interpersonal relations shared in the institution (Mapasela & Wilkinson, 2005)

As a result of the introduction of the nGAP, universities are under pressure to source and allocate mentors to the participating lecturers, as required by the DHET guidelines. The DHET SoPs stipulate that each lecturer must be allocated a mentor (separate from the supervisor) for the first four years of their participation in the programme. According to the nGAP SoPs, the mentor's role includes keeping close track of agreed developmental milestones and plans. Mentors are envisaged as experienced and successful academics, and if necessary, recently retired academics may be contracted as mentors. The duties of mentors include:

- “assisting with the preparation of a personal plan for professional development;
- assisting, where necessary, with the process of registering for a PhD;
- assisting with matters such as personal problems, time management, and financial management; and
- providing opportunities for reflective discussions on teaching and research experiences, opportunities and challenges” (DHET, 2018, p. 4).

Although the DHET has clearly stipulated some of the duties and responsibilities of mentors in the SoPs, the implementation of the mentoring aspect of the nGAP is an institutional responsibility. Therefore, it is incumbent upon universities to ensure that a system or process for the recruitment and allocation of mentors is developed, and this points to the institutional capabilities to enable the implementation of mentoring. In other words, among other responsibilities, universities are expected to develop processes to formally appoint and remunerate mentors according to the funding allocations, provide training for mentors and mentees, provide leadership for mentors, provide opportunities for mentors and mentees to network, and conduct evaluations and assessment of the mentoring relationships on a regular basis. It is expected by the DHET that universities will institutionalise the nGAP mentoring programme and build it into a successful initiative which provides value to participating

lecturers and, in the long term, becomes the ‘expected practice’ for all emerging academics to undergo.

The above description of mentoring roles agrees with a number of definitions found in the mentoring literature. Nnabuike *et al.* (2021) define mentoring as the act of guiding, modelling, teaching and sponsoring a graduate student or junior member of the profession who is less experienced (usually a younger member). Renshaw (2008) posits that mentoring is an evolving process encompassing aspects of coaching, facilitating, training and counselling, targeted at communicating knowledge and supporting individual development.

In the context of the nGAP, mentoring is understood as a process to develop the career paths of the lecturers. It involves a relationship outside of supervision, line management or probationary procedures. Generally speaking, the nGAP calls for mentors who may be classified as either ‘career mentors’, who have a primary responsibility for providing career support and guidance to the mentee, or as ‘scholarly mentors’, who need to be experts in their field of research and have the ability to develop their research, academic skills, and networking networks.

Literature on mentoring in higher education concluded from 159 studies on mentoring in schools and universities that mentoring has many positive outcomes for both mentors and mentees (Bell Treleaven (2011). These include

“...developing collegiality, networking, reflection, professional development, support and assistance, and personal satisfaction. Additional benefits for mentees can include higher rates of retention and promotion, higher success rates in receiving external research grants, higher publication rates and better perceptions of themselves as academics” (Bell Treleaven (2011, p. 3).

Ferman (2002) posits that traditionally, mentoring in universities has been informal and “it may be invisible, unrecognized, unrewarded and hence under-utilized” (p. 153). However, the nGAP provides an example of a formal mentoring programme designed to assist the lecturers and to facilitate academic and research capacity development within a specified period of three years. According to the requirement of the programme, the nGAP mentoring is arranged within the institution.

The nGAP lecturers in the study provided diverse responses when asked how they had experienced mentorship in their universities. There was agreement among the majority of them that even though the mentoring feature of the nGAP is formalised and structured in terms of implementation, their universities do not have formal policies specifically for the selection and allocation of nGAP mentors:

“I noticed that there’s no specific policy followed here to allocate mentors to nGAP lecturers because...my mentor told me that he was asked to assist the university with mentoring for the nGAP...” (Lect. 3).

Some of the lecturers felt that the absence of a formal process for identifying and allocating mentors to mentees may be denying them the opportunity to participate in the crucial process of choosing their own mentors, and that mentors seemed to be imposed on them. One of the lecturers detailed how the lack of consultation resulted in her being allocated a mentor she was incompatible with due to age and cultural beliefs. She was of the view that had she been afforded the opportunity to participate in the selection process, the situation would have turned out differently for her mentoring relationship. While it is deemed important that the mentor is old enough to have attained the requisite experience to benefit the mentee, Hunt and Michael (1983) found that where the mentor is older by 20 years or more, such relationships can lead to negative outcomes. In this context, the mentorship relationship has been observed to approximate a parent-child one, where the mentee is likely to experience instances of inability to express their needs due to the mentor’s desire to adopt a parental role.

“For me, as someone who is in the organisational development field, I know that mentor/mentee pairing is crucial in order for mentoring in a programme like this to succeed ...I have been allocated a mentor that I unfortunately am incompatible with. He is a male, who is old enough to be my father. I come with my own cultural beliefs and he holds his own beliefs. There’s so much I want to talk to him about, but I can’t, simply because I don’t feel comfortable doing that. He is a great mentor, but not for me. I would have loved to work with a woman, and I am sure she would have understood me better. Unfortunately, I was not consulted, I was just told that here is a mentor for you.” (Lect. 2).

The above response agrees with research, indicating that matching mentors and mentees of the same gender (and ethnicity) can ensure a more effective mentoring relationship, particularly between new and experienced mentors (Meschitti & Lawton-Smith, 2017). Even though the lecturer in the study was not specific about the issues she could not discuss with the older male mentor, the latter authors found that there are no substantial differences in the role of female and male mentors in relation to maternity and family support issues, except in the support provided to them. Most of these issues are forbidden or not discussed, but they are still important for female researchers (and male researchers), causing a wide range of interference and interference with their careers (ibid).

Furthermore, a study conducted in the USA investigating the attitudes of chairs in the department of family medicine towards mentoring, emphasising female and minority faculty members, found that respondents could not agree unanimously on whether female mentees should be matched with male or female mentors; several respondents thought that female mentors could benefit from advice from other women (Cross, Bridgman, Thapa, Cleary and Kornhaber, 2001). Among the study's findings were concerns about "trust and vulnerability of mentees (e.g. boundary crossing in male/female pairings) and insufficient senior women to mentor junior women" (ibid). However, in the context of South African higher education and in relation to the nGAP, the matching of female mentors to female mentees may prove to be a challenging exercise, in the sense that the majority of tenured and retired senior academics/professors who could become mentors for nGAP lecturers are predominantly white and male, while the majority of nGAP lecturers are Black and female. These dynamics have important implications for the selection and allocation of mentors who are willing and available to mentor nGAP lecturers.

Another lecturer indicated that she was left without a mentor for some time, depriving her the opportunity to benefit from the mentoring aspect of the nGAP. She was of the view that she was being punished for questioning the process followed in sourcing a mentor for her, as well as for refusing the allocated mentor.

Even though the intention of this study is not to generalise, the responses signal some of the challenges and struggles that some lecturers might experience with regard to the mentoring aspect of the programme across the universities:

“The mentoring part of the programme is great but could have been greater if it was properly done. I refused to work with a mentor that was allocated to me because I already had an idea of a person I wanted to work with. I was waiting to be asked who I wanted to work with. Am I wrong to think that I was supposed to be part of the process of choosing my own mentor? I spent some time without a mentor and think I was being punished for questioning things...” (Lect. 4).

The responses above echoed the findings of the study conducted by Bell & at the University of Sidney. According to the study, mentee choices reduced the likelihood of mismatches and increased the agency of mentees, which allowed them to better negotiate the relations of power that are inevitably present within companies and between mentors and mentees. (Bell & Treleaven, 2011).

Lecturer 5 thought her mentoring experience was what she termed “weird”. She believed she had been cornered into a mentoring relationship, because she was simply presented with a mentor and informed upfront that there was no room for her to say no to the allocation. She thought her non-involvement in selecting her mentor may have affected their relationship in a negative manner; however, she indicated that she was hopeful that the relationship will improve over time:

“For me, the allocation of a mentor was such a weird process. I was told upfront that I cannot refuse an allocated mentor because the university is struggling to find mentors for the nGAP. So, I had to accept what I was given. I think therefore our relationship struggled a bit at the beginning, but I guess we are working on it. I hope things get better with time...” (Lect. 5).

A lecturer spoke about how one of the people responsible for allocating mentors to nGAP lecturers informed her that having a mentor was a privilege that other young lecturers, who were not part of the nGAP, did not have, and that there was a scarcity of mentors in the sector. Although the lecturer was unhappy about the process of mentor selection, she acknowledged the shortage of mentors in the entire higher education system. This confirmed the argument made by Quinn and Vorster (2012) that many academics have become highly competitive and are therefore more concerned with the ‘publish or perish’ imperative. Thus, finding ideal mentors, given the multiple demands on academics' time, might not be an easy process for

universities; because most senior academics are preoccupied with research and publishing, these commitments render them unavailable.

“As far as I have experienced things, lecturers have no room to say no to an allocated mentor. I was told I must be grateful that someone has been found for me because mentors are scares everywhere. The person also said to me I must consider myself lucky because other young academics out there don’t have the privilege of a paid mentor...I understand that there may not be enough senior people to work as mentors, but I’m not happy about the approach and process of selection...” (Lect. 6).

The response above also highlights the reality that mentoring in South African universities is largely *ad hoc* in practice and under-explored in research. It is not a formally assigned relationship and one of the implications of this is that not all academic staff members across the sector have benefited from mentoring.

Lecturer 7 spoke about how it took months for him to be allocated a mentor, and when this process was concluded, he ended up with someone he had met previously and had had an unpleasant experience with. This meant that the lecturer was forced to work with someone who has the potential to negatively impact the most important experience in his career.

“It was after about three months when I realised that I was supposed to have been allocated a mentor. I went to the nGAP manager to enquire, and I was told that they have been struggling to find a mentor for me. A few weeks afterwards I received communication from the manager that Prof so-and-so will be my mentor and was given his email address and number. I was honestly unhappy with the choice because I knew the person from when I was doing my master’s. Let me just say we had our differences...I can’t say the relationship is okay because of the tension...It would have been better if it was someone I recommended or consulted when being sought...” (Lect. 7).

As indicated earlier in this analysis, as a structured programme the nGAP provides for formal mentorship programmes in which matches between mentors and mentees are typically made by a third party within the institution, and may include the use of some sort of external matching process. As a result, the lecturers have less control on who is allocated to them. The response above confirms the statements made by Meyer & Fourie (2004) cautioning that, when matching

the mentors to mentees and ensuring that the mentors have the necessary experience, the universities must also consider the possibility of conflicting personalities (Meyer & Fourie, 2004). Investing in the pairing process is critical, as mentees who have had no input into the process could be dissatisfied with their allocated mentor. Blunt & Conolly (2006) conclude that for the mentoring relationship to be successful, the mentee needs to be directly, considerably and particularly motivated.

Although the perceived one-sided selection and allocation of nGAP mentors was highlighted by some lecturers as a potential impediment to their mentoring relationships, other lecturers were not concerned about how the mentors were selected. They demonstrated pleasure with their allocated mentors and spoke cordially about some of the qualities their mentors possessed as well as some of the activities they engaged in, which they believe were enriching their experiences. This response contradicted the conclusion reached by Bell & Treleaven (2011) that mentees who had not made input into the pairing process were far less satisfied with their mentors. They found that a programme where mentees and mentors were matched based on informal knowledge and mentors' biographical information was very well received by mentees:

"I honestly don't have a problem with a mentor being chosen for me because I wouldn't have known how to go about it. The one I got allocated is brilliant and we work so well together...she basically just took interest in my career plans and development. I don't know what decisions I would have made without her guidance. We have a schedule for all our meetings and we both participate. She does not interfere with my research, we focus on development...I'm blessed with someone who listens and offers me advice and support for almost everything..." (Lect. 4).

Another lecturer indicated that she was satisfied with the process of selecting mentors at her university, even though she was not involved in the selection process. She indicated that she would not have had the time to look for one herself and that she was new in the institution. She spoke fondly of her experience with her mentor, highlighting some of the expertise and knowledge the mentoring relationship had provided. This lecturer indicated that she had been able to establish valuable and beneficial professional networks as a result of the guidance provided by the mentor. This mentoring relationship appeared to be a mutually supportive and creative partnership on an equal footing. A mentoring relationship is dependent upon the willingness of those acting as mentors to invest time for guidance on an ongoing basis.

"I wouldn't have had time to go around looking for a mentor, besides, I'm new here and don't know anyone at a senior level. So, I'm happy that someone was found on my behalf and I'm happy with him. He is experienced and knowledgeable in my field, teaching, research, publishing, admin and leadership...he has been in academia for a long time. He has connected me with some valuable colleagues in the university with whom I'm trying to create long term networks...very knowledgeable and willing to share it...I couldn't have chosen someone who is so perfect" (Lect. 1).

One lecturer spoke about some of the activities they had engaged in during mentoring, indicating that her mentor was highly effective and that he understood what mentoring entailed. According to the lecturer, the mentor provided the necessary leadership and guidance through regular one-on-one meetings in which the lecturer was given the opportunity to determine issues for discussion. Mentoring also requires the commitment of those needing guidance to actively identify specific developmental goals and to invest time and energy to achieve them.

"My mentor was chosen for me, but I must say I'm grateful because he is a very effective mentor, very organized, knows what to do and what not to do. He's always prepared for our meetings...he encourages me to take opportunities and attend internal training programmes...he organizes regular one on one meetings and gives me work to do. He allows me to initiate topics for discussion and actually let me set the agenda for our engagements..." (Lect. 8).

These responses echo the findings of a study conducted by Hoffman, Harris and Rosenfield (2008, p. 103), who found that students in the Canadian education system "have come to realize the true power that a great mentor can possess." The lecturers' responses were also supported by Allen (2001), who writes that "the best mentors are those who believe in you, who demonstrate honesty with you, and who introduce you to important people you need to meet." As a result, mentors are effective when they are supportive, patient, respected, good motivators and good role models.

The lecturers were required to reflect on what they would like to have achieved at the end of their mentoring relationship. There were varying responses, with some indicating that they would like to be guided and supported with professional development, others saying they

would like to be assisted with establishing professional and research networks, and some indicating that they would like to be helped with balancing their personal life and work, particularly with regard to teaching and research.

“I would like to come out of this relationship as an assertive and confident academic... be able to manage my work and personal life...” (Lect. 3);

“...be able to identify and establish beneficial professional networks...” (Lect. 5);

“... to have a clear career plan and be able to handle bullies...” (Lect. 7).

The underlying principle of mentorship is that mentors intervene appropriately in response to the selected goals of the individual mentee – related to their specific contexts, circumstances, rank, and their network of available peers, together with their responsiveness to the broader social context (Dhunpath, Matisonn, & Samuel, 2018). Together, mentor and mentee tailor-make unique pathways for mutual development, providing opportunities for monitoring achievement of such (ibid).

In a study conducted by Elliott, Isaac and Chugani (2010) in the United States, it was found that mentorship positively impacted participants' personal and professional success, and women participants expressed the benefits of mentoring as emotional support, role modelling, problem-solving, and assistance in negotiating the systems. Based on the findings of this study, it has been noted that “both same-gender and cross-gender mentoring relationships have their advantages and disadvantages, and while same-gender relationships might provide mentees with some levels of support, cross-gender relationships may provide mentees with other types of support.”

5.5.3 Organisational climate and culture

While the lecturers were reflecting on their experiences, the issues relating to organisational climate and culture emerged. There were varying responses from lecturers about factors that they thought impacted negatively or positively participation in the nGAP. These ranged from co-workers' hostile attitudes, the use of language as an exclusionary mechanism, perceived jealousy and envy, discrimination and stigmatisation. One lecturer pointed out the following practices in relation to the climate within which they operate:

“...(I) experienced negative attitudes from some of the departmental colleagues...there’s gossip generated about the nGAP appointments, labelling the programme as a ‘BEE’ scheme...these colleagues are creating stigma around the post and treating me as if I was done a favour and are not deserving of the appointment...” (Lect. 8).

Another lecturer indicated that being a young Black woman pursuing a PhD as part of a transformation driven programme such as the nGAP may have exposed her to discriminatory practices within a discipline that is dominated by white males. The lecturer described the treatment she received from some white male colleagues who attempted to bully her and made negative and racist remarks about her. According to the Soudien Report (2008), irrespective of the programmes implemented in an attempt to conquer racism and racial discrimination, they remain a common element in universities in South Africa, and the country is still far from winning the battle against them.

It is important to highlight that racial climate and persistent inequalities have a bearing on this study because, in terms of the capabilities approach, these issues amount to negative environmental conversion factors for lecturers. Several studies by different South African scholars such as Austin (2001); Mabokela (2002); Mabokela (2003); Mabokela & Mawila (2004); Perumal (2003); Portnoi (2005); Potgieter (2002); Potts (2000); Schulze (2005); Subotzky (1998) have highlighted the reality that the ‘institutional climate’ in South African higher education institutions remains tainted with racist and sexist undertones, which makes it challenging for talented young Black academics to to the environment, and for universities to retain them.

“...my department is dominated by white males who are bullies, disgruntled and display racist tendencies...they pass condescending statements that imply that I don’t belong there...they come in a very subtle way, you can’t really touch it but you know for a fact that racism is there...I think some people disguise racism as a form of power sometimes...” (Lect. 7).

The above responses also confirm the findings of Heleta (2016) that male academics were envious of female colleagues who receive dedicated support which they do not have access to, but that women academics might be cautious to benefit from a ‘women-only’ programme, as

it would suggest that they are given special help to be successful. Motloun (2019) posits that whiteness is still currently privileged in higher education, so the appointment of this lecturer under a transformation programme that prioritises previously disadvantaged women from underrepresented groups may appear as threat to white males who have been dominating certain departments and research areas for a long time. Furthermore, he asserts that higher education and higher education institutions are all dominated by Eurocentrism, which has historically assisted in maintaining and sustaining the apartheid order, economically, politically and socially.

Another lecturer demonstrated frustration when speaking about how she experienced discrimination from some of her departmental colleagues, who tried to exclude her from participating in departmental activities such as meetings by issuing communications in a language they knew she did not understand.

“I almost missed a meeting because the people who were organising it excluded me from the communication and were actually communicating in Afrikaans. I think they wanted to exclude me from participating. Another time communication for a social activity in the department was also issued in Afrikaans...I was honestly made to feel like I do not belong and that my contributions does not matter...I sense some form of jealousy and envy from colleagues due to the support I get from the programme, which they do not get...there’s often this unwelcoming outlook that says, ‘you don’t belong here’...” (Lect. 5).

The above response confirms the argument made by the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) that Black academics tend to find themselves marginalized by many institutional environments and cultures, as well as by the predominance of White academics and administrators at all the centres of administrative and academic power (committees, disciplines, departments, faculties) despite the redress policies at the national and institutional levels (HRDC, 2015b). According to Bhopal (2015), it may be hard to detect and confront racism within universities because it is derived from an environment that encourages such behaviour. She found that scores of Black and minority academics report encounters with subtle, covert and nuanced racism in higher education, where white identity is privileged and protected within the space traditionally reserved for the middle class (ibid).

Meanwhile, some lecturers indicated that they suffered exploitation and power abuse at the hands of the nGAP managers who were supposed to be taking care of their needs and support them. The lecturers spoke about the difficulties they experienced in accessing funds for their support, the lack of transparency in how funds were utilised and the delays they experienced as a result of uncooperative nGAP managers. The response below points to the construct of power struggles that seem to be occurring between the managers and the lecturers.

“...access to funding for things like equipment is such a nightmare...the manager is so rude and refuses to give access to the DHET money...she is abusing her power, because the whole thing is just about her showing who is in charge...the delays that happen because of this kind of attitude and complaining only makes it worse....” (Lect. 6).

It is evident from the responses that, because of the nature of the nGAP and the conditions within which lecturers were appointed, the lecturers found themselves vulnerable to exploitation by nGAP managers/coordinators who abused their powers, knowing very well that the lecturers would be fearful of questioning their behaviour. This is in agreement with the earlier response from a lecturer who felt he was punished for questioning the mentor selection and allocation process.

The responses also point to the apparent rivalry that seemed to exist between the administrative and academic sides within many universities. It should be made clear that the nGAP implementation process is driven and highly regulated through DHET guidelines and reporting processes, and is therefore reliant on highly skilled and competent people who are able to interpret policies.

Some lecturers provided diverging responses from the above, indicating that they experienced positive climates within their departments and faculties. The lecturers pointed out that they were well received in their departments, provided with the relevant support and made to feel that they belonged:

“I have been received very well in the Department and I really feel at home...I’m receiving the necessary teaching and research support...My other colleagues are supportive and very protective of me...” (Lect. 4).

One of the lecturers indicated he had been given opportunities to participate in internal departmental activities and some decision-making processes and structures. He had also been encouraged and afforded an opportunity to attend internal and external networking meetings:

“I’m very lucky I must say, compared to what I hear other lecturers talk about when we meet because I am involved in departmental committees, I’m part of some academic decision-making structures in the department that make some decisions on curriculum and development of modules. My colleagues in the department are very friendly and supportive...” (Lect. 3).

Another lecturer spoke about how young lecturers in his department were encouraged to participate in professional and social networking activities outside their departments, such as training workshops and seminars:

“...there’s a great practice here of encouraging young staff members to engage in professional networks internally and externally such as gatherings and workshops. I think I’m being provided with a much better environment that is supportive of launching my academic career...the colleagues are also very supportive and always willing to help...” (Lect. 2).

Two of the lecturers spoke positively about the culture of their universities, indicating that they were research focused and therefore ensured that young academics were socialised into the culture of networking. The necessary support was provided through the postgraduate and research support offices:

“...the university is research intensive and encourages networking...there’s lots of resources and support through the research and postgraduate office...the university goes all out to make lecturers feel at home and enjoy their time here...” (Lect. 1).

The findings also indicated that there were also reassuring activities within the university environment that had the potential to impact on the retention of nGAP lecturers, such as institutional climate and culture, growth opportunities, employee engagement, valuable work, and collaboration or constructive relationships with colleagues.

5.5.4 Lecturers plans to leave or stay in the programme

As the lecturers in the study continued to speak about their experiences of participating in the nGAP, strong views emerged regarding the issues they thought determine their decisions to leave or stay in the programme, or at the employing universities. The lecturers provided differing views: some indicated that they had considered looking for similar jobs at another university, but still under the auspices of nGAP. Others stated that they had no intentions of leaving the programme or their employing universities.

Various reasons were given by those who considered leaving, ranging from negative attitudes from colleagues, discrimination and an unwelcoming culture, to not being respected or valued. They were of the view that these constructs had contributed negatively to their experiences as nGAP lecturers. Research carried out by Theron, Barkhuizen and Du Plessis (2014), who examined influences on academic turnover and retention in South Africa, highlighted several “turnover risks and potential retention factors” that universities must address if they are committed to retaining the important and capable academic staff. These are:

“...compensation, emotional recognition, a bonus structure that reflects employee contribution, improved implementation of performance management systems, regular feedback, promotional opportunities, talent management policies, career development opportunities and mentorship opportunities” (Theron *et al.*, 2014, p. 12).

In Theron, Barkhuizen & Plessis (2014), both the CHE (2008) and HESA (2011) are reported to have conceded that compensation is a key reason why academics are leaving HEIs, that compensation structures should be customised to retain academics, and that uncompetitive remuneration packages result in academics being poached by the private sector.

One of the lecturers stated that she had seriously considered leaving her current university and the programme if an opportunity arose that provided better conditions. These included a higher salary and a more positive and supportive environment. According to a study conducted by the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA), academics are not adequately remunerated in comparison to occupations in the public sector (public enterprises and science councils) or in the private sector, which required similar levels of education and experience, and the pay gap between universities and the public and private sectors has been widening (DBSA, 2010). As stated in Chapter 2, the nGAP allocates 18% of its total budget towards salary for the first three years of training. The total allocation per lecturer is R2 500 000 for the six years. So, 18% of

the total allocation amounts to R450 000 per annum for the first three years. Reports submitted to the DHET has shown that well-resourced universities have been able to top up the amount to align it with the salary levels of other staff members.

“I honestly think if a better opportunity were to come up from another university I would apply. I think I deserve a higher salary than what the nGAP post is offering. I’m also drained by the negativity around here. I want a supportive environment where I am recognized and respected as a person and a professional...” (Lect. 7).

Another lecturer indicated that she would consider leaving the programme for another post that did not attract the negative attitudes that the nGAP post does. She believed that the stigma around the nGAP that was indulged in by some of her colleagues was negatively affecting her integrity as a professional.

“The stigma created by colleagues has created so much pressure for me because I feel like I need to now and then prove to people that I’m capable and I deserve this post. It is overwhelming to say the least. The programme comes with lots of great opportunities and support, so I wouldn’t want to leave it. I would rather look for a similar post in another university...” (Lect. 8).

Lect 5 stated that she would not leave the programme as it provided the support she needed; however, she had been thinking about looking for nGAP posts at other universities, where transformation and diversity were more in evidence. She stated that she has initiated conversations with her associates in other universities, asking them to recommend her for similar opportunities.

“The opportunities that come with being a lecturer under this programme are great and I would not trade them for anything, but the environment here is not pleasant at all. I do not think I’ll stay here for the entire six years; I’ve started speaking to people I know in other universities. I feel like discrimination and racism are just too rife here, getting away with their bad behaviour and attitudes here. I want a university that embraces a more transformative and diversified culture...I’m exploring my options; I’m talking to my associates in other universities...” (Lect. 5).

In contrast to the above responses, in which some lecturers said they had considered leaving the programme or their employer, others expressed different views, stating that they would stay in the programme and with their employing universities. They cited positive experiences, good career prospects, being provided with the necessary training and development, feeling appreciated and involved, and having access to different avenues for support. The study conducted by Solomon Korantwi-Barimahat found that more or less similar issues to those highlighted by the nGAP lecturers had impacted positively on the retention of academic staff at a Ghanaian university. The issues he uncovered included:

...the university's leadership; organisational culture and values; growth opportunities; communication; institutional mission and vision; work-life balance; meaningful work, reward and recognition; and collegiality or positive relations among colleagues" (Korantwi-Barimahat, 2017, p. 117).

It is crucial that employees feel fulfilled about the work they do, and that they contribute to the development of their organisations. Lumley, Coetzee, Tladinyane and Ferreira (2011) agree with the statements made above, asserting that organisations must be committed to individuals as a way of demonstrating a psychological connection, and that this should be characterised by the individual's strong identification with their organisation. Moreover, Korantwi-Barimahat (2017) propose that leaders ought to make employees feel like part of the organisation, enabling them to more readily understand how their efforts contribute to the general success of the organisation.

"I'm not planning to leave the programme at all because of there are so many career development and training opportunities offered by the university; I'm having a great time here and I feel like I'm appreciated and my input in many areas is valued. The teaching and research support provided here is unmatched..." (Lect. 2).

Lecturer 3 indicated that her university offered potential for future growth; she sees herself growing into a professorship position sometime in the future, therefore she has no intentions to leave.

"I see myself growing into professorship here, there's a lot of potential for future career growth in this university, so the idea of leaving for another university leaving the nGAP has not crossed my mind..." (Lect. 3).

Lecturer 4 stated that she did not have any intention of leaving the programme or the university, as she felt empowered and happy. She was engaged in a number of activities in her department, and this made her feel valued.

“I’m very happy here, I’m not intending to leave to another type of post or to another university for that matter...I’m being empowered, and I’m engaged in a number of departmental activities, and I feel valued...” (Lect. 4).

Another lecturer was not completely sure if he would leave the current university in the future; however, he was certain that he would like to stay in the programme for the duration of his training. He cited several factors that encouraged him to stay in the university, including a positive environment, friendly and supportive colleagues and the valuable networks he had already established. He said that it as a result of all these aspects that he had developed a sense of belonging.

“I don’t know what the future holds, but for now I’m not planning to move anywhere until I finish my six-year training...the environment here is positive, colleagues are very friendly and supportive. I feel like I belong here, and I have actually formed great networks beyond my department...” (Lect. 1).

The responses from lecturers highlighted the need for universities to develop retention strategies specifically for the nGAP. The nGAP programme aims at long-term strategic transformation by helping institutions succeed, not only by recruiting more lecturers but also by enhancing all the aspects of their experience and making it as rewarding as possible for lecturers, in exchange for their contribution to the institution. In other words, the success of the nGAP is judged by the universities’ ability to provide rewarding and valuable experiences for the lecturers, so that they are encouraged to remain in the higher education sector and grow into fully fledged academics who are able to take over from senior academics who are retiring. In light of the existing competition between the universities, the public and private sectors for young, talented graduates, the nGAP success would position universities as the employers of choice for young people who are passionate about a career in academia and would like to participate in the nGAP.

The responses by nGAP lecturers also point to the perceived failure by some universities to honour what researchers refer to as the ‘psychological contract’. It is understood as the

unwritten, subjective agreement that is comprised of expectations of employees. As Rousseau (2014) points out, a psychological contract is created by employees through their experiences in recruitment, career development, and employee rewards. Considering this psychological contract is often subjective and unspoken between the parties, employers may find it challenging to manage employee expectations. The employee loses hope and trust in the organisation once they discover that a breach of that contract has occurred, the level of commitment drops, and the employee is more likely to consider leaving the organisation.

The responses provided by the nGAP lecturers indicated that, coming into the programme, they were expecting that the reduced workload would be properly implemented, that they would experience transformation and inclusion, have the freedom to voice their concerns, experience a welcoming environment, receive teaching and research support, and that they would be properly mentored. The responses point to the failure by some universities to meet these expectations. The above lecturer responses agree with the findings of a climate survey conducted at an institute of higher education in Pretoria, South Africa in 2013, which found that most employees who were unhappy, alleged that their trust levels were low, that they have been deceived and that their expectations were not being fulfilled by the organisation (Naidoo *et al.*, 2019). As reported by the nGAP lecturers in this study, as well as in the research cited, the psychological contract seems to have a substantial influence on the ability of organisations to retain employees.

On the other hand, the nGAP lecturers whose psychological contract seems to have been fulfilled by their universities have expressed their intentions to stay in the programme and with their employer. According to Bal, De Cooman and Mol (2013), psychological contract fulfilment leads to greater work engagement, a more positive attitude towards the job, and a lower turnover intention. Moreover, Abarantyne, Naidoo and Rugimbana (2019) suggest that “employees become more motivated to invest in their work and contribute more to the organisation, indicating higher levels of engagement.” (p. 4).

5.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter presented an analysis of the data generated from the nGAP lecturer interviews. The discussions confirmed that there are indeed opportunities and challenges associated with being a lecturer under the nGAP, and that these may affect the lecturers’ experiences negatively and positively. Some of these factors are embedded within the features and structure of the

programme itself, while others are rooted in the institutional mechanisms and structures that are employed to support the implementation of the programme. Evidence gathered through the interviews with the lecturers suggested that these factors are, on the one hand, constraining and on the other, enabling the programme's effective implementation.

The data also showed that although the nGAP has been well received and applauded in the sector, some of its structural features (e.g. mentoring, workload, funding allocations, reporting, research vs teaching support, and so on) present themselves as strengths as well as weaknesses. For this reason, the understanding and interpretation of these features by both the individuals and the institutions either enable or constrain the programme's effective implementation.

Theory and literature were used to expand and analyse these issues. The next chapter provides an analysis of the nGAP managers' interviews, issues are taken forward from this chapter, as they also dominated the discussions of mentoring, monitoring and reporting, institutional support, and conceptualisation of the nGAP by both the individual managers and the universities.

CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATION OF DATA FROM THE nGAP MANAGERS' INTERVIEWS

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the interview responses from the nGAP lecturers. The discussions confirmed that there were opportunities and challenges associated with being a lecturer in the nGAP programme, and that these were negatively and positively affecting the lecturers' experiences. It was demonstrated that these factors were embedded within the features and structure of the programme itself, while some were rooted in the institutional mechanisms and structures that were employed to support the implementation of the programme.

Evidence gathered from interviews with the lecturers suggested that these factors were constraining on the one hand and enabling for the programme's effective implementation on the other. The data also showed that although the nGAP has been well received and applauded by the lecturers, some of its structural features, such as mentoring, workload, funding allocations, reporting, and research vs teaching support can be regarded as strengths as well as weaknesses, therefore the interpretation and understanding of these features by both the individual lecturers and the institutions either enabled or constrained the programme's effective implementation. Theory and literature were used to expand and analyse these issues.

This chapter is the second of the three data chapters, and its main objective is to provide a presentation of the nGAP managers' interview responses. The chapter discusses how the nGAP managers got to participate in the programme, as well as their different roles and responsibilities in it. The chapter also deals with the nGAP managers' and their universities' understanding and interpretation of the nGAP, as well as the support that was provided by the universities in the implementation of the programme. Another central purpose of this chapter is to highlight and discuss the managers' experiences of participating in the programme. The data collection and analysis processes that the study followed for all three categories of participants were outlined in detail in the previous chapter.

6.2 Managers' biographical and employment details

It was demonstrated in the previous chapter that the implementation of the nGAP takes place at three levels: the individual lecturers, the nGAP managers at the universities and the

government department concerned, namely the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). In Chapters 1 and 2 the process of the communication, coordination and management of the nGAP by government and the universities was outlined. However, for purposes of this study, the focus remains on exploring individual experiences at two levels: those of the lecturers and the university, with the managers and mentors representing the university.

Table 6.1 presents a summary of background information of the five nGAP managers/coordinators interviewed for the study. Four of the managers were female and one was male. In terms racial classification, two were Coloured, two were white and one was Black African. They were all between 29 and 55 years of age. The nGAP managers occupied different positions in their respective universities; however, they will be referred to as nGAP managers, since a large part of their responsibilities was to coordinate and manage the implementation of the programme in their universities.

Table 6.1: Managers participating in the nGAP

Position	Manager 1	Manager 2	Manager 3	Manager 4	Manager 5
Institution type	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.
Race	Coloured	Coloured	White	Black African	White
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female	Male
Age	Between 29-55				

6.3 The role of managers in the nGAP

6.3.1 Managers' appointments and responsibilities

During the interviews, the nGAP managers were first asked to recount how they became involved in the nGAP and to outline what their roles and responsibilities entailed, with specific reference to the coordination and management of the programme. There were similarities in the majority of the managers' responses, as they were all employed by their universities long before the introduction of the nGAP. Some managers indicated that they were informed by their seniors that they would be coordinating the nGAP because of their experience in implementing similar programmes at their universities.

The responses of the two managers below seemed to suggest that being part of the nGAP was not something they had voluntarily decided on; it was an assigned activity that could not be avoided. This points to the issue of agency and freedom which also emerged in the analysis of the nGAP lecturer responses, where there seems to be little room for decision-making or for

making suggestions about the implementation of some of the features of the programme, such as the reduced workload, mentoring and reporting.

“I was tasked with coordinating the nGAP because of the extensive experience I have in managing more or less a similar internal programme focusing on developing emerging academics...” (Manager 4).

“I have been working on a similar programme in the university for years now and I was informed by the DVC and my Director that the programme will be coordinated and managed in our unit...” (Manager 3).

There was also agreement among the managers, and it was obvious from their responses, that coordinating and managing the implementation of the nGAP was an involuntary, assigned activity that became an additional responsibility in their day-to-day employment. The responses also agreed with the lecturers’ views, which indicated that most universities repurposed their existing human, financial and policy capabilities to support the implementation of the programme. I have demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2 that the nGAP was introduced in a hurry and caught many universities by surprise, leaving them with no choice but to adapt or fail. The lecturers’ responses indicated that some universities were better prepared for the programme than others, as they were able to appoint dedicated persons to work on the programme. This was confirmed by the nGAP managers’ responses:

“I have been with the university for more than 5 years working in the training and development of academic staff in the Centre for Staff Development, so the coordination and management of the nGAP has become one of the projects we implement in the centre...” (Manager 1).

“I have been with this university for a long time, working on mid-career staff development programme, so the nGAP came as an addition to my responsibilities...” (Manager 2).

Their work experience and the length of employment at the universities emerged as an important individual and institutional capability in the area of human resources, which was considered when participating universities were identifying staff members who could coordinate and manage the nGAP. It can be argued that this practice is common in many organisations where senior or long-serving staff members are often seconded or recommended

for other roles, based on their professional expertise and practical experience. In the previous chapter it was demonstrated that most participating universities have not employed new or separate measures to support the nGAP, but have repurposed their existing resources and systems for this. It is clear that the nGAP brought with it the need for universities to review some of their administrative procedures and practices in order to suit the changing needs and circumstances, as well as to create some flexibility in order to accommodate the nGAP. However, as reported in the previous chapter, Sen and Nussbaum maintain that any capability should not be constrained, but must be enabled or supported in order for it achieve agency and freedom. This analysis will demonstrate the extent to which this important capability has been supported or constrained by the managers' respective universities.

The nGAP managers' responses indicated that their additional responsibilities as part of the nGAP revolved around coordination, administration, management and monitoring, with some attention paid to lecturer development, finance and administrative support. In her response, one of the managers indicated that she oversaw all aspects of the internal nGAP application process, which followed a set procedure and involved a number of internal stakeholders such as deans and deputy vice-chancellors (DVCs). In the previous chapter, in which the nGAP lecturers' responses were analysed, the process followed by universities in preparing and applying for nGAP posts was examined, as well as the roles of the deans and HoDs in influencing who was considered for the posts. The response below highlights the important coordinating role played by managers in ensuring that information was disseminated to the relevant units in the universities:

“One of the many responsibilities that came with the nGAP is the overall work of ensuring that consultations for the post applications process takes place internally, from sending the communication relating to the applications to Deans to making sure that their submissions meet all the requirements in terms of formatting and packaging the applications. I am also responsible for making sure that once the applications have been completed, they go through an approval process to all the relevant DVC and VC before submission to DHET...” (Manager 1).

One manager referred to himself as a ‘middleman’ who was responsible for the application process, financial management, preparing and compiling annual progress reports for submission to the DHET, ensuring that all the policies and regulations with respect to the nGAP

were followed, and most importantly, ensuring that all the role players participated in the programme. Referring to himself in this way could imply that this manager could be someone who was expected to act as a support and remove all the hurdles in the way of appointees, and who was able to form and maintain mutual professional networks, both within and outside their respective units.

“I serve as a liaison between DHET, the relevant academic departments, finance and procurement, HR etc., I am sort of a middle man between all the role players...I am also involved in every step of the preparation of the nGAP posts proposals to DHET...I prepare and compile all nGAP annual progress reports as per the DHET requirements...I also coordinate and manage the administration of the allocated lecturer funds to ensure that budgeting and administrative policies, procedures, and DHET requirements are being followed, work with DHET in managing any changes occurring in relation to the posts...” (Manager 3).

Another manager’s role involved human resources and regulations involving the advertisement of posts, assisting lecturers with interpreting the relevant internal policies and DHET guidelines, managing lecturer and mentor databases and providing the lecturers with the relevant administrative support. It should be emphasised that even though the nGAP managers who participated in the study occupied different positions, they all operated at middle-manager level, with some of them also occupying academic positions.

“I’m responsible for developing and maintaining database of all the nGAP lecturers and mentors. I have to make sure that all the approved nGAP posts are advertised and filled before end of the financial year, working with HR and relevant departments... I help lecturers with the interpretation of the university policies and guidelines requirements and provide the lecturers with administrative support on an ongoing basis...support the University staff with funding policies, regulations, and procedures...” (Manager 5).

One of the managers’ responsibilities was to coordinate internal academic and research training and development support for the nGAP lecturers, to allocate mentors for lecturers and to organise regular meetings and workshops for the lecturers and their mentors. Jansen Van Rensburg, Davis and Venter (2014) refer to middle managers as ‘linking pins’ in hierarchical networks. These authors are of the opinion that as a communication link, middle managers often serve as the entry point for initiating activities to be implemented by upper- and lower-level staff.

“I coordinate the teaching and research training and development support for lecturers, I make sure that the lecturers are allocated mentors as per the DHET requirements and that the mentors are paid their stipends, I also make sure that the lecturers spend their allocated funds within the set DHET guidelines...I organise regular internal gatherings and workshops specifically for the lecturers and their mentors...” (Manager 2).

Lastly, one of the manager’s responsibilities included tracking expenditure, funding allocations, ensuring that all the necessary documentation was completed by the lecturers and that they were allocated equipment and office space:

“I’m responsible for all the administrative issues relating to the programme and this involves managing and tracking the individual lecturer’s funding allocations, ensuring that they complete the relevant forms for accessing funds, they receive their equipment such as computers, offices and other work things...” (Manager 4).

The nGAP managers’ responses in this study demonstrated that the nGAP implementation was not simply about administration; it demanded new dimensions of knowledge, interpersonal skills, technical competence and understanding of policies and regulations. The nGAP managers disclosed that they had multifaceted roles and that they were expected by their universities to continue working and upholding the highest standards of professional commitment.

Some of the managers’ responses pointed to the issue of insufficient administration and management capacity in some universities to support and sustain the activities of this highly administrative and process-driven programme. It seemed clear that for the nGAP managers to run the programme successfully and serve the increasing number of lecturers, they needed to be provided with satisfactory administrative and management support structures and systems to enable them to focus on the holistic needs of the lecturers. The overall feeling amongst the nGAP managers participating in the study was that even though the work of coordinating and managing the nGAP was good for their career development, the additional workload was certainly not sustainable, due to the fact that the number of nGAP lecturers in their universities had been increasing annually. Thus, in the absence of support for this important capability, the administration and coordination of the programme would become an overwhelming burden that had the potential to constrain their participation.

Noting that the nGAP came with additional responsibilities for the managers, they were asked how they felt about these developments and how these developments have affected their day-to-day functioning. Most managers indicated that they were unhappy and uncomfortable with their additional workloads. One of the managers stated that the additional work consumed her time, and that she had complained to her manager about it, but she seemed pessimistic about what the results would be, as she had been told before that the university did not have the funds to appoint additional staff.

“I don’t want to lie to you, I’m not happy at all because the nGAP takes so much of my time, the work is too much...my manager knows that because I complain all the time...I guess there’s not much I can do because I’m always told there’s no money...” (Manager 4).

Manager 3 appeared frustrated and stressed about the additional workload and indicated that the inefficiency of the people supporting her made the situation even worse, as she had to constantly engage in damage control. She was of the opinion that the way the programme was implemented at her university needed to be urgently reconsidered, as it had proved to be challenging. This response suggested that some of the staff who had been assigned to assist with the additional responsibility of overseeing the coordination and management of the nGAP were expected by their universities to adapt to their changing roles and still provide the requisite levels of service without being provided with the appropriate support.

“I’m honestly at a brink of stress because there’s so much work for one person, the other people who are supposed to be supporting are not very efficient so the work ends up being done by my office, this programme has good intentions but the way it’s implemented need to be revisited. It’s not working for me to be honest...” (Manager 3).

Manager2 also expressed unhappiness about her workload. She was of the view that the additional responsibilities created an overload of work for her and this did not come with any additional compensation. She added that her plea for the university to employ a dedicated person to manage the programme might have fallen on deaf ears, as the university only employed an intern to assist her. Her response indicated that she needed a more skilled person, who could make a major impact in reducing the workload; however, she was informed by the university that the allocation from the DHET did not allow for this.

“I wish I could say I’m happy with the situation, but I’m not because I have additional responsibilities that didn’t come with additional pay. I’m overworked and I have tried to raise the issue a number of times for the university to employ a separate nGAP manager, but I’m told the money given by DHET won’t afford an experienced manager like myself. Instead, they employ an intern and unfortunately, I can’t get much from an intern...” (Manager 2).

Finally, one of the managers indicated that he has raised his concerns about the additional workload with the senior staff at his university, who had promised to explore the possibility of employing a dedicated person to focus on the nGAP. He seemed hopeful that they would respond to his request, as the university was experiencing an increase in the number of nGAP lecturers. In his opinion, the effective implementation of the nGAP would require far more dedicated and focused capacity.

“I have concerns regarding the additional workload, but I have discussed this with my seniors and they promised to look into it. The last time I checked they were involved in a negotiation with the university to see if a post can be created to employ a dedicated person to focus on the programme...I’m hopeful because this would be a huge relief for me because for this programme to be effectively and properly implemented, you need a person who will just focus on it. Especially because the number of lecturers increases annually, and this means even more work...” (Manager 1).

The responses quoted above highlighted the diverse and complex nature of the nGAP processes and the reality that its implementation at institutional levels involved large amounts of work, which appeared to have put tremendous pressure on universities, in particular on the people nominated to oversee the implementation. It is also clear from the responses that the responsibilities of the nGAP required a great deal of coordination, communication, financial management, monitoring and evaluation, understanding and interpretation of policies and regulations, advocacy and marketing, and that carrying these out required the suitable skills, capabilities and capacities. It can also be deduced from the responses above that the universities were expecting the managers to cope with the load while delaying on fulfilling their requests for additional staff to assist with the work.

Another construct emerging from the nGAP manager responses is what is referred to as ‘role overload’, since the responses of the majority of participating nGAP managers demonstrated

feelings of unhappiness about the additional responsibilities that came with the implementation of the nGAP. Most of the managers indicated that they were overwhelmed by the amount of pressure that came with the nGAP work. Huang, (2017), describes role overload as situations in which employees have too many obligations, or where their performance is expected to be well achieved in a limited amount of time, with limited resources, and under pressure. Huang concluded that employees who experienced role overload tended to be subject to high levels of job stress, because their job demands exceed their capacity.

The above statements echo the responses of the majority of participating nGAP managers, who indicated that they experienced stress as a result of additional responsibilities, and that they were unhappy about this. In the earlier analysis of lecturer responses, it was demonstrated that work overload is a complex and sensitive issue in the nGAP, and that it needs to be properly dealt with as it has the potential to cause despondency among employees and may drive them to consider leaving the organisation. The nGAP managers in the study did not indicate their turnover intentions; however, it is important for the issue to be highlighted, as the lecturer responses indicated that role overload was one of the antecedents that could impact on an employee's decision to leave the organisation, particularly where there were issues relating to remuneration. As mentioned earlier, some managers alluded to the fact that they were not being remunerated for additional nGAP responsibilities.

Although a sense of role overload came across strongly from the majority of the responses, one of the managers indicated that he was comfortable with his workload and the situation he was in. He indicated that his university was well-resourced and had sufficient staff to support the implementation of the nGAP. Contrary to the responses above, which emphasised managers' experiences of role overload, this manager's response highlighted the inequalities that exist in the distribution of administrative and management capacities in the South African higher education system. As pointed out by Moyo (2018), the differentiated nature of the higher education system, with particular reference to the legacy of apartheid and the uneven distribution of resources and people within the system, means that expertise is concentrated mainly in the urban, better-resourced universities. This plays a significant role in the day-to-day administration of academia, as there should be recognition that as a result of the historical inequalities, access to administrative and managerial expertise and resource allocation in this country is highly uneven at all the universities.

It should also be pointed out that the DHET has recognised these inequalities, and in order to address them it has allowed universities to utilise 5% of their allocations towards the appointment of additional capacity to assist with the implementation of the nGAP and other earmarked grants. But it is clear from the above responses that this 5% allowance does not make enough of a difference for institutions that are under-resourced and have weak administrative systems and structures. These universities are, unfortunately, severely constrained in the implementation of the nGAP. In contrast, in the well-resourced universities, this allowance makes it possible to appoint dedicated persons on a permanent basis to support implementation of nGAP and other earmarked grants.

“I’m comfortable with the workload because the nGAP is just a small fraction of the work I do in this office. I’m fortunate that the university is very well resourced, and we have a fairly good number of experienced people who are very effective in supporting the programme. So, we have a very well-coordinated approach, and it works very well for us...” (Manager 5).

The nGAP managers interviewed for the study highlighted some of the many challenges that confronted them. These originated from institutional structures and practices that were allocated to support their needs as well as those of the nGAP lecturers. The most apparent issues were those relating to role overload and the insufficient financial allocation towards additional capacity to support the implementation of the programme. According to the responses, these issues seem to have been exacerbated by the fact that the introduction of the nGAP in the higher education sector was hurried and brought with it a broadened mandate and additional responsibilities for universities, especially for the units that were tasked with its implementation.

6.3.2 The universities’ interpretation of the nGAP

Before presenting the responses from the nGAP managers under this theme, it is necessary to provide a summary of processes and operations between the DHET and universities regarding the nGAP. This presentation is informed by the researcher’s experience of working on the programme while employed by the DHET, and is relevant as this process could influence the way the programme is conceptualised and interpreted at universities.

In terms of protocol and process, all the information from DHET regarding all earmarked grants, including the nGAP, is communicated through the offices of the vice-chancellors and

the information is then cascaded to all the relevant offices such as the DVCs, deans, HoDs and other managers and administrators who are responsible for the actual implementation on the ground. The information eventually reaches the staff members who have been tasked or nominated to be the programme managers and coordinators, in this case, the nGAP managers. If the university management decides that the office of the DVC will be responsible for overseeing the programme, this implies that the nGAP is interpreted and conceptualised as an academic and/or research staff development function. However, if the university decides to nominate the human resources department to be the leading department and coordinators, this will be an indication that the university's interpretation of the programme requires an administrative approach. The difference is that one approach is more administrative in focus and the other is more developmental. This variance was apparent in the nGAP managers' responses as they reflected on their participation in the programme.

Under this theme, the participants were asked to reflect on how they thought their universities viewed and interpreted the nGAP, and to indicate how they thought their universities' stance influenced the manner in which the programme's implementation was carried out and supported. Some managers indicated that their universities' decisions around the implementation of the nGAP were guided by the focus of the programme itself, and others highlighted their universities' strategies on the implementation of academic and research staff development programmes.

Manager3 indicated that his university conceptualised the nGAP as a human resources initiative, since its focus was on recruitment and training of lecturers; however, the posts application process begins in the departments and faculties:

"From where the university stands, the nGAP focuses on the recruitment and training of lecturers and therefore HR was tasked with leading the programme. However, the posts are determined by the Deans and HoDs at departmental and faculty levels. There is also the development aspect the nGAP which is major responsibility of human resources development carried out through the academic staff development unit. So, implementation of the nGAP involves many units and the information flow is controlled by the office of the DVC teaching and learning..." (Manager 4).

At another university, communication and information from the DHET went through institutional planning, within which the human resources and recruitment processes were carried out. In this university, two DVCs were instrumental in the implementation of the nGAP through the academic departments and postgraduate and staff development units. However, the deputy vice-chancellor took overall responsibility for the programme in the university.

“In my university, the nGAP information goes to the strategy and planning office which includes HR and then DVC Academic would take over the responsibilities of developing the posts through the academic departments because there are teaching related issues, the DVC research through postgraduate and staff development units for training and development of lecturers. But the main driver is the DVC academic who takes overall responsibility and accounts for the programme internally and to DHET...” (Manager 3).

Another manager pointed out that at her university, due to some communication and leadership challenges, the different university committees got involved in deciding which office would take overall responsibility for the implementation of the programme. In making these decisions, the committees had to take into account a number of institutional policies and processes that had a bearing on academic staff development and training. This response highlighted the governance processes and decision-making structures in universities:

“There were some challenges with internal communication and leadership where information was just stuck in one office and as a result there were delays in deciding where nGAP information should go and where the project should be located and managed. The decisions were eventually taken by the different committees that are part of the university senate, wherein all the senior academic and administrative leaders participate. During the committee discussions, institutional policies such as HR policies and staff development and training policies had to be taken into consideration as well...” (Manager 2).

Man, 1 stated that the interpretation of the nGAP by her university took more into consideration than just the salary needs of the lecturers, and included their additional training and support. As a result, the university decided to interpret the nGAP as an academic and research staff development initiative. This response demonstrated that even though the government, through its management approach, was maintaining a strong grip on how the nGAP should be implemented at institutional level, some universities embraced and took ownership of the

programme earlier on, making it easy for them to provide leadership in relation to the location of its functions. In the nGAP lecturer responses presented in Chapter 5, it was demonstrated that the manner in which the universities conceptualised the programme had a considerable influence on how its implementation would be understood and supported, and that its conceptualisation and interpretation at both individual and institutional levels was guided by capabilities such as their overall objectives, strategy, priorities and planning, the positioning of the programme, the capacity to coordinate and manage, resources, infrastructure, availability of funding and institutional autonomy.

“In my university, the interpretation of programme took into account the fact that the appointed lecturers would need to receive more than just their salaries, the programme requires that lecturers are provided with holistic and necessary academic and research training and support. Therefore, a decision was taken that the nGAP would be treated as an academic and research staff development function led by the teaching and learning division, obviously with the leadership of the DVC ...” (Manager 1).

Finally, one manager provided an interesting response that drew attention to leadership change as one of the issues that she thought might have been behind her university’s sluggish grasp of the programme, as well as its inability to get the programme off the ground. The manager was of the view that the university lacked leadership and guidance, which could have provided direction during the planning and preparation for the programme. She also indicated that the new leadership struggled to rally people around the programme as there seemed to have been some resistance, even though it was unclear to her whether this was directed at the new leadership or towards the programme itself.

“In our university, we had a change in leadership and this affected communication coming from outside, especially from DHET where information keeps going to wrong people and was never redirected to the relevant people. I would say we lacked guidance and leadership at the planning and preparation stage. So, this negatively affected our planning and there was a bit of struggle by the new leadership to get the programme off the ground and rally people around it...there was a bit of resistance among senior staff, but I’m not sure whether it was towards the new leadership or towards the nGAP itself...but we’re slowly getting there, things are starting to fall into place... (Manager 5).

The above response points to concept of ‘resistance to change’ which, according to the nGAP manager, could have arisen either because of the introduction of a transformation focused programme (nGAP) by government or by the assumption of duty by the new leadership.

In research conducted by Zell (2003 p. 87) to understand resistance to change in higher education, it was found that the process of organisational change encountered by the academics seemed like the process of “death and dying” experienced by critically ill patients. According to Zell, the academics experienced “five distinct stages that included denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance” (ibid). In a nutshell, there was potential for resistance to change in higher education institutions where there were strong cultures and traditions and long staff tenures.

Govender, Moodley & Parumasur (2005 p. 79) examined management's perception of the change management process at a South African university and found that staff's attitude toward the change process (including feelings, knowledge and behaviour) needed to be taken seriously, especially since the feelings of the staff can have a profound impact on the change process as a whole. With regard to the nGAP implementation, it was possible that the people who were uncomfortable with its introduction were those who were comfortable with the status quo because it favoured them, so they felt threatened by the idea of transformation. If the perceived resistance was as a result of the new leadership, it could be that the previous leader was not in favour of transformation, and that they were comfortable with their leadership. In some way, the issue of resistance to change emerging from the managers' responses, links back to the nGAP lecturers' responses where they identified institutional climate and culture as one of their reasons to want to leave their universities and the programme. Issues such racism, stigmatisation, alienation and discrimination were regarded as having a negative impact on their experiences in the nGAP.

Furthermore, with respect to the concept of managerialism alluded to earlier, the government should have limited its interference in the daily operations of universities, which were viewed as autonomous and self-regulating. However, what has been observed in that government delegated the administration of the nGAP to the universities, but kept a firm hand on decision-making. In the previous chapter, the responses from the lecturers demonstrated that while universities had been given the space to make decisions concerning the nGAP, government remained in control of how the nGAP managers, mentors and lecturers behaved and pursued

the idea of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme. As a result of this approach, the implementation of earmarked grants such as those associated with the nGAP had become highly managerial and bureaucratic with the declining trust and discretion from government. Although the universities had been afforded the freedom and autonomy to implement and lead certain aspects of the nGAP, the lecturer and manager responses had demonstrated that some universities had adopted a tentative and uncertain approach to decision-making, constantly relying on the government for intervention, even in matters that were not strictly within the government's jurisdiction. It could therefore be argued that, to a certain extent, the managerialist approach adopted in the implementation of the nGAP might constrain the autonomy, freedom and experiences of participants. This approach did not appear to have helped the situation, as it put unwarranted pressure on under-resourced universities

The responses demonstrated that the participating universities had different interpretations of the nGAP, with some adopting a development-focused approach and others concentrating on administration. However, it did not matter which approach the universities followed, since the DHET was the authority that set the tone for the implementation strategy by instituting guidelines and regulations that dictate the implementation of the programme at institutional levels. The analysis of how the government's approach enabled or constrained the implementation of the nGAP is a central theme of this study, and will continue to be explored.

6.4 Managers' responses to nGAP regulations and university practices

As explained in Chapters 1 and 2, the nGAP is a partnership with and a responsibility of government and the higher education institutions; however, the human resources management aspect of the programme is delegated to the universities. The DHET provides direction through its guidelines and SoPs on how universities should go about the recruitment and selection of lecturers by outlining the requirements for participating in the programme, determining the workload allocation for lecturers as well as the financial allocation towards lecturer remuneration. The universities may follow their internal policies and processes in terms of the programme's human resource management practices.

The issues relating to how human resources management was practised in relation to the nGAP were at the centre of discussions during the interviews, when the managers were reflecting on their experiences of participating in the programme. A range of issues were discussed; however, the managers felt strongly about some of the nGAP participant requirements, as well

as their level of employment at universities. They thought these issues were more important and needed to be highlighted for consideration by both the universities and the DHET.

6.4.1 Requirements for participating in the programme

The managers agreed that while the nGAP seeks to attract and recruit the best and most talented aspiring young academics, some of its requirements were making the programme appear exclusive and inaccessible to the very people that it seeks to attract. The managers referred in particular to the standard requirement stated in the SoPs that aspiring nGAP lecturers must have obtained a 70% pass at Master's degree level. The general feeling among some of the nGAP managers was that this requirement makes it extremely difficult for universities to recruit the lecturers, particularly those in scarce skills areas such as engineering, mathematics and accounting. In the words of the DHET in its SoP guidelines, "the nGAP is positioned as a prestigious programme and candidates who demonstrate high academic ability must be recruited" (DHET, 2018). The SoPs went on to stress that participants must have obtained 70% or higher in their Master's qualification (ibid).

One of the managers provided an example of a Master's degree candidate in engineering who was recommended for the nGAP position at her university, but the DHET rejected the appointment based on the 70% requirement. She argued that this candidate was brilliant and stood a better chance of being considered for a well-paying position in the private sector after obtaining an average of 68% for their Master's degree. The argument put forward by the manager was that there was a lot of competition for young, talented graduates in the labour market, and the universities could not afford to overlook such candidates simply on the basis of their not achieving a certain score. The argument that has always been advanced by the DHET, in defence of this and other requirements for participation, was that government does not want to compromise the quality of the academics being recruited into the system while focusing on transformation. However, the argument put forward by some of the managers was that the focus of the government and the universities should not only be on quality (in this case academic achievement) but on the quality of support provided to the lecturers. This would ensure that when young academics were granted access to opportunities through the nGAP, they were supported properly, to ensure that the system received the desired quality.

"...there's not enough pool of Masters students in the country who want to be academics, especially in fields that offer competitive salaries in the private sector and government...For

an example a student in civil engineering with 68% is the best candidate for employment anywhere else, so why not in academia...if we want to compete for such candidates with the labour market then we need to make the programme inclusive and not exclusive as it currently appears...” (Manager 1).

Another manager appeared frustrated when speaking about the 70% requirement. He indicated that he found the requirement difficult to apply in practice because he had dealt with a case of a candidate in accounting studies where, as standard practice, the awarding universities and the discipline did not allocate marks for a Master’s degree. He believed it would be preferable if the DHET could refrain from specifying the percentage, as this presented practical challenges.

While employed by the DHET and working on the implementation of the nGAP, the researcher became aware of some of the contentious issues raised by universities regarding the 70% requirement. In terms of the appointment of lecturers, the universities were responsible for carrying out all the recruitment processes; however, the appointment of the candidates could not be finalised without the approval of the DHET, and this may have ended up as either a rejection or an approval. Even though the universities seemed to have the autonomy to recruit and interview candidates, the DHET approval was the final word in terms of whether the candidate was appointed or not, as this was the last step in finalising nGAP positions. The researcher had experienced situations where candidates were rejected because they did not obtain a 70% mark, so universities were asked to provide motivations for their appointment; however, some of these were not accepted, even with motivation. Other cases involved universities or the discipline that did not allocate marks, and to decide on these the DHET would utilise undergraduate marks as an alternative to decide whether the candidate should be appointed.

This confirmed the inconsistencies that were pointed out by some of the managers in this study. It also emphasised the managerialist approach alluded to earlier, whereby the DHET gives universities certain powers and denies them some. This also explained why some universities did not fully embrace and own the programme, because they did not have full powers to make all the important decisions pertaining to the appointment of the nGAP lecturers.

“This 70% requirement is very difficult to apply because not all universities provide percentages in the master’s degree, they just put ‘pass/ have met the requirements of Master’s degree. So in such a case, how do you quantify that...this frustrates me a whole lot because I

recently dealt with such a case in the Accounting field where there were no marks and I was forced to ask for motivation from the awarding university...I really feel that there's no consistency from the DHET side...I think they should at least put a range instead of the maximum percentage the way it is currently? (Manager 5).

According to another manager's experience, a number of candidates who were recommended for posts in her university, and who had demonstrated great potential to succeed as nGAP lecturers, were excluded from participating in the programme as they did not receive the 70% score in their Master's degrees. She was of the view that the DHET was interfering too much in the recruitment process and that universities should be allowed to decide on who they regarded as suitable for the positions.

"My experience taught me that we are we are actually denying good candidates an opportunity to participate, especially in the scarce skills fields...many good candidates who have the potential to become very good academics range between 65%-70%, and in these fields this is deemed the best...this area should be left to universities to decide on so long as there's an opportunity to attract more candidates" (Manager 3)

Yet another manager indicated that the issue of 70% was problematic and agreed with Manager 5 that this was applied inconsistently by the DHET. She said that the DHET indicated that universities should provide a written motivation in instances where a candidate was recommended but did not meet the required percentage; however, she had experienced a situation where the motivation provided was not accepted as it was deemed insufficient. She was of the view that this is one of the areas where the DHET should afford universities space to decide, especially if the appointment of the candidate was supported by all interview panel members. This response echoed the argument made earlier that the managerialist approach adopted by government might be creating confusion in universities, and this constrained their behaviour when it came to implementation of some of the nGAP aspects. From the interview responses of nGAP managers, it appeared as if government's approach had created uncertainty in some universities in relation to their roles and responsibilities as well as in their capabilities.

"...the issue of 70% is very problematic. The DHET says to us, provide motivation if the candidate has received lower than 70%, but when we do, they don't accept it and they reject the recommendation...If the university says they want the person, it means there's something

they know or see in the person that they want to nurture and develop...so why deny them the opportunity?” (Manager 4).

One of the managers was quick to point out that she thought the 70% requirement clashed with the developmental agenda that the nGAP was purporting to advance. In her view, many candidates are being excluded from participating in the programme without government taking into consideration their different backgrounds and circumstances. She expressed the opinion that the programme was short-sighted in this regard, as it did not consider the history and backgrounds of the majority of the excluded candidates, and that the DHET should consider reviewing this requirement and, in fact, leave the universities to make final decisions on this issue.

“For me the 70% requirement is a big problem for the nGAP because here we are saying the programme is developmental and seeks to attract candidates from previously underrepresented groups, but we turn and deny these very students, who by the way have demonstrated the potential to be developed, access to the programme... We should be mindful of our harsh history and backgrounds, especially of the people we are trying to attract, we should not put them off like this... (Manager 2).

The same manager concluded that:

“The impression this creates is that nGAP is exclusive and is for the best performers creates unnecessary pressure on candidates. I heard of several candidates who left the programme because of depression related issues. There was so much pressure put on them because they were in this exclusive programme that very few people have access to... I’m not saying compromise the quality, but do not appear exclusive or perfect ignoring our history... I strongly recommend that the DHET re-looks at this requirement and allow universities to use their own discretion to implement this...” (Manager 2).

The managers’ responses pointed to and questioned the transformation and developmental agenda that the nGAP should have been advocating. There was thus a general feeling among the majority of managers that the 70% requirement for participation in the nGAP made the programme appear exclusive, and that this had the potential to exclude the same people that it was trying to attract.

From the researcher's experience as a DHET employee working on the nGAP, she firmly supports the assertions made by some of the managers. During her time in the post, there were universities which she cannot name here as they were not part of this study, where attempts were made to try to recommend only white and Indian women and exclude Black African females (who are the nGAP's main targets), particularly in scarce skills areas, using the 70% requirement as one of their reasons. This would occur mostly in disciplines and departments where the staff demographics were still untransformed.

Some researchers referred to this practice as a subtle means of rejecting the need for change (Hall, 2012). In other words, powerful beneficiaries of past privilege remained in control of institutions and continued exclusionary practices, while appearing to facilitate change and at the same time resisting transformation (Bazana & Mogotsi, 2017). This argument suggested that some of the requirements of the nGAP, particularly the 70% requirement, could have the unintended consequences of the programme maintaining the status quo and continuing to allow universities to practise discrimination.

It could be argued that this requirement portrayed the nGAP as having adopted an exclusive and prohibitive approach. These forms of exclusion – despite attempts at inclusion – have been judged as perpetuating inequality (Reddy, 2006; Bozalek & Boughey, 2012) rather than providing meaningful change. It should be emphasised that although women in general were previously denied opportunities in this country, Black African women were even more disadvantaged and excluded from opportunities in higher education and in society, in general due to apartheid and discrimination practices.

The responses above are cautioning the DHET that the nGAP's 70% requirement and the inconsistencies in its application at some universities have the potential to continue features of discrimination in universities. And may lead to the programme not achieving its intended objectives of transforming the staff profiles in universities. There was a general feeling among the managers that the nGAP initiative should not just be about the numbers, it should be about ensuring that these recruited academics succeeded in acquiring senior postgraduate degrees and were supported to progress into senior academics in HE. Even though there was evidence of progress in increasing the number of young academics through the nGAP, reversing the still-visible discrimination practices in most previously white universities was much more important and should not be jeopardised.

One of the areas which South African universities appear to be failing to address is that of nurturing and empowering an impactful number of young Black female academics, and despite acknowledged progress in this area, the numbers fail to reflect the demographic composition of South Africa (Nkomo, 2013). The managers argued that candidates entered the higher education system with different abilities and personalities, and the nGAP should not ignore these important aspects by focusing only on academic achievement as a proxy for being appointed to positions.

One of the managers commented that what she observed at her university was that the 70% appeared to be used as an excuse to consider internal candidates and those recommended by research supervisors. She indicated that these senior people seemed to possess power that could potentially hamper the participation of other candidates, particularly those perceived as outsiders. The manager's response confirmed and cross-referred to the construct of 'inbreeding' which had emerged in the nGAP lecturer interviews: it was reported that some supervisors and HoDs who were supervisors, were recruiting lecturers for nGAP posts.

It has been shown through empirical evidence from other sources and through the data from lecturer interviews that 'inbreeding' practices pose the danger of excluding candidates demonstrating potential purely because they are bred from the 'wrong' university. It can also be argued that the 'inbreeding' practices in the nGAP confirmed the suspicion of some of the managers that the nGAP was exclusive in its approach, with lecturer positions being reserved for the select few who belonged to certain networks and have particular connections.

In light of these responses, the researcher was convinced that the most important question government and universities should be asking about the nGAP was whether the programme was reducing the existing inequalities through the provision of more opportunities for young academics, both Black and from other under-represented groups, or whether it would, in fact, increase these inequalities by unreasonably expanding opportunities for those already privileged.

"In my experience as a manager I feel like the 70% issue opens room for exploitation by some HoDs and Deans that have been given more power to run the programme. I feel like they use the programme as some internal job creation scheme for the people they know and don't even consider candidates from outside of the university, using the 70% to exclude them...poor kids

apply for posts not knowing that they are just there to make up numbers so that DHET can see that the recruitment process was followed...this is unfair to be honest...” (Manager 4).

The above response also put the spotlight on the issue of a limited pool of Master’s graduates who were being targeted for the nGAP. The *2019 Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics* revealed that the pool of Black South Africans and Coloureds from which new and young academics could be recruited remained small and was growing at a low rate. The report argued that this worrying trend “needs to change urgently as it has become a significant barrier to the recruitment of South African Black academics, as the pool from which to recruit is decreasing proportionally over time” (DHET, 2019, p. 12). According to the report, “There are multiple compounding factors that result in an inadequate, diminishing, and inequitable postgraduate pipeline in South Africa and one of these factors relates to high levels of competition for the small pool of high-achieving graduates and more attractive opportunities outside of postgraduate study” (ibid).

6.4.2 The issue of lecturers’ salaries

Regarding the issues of levels of employment and remuneration for lecturers, managers agreed that the DHET guidelines were not clear on this issue and that its application was a challenge for their universities. This response accounted for the dilemma that universities found themselves in regarding the effective implementation of nGAP features, while also trying to maintain their partnership with the DHET, as well as their autonomy and freedom to run the universities according to their internal policies.

For instance, the nGAP salary allocation was set by the DHET; however, in most universities that the amount provided did not align with the salaries of other lecturer posts. This response points to the issue of managerialism alluded to earlier in the analysis. It could be argued that this approach was constraining to internal university processes when it came to the implementation of some of the features of the nGAP, in the sense that universities were not necessarily in charge of the programme, as they were made to believe.

“The DHET is not clear in its guidelines as to what levels should the lecturers be appointed at. This is left to universities to figure out, but our remuneration policies don’t have a salary level called nGAP. It’s not as easy as it sounds because funding for lecturer salaries is from the DHET...it’s sort of a challenge...” (Manager 1).

Another manager indicated that at her university, the issues of lecturer levels and remuneration were highly contested between lecturers in the nGAP and ordinary lecturers, who had similar qualifications and were doing the same job. It was said that some of the nGAP lecturers had threatened to leave the university because of the salary and level discrepancies. The manager's response confirmed some of the information provided by the nGAP lecturers in the previous chapter, which highlighted low salaries as one of the antecedents to nGAP lecturers' wanting to leave either their universities or the programme. The response also highlighted the possible policy clashes between the nGAP as a concept and the practical realities of its implementation at institutional levels.

"This is a highly contested area in the university because we have some lecturers who are appointed at a certain level and they have similar qualifications as those of the nGAP lecturers...we have a lot of complaints and actually some nGAP lecturers have threatened to leave for other universities that have topped up salaries for nGAP..." (Manager 4);

The university has its own policies but these clash with some of the features and requirements of the nGAP. The non-clarity of levels appointment for nGAP lecturers causes a lot of friction in the university...there's a feeling that some lecturers are paid more for the same job and same qualifications..." (Manager 2).

It was indicated earlier in the analysis that the nGAP adopted a partnership model where the DHET provided funding towards the programme specifying how it was to be used while the universities supported the lecturers through infrastructure and other resources. Even though this is a partnership model, universities should still have the freedom to make decisions in matters that are within their control. Also highlighted, earlier in the analysis, was the approach adopted by government in all its earmarked grants, including the nGAP, which emerges from the responses as form of managerialism. The managers' responses point to the likelihood that the managerialist approach adopted by government could have affected the universities' 'ownership' of the programme. Some universities had embraced the nGAP and run it as one of their own programmes and were therefore able to take decisive action to enable its implementation. On the other hand, other universities had not demonstrated full ownership of the nGAP and held the notion that it was a DHET programme; therefore, they had become completely dependent on the Department for guidance, even on issues that were within their control. For example, the issue of the teaching workload, discussed in the previous chapter -

lecturers in some universities expected the DHET to inform their employers how this should be implemented.

One of the managers indicated that although the low salaries were an issue in his university, they managed to devise a solution by using the university funds to top up the nGAP lecturer salaries. The response above and the one below point to the issue of inequality which was alluded to earlier in the analysis, where some universities are well resourced and able to provide additional funding towards the nGAP, while others are under-resourced and are reliant on government funds.

The determination of workload in most universities depended largely on class sizes, as well as available resources; therefore, universities with fewer resources and large classes may have found it difficult to allocate reduced workloads to nGAP lecturers, and vice versa, so only universities (not the DHET) were equipped to deal with these issues, applying their own policies and processes. However, there seemed to be doubt among the managers about what universities were capable of.

“This was an issue in our university as well, but we have been able to deal with the different salary levels by topping up the DHET allocations to align the nGAP lecturer salaries with those that are not part of the programme. This is because most of our nGAP lecturers have made significant progress, some already have PhD and have done post-doctoral training, some actually have a good number of publications...We are very fortunate to have had additional financial resources to deal with this...” (Manager 5).

The responses also indicated that institutional autonomy should allow for remuneration decisions to be determined at institutional level. In the case of the nGAP, the salary allocation for the lecturers was set by government and implemented by the universities. The challenge that comes with this is that the allocation was low and did not match the lecturer salary scales in most universities. However, some universities could top up the salaries to match internal post levels, while those that were under-resourced were unable to do this. In its SoP guidelines, the DHET indicated that “the interest earned on the balance of the fund may be used to offset inflationary salary increases relating to nGAP costs” (SoP Phase 1&2, 3), some universities have taken it upon themselves to utilise the accumulated interest to bridge the gap in the lecturer salaries.

6.4.4. The issue of lecturer ‘entitlement’

Upon noticing the frustration displayed by some of the managers when speaking about the implementation of nGAP lecturer salaries and employment levels, the researcher felt compelled to probe the managers further and ask them how the lecturers were responding to the issues. One of the managers indicated that some lecturers:

“...displayed the culture of entitlement and arrogance and not really understanding that this programme is not only about the money from government and that it’s about development...they just demand what they say is “our money...” (Manager 4).

Another manager referred to some the lecturers’ attitude as:

“... ‘born with a silver spoon’ and that the lecturers have an unrealistic view of what the life of an academic is really like...” and that “they spend a lot of time complaining and ignoring the fact that they enjoy incredibly preferential situations with time ring-fenced for research and writing AND special access to funding...” (Manager 5).

The concept of entitlement emerged from the responses above as the managers felt that the lecturers were displaying this attitude. From her experience in the DHET, the researcher was aware that the word ‘entitled’ appears in the majority of DHET documents and guidelines. It was also the kind of language that was used in the meetings and workshops held by the DHET when engaging with lecturers. Therefore, it was not surprising to hear that, in fact, some lecturers displayed this attitude. Moreover, it had been observed by many, including the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, that there was a culture of entitlement among young people in the higher education sector. He highlighted this during an interview with the media during the Fees must Fall protests that took place in 2015. He made a similar comment in 2013 while addressing the media about the protests organised by medical students who were studying in Cuba on a government scholarship (News24, 2013).

It has been observed that this attitude was often displayed by young people in this country, particularly in relation to government-sponsored programmes. It can also be argued that the instructive language used by government in the nGAP documents could be contributing to the attitude displayed by some nGAP lecturers.

In the analysis of the nGAP lecturer interviews, some lecturers spoke about their frustrations as a result of lack of support by the same nGAP managers who observed that some lecturers displayed an attitude of entitlement. There were several researchers “who have labelled the relationship between academic and administrative staff members as uneasy and ambivalent and further characterising academic staff as anarchists” (Kuo, 2009, p. 49), and who perceived the “administrative culture as stuck in slow motion, blissfully ignoring efficiency and leadership” (Meyer & Kaloyeros, 2005, p. 16).

Without attempting to make excuses for the behaviour of these young lecturers, it should be borne in mind that most of them were young academics who were transitioning from being students. As students, they were used to projecting the mentality of ‘the customer’ who should be provided with service by the university administrators, and such service was demanded, as their attitude was that ‘the customer is always right’. According to Coutts, C. 2019, students who paid high tuition fees began to adopt an attitude of expecting value for money from the institution, and to think more like customers than members of the community. As customers, they demanded things that were clear and specific from their provider, namely value for money.

Furthermore, the perceived culture of entitlement observed among some of the lecturers could also be ascribed to a lack of clarification of expectations by the universities and government. The responses provided by the lecturers in the previous chapter demonstrated that they had their own expectations when they joined the programme. These were in relation to aspects of the job such as funding allocations, salary levels, support and developmental opportunities for teaching and research, and policies around the management of the reduced workload. From the responses from both the lecturers and the managers, it was evident that on the one hand they were frustrated as they find themselves in situations where they are not afforded an opportunity to make meaningful input as far as the features and implementation of the nGAP is concerned, while on the other, the managers find themselves having to deal with lecturers who appear to be making unreasonable demands while they are also overwhelmed with additional responsibilities that go with implementing the nGAP.

6.5 Views and experiences of managers in relation to implementing various features of the nGAP

6.5.1 Mentoring

The mentoring aspect of the nGAP came under the spotlight again, as managers spoke about their experiences of implementing the programme in their universities. The analysis of nGAP lecturers' interviews revealed that mentoring for the programme needed to be regulated by means of a standard policy that is applicable to all the universities. Universities are currently left to implement mentoring for the programme on their own, applying their different experiences, while some have mentoring policies and others do not. In the previous chapter, most of the lecturers argued that the lack of a formal policy for nGAP mentoring posed challenges to their mentoring relationships, specifically referring to the mentor-mentee pairing process.

For this study, the managers were asked to reflect on how mentoring had been organised, which was one of their responsibilities. Although the majority agreed that a need existed for a formalised process of mentoring for the nGAP, their responses indicated varied experiences, which indicated that the nGAP mentoring at their universities was constrained by a number of issues. These were identified by the managers as constraining and enabling mentoring for the nGAP in participating universities, and included

- the availability of suitable mentors who were willing and had the time to mentor the nGAP lecturers;
- the lack of an instrument to assist universities in holding mentors accountable;
- remuneration or incentives for nGAP mentors.

One manager referred to the process of finding mentors for lecturers as a huge challenge because she often found it difficult to satisfy all the parties involved in the mentoring relationship happy, particularly the mentees. She indicated that some of the mentees were vocal about their unhappiness with the allocated mentors, while others did not to express their discontent. She observed that those who had not complained would find ways of withdrawing from the relationship.

In the previous chapter, it was demonstrated that most of the participating lecturers were unhappy about how the pairing process was carried out, indicating that they had been excluded from the process. The nGAP lecturers' responses in the previous chapter demonstrated that some mentees wished to take part in the mentor selection process, and because they had not done so they were dissatisfied with their allocated mentors. It was also clear that some lecturers preferred to be paired with mentors of the same gender. Chesterman (2003) pointed out that mentoring of women in the South African context, particularly those from historically disadvantaged institutions, is often hindered by a shortage of senior academic staff and insufficient resources allocated towards the professional development of staff.

“...the responsibility of matching mentors and mentees is huge and comes with a lot of challenges. I struggle a lot to find senior academics who are willing to mentor the nGAP lecturers and when you find them, you realise that they are not compatible with the mentees. I dealt with one lecturer who wanted to be mentored by a black African woman and when that didn't happen she was not happy, but she didn't have a choice but to settle for the one we found for her...In most cases, I would find that the mentee is not happy with the match. Some voice it and some just keep quiet and never show up for meetings...I wish there were a different way we could do this...” (Manager 4).

Another manager indicated that the process of sourcing mentors was cumbersome, as most senior academics in her university were already overcommitted and were therefore not keen to take on the nGAP mentoring. However, in the absence of a policy to regulate mentoring in her university, she developed her own strategy in order to allow the mentees to participate in the process. She asked them to nominate their preferred mentor, failing which she would source and assign a mentor with the assistance of their supervisor or HoD.

Geber (2003) notes that coordinating a mentoring project is a highly relationship-intensive task, as well as extremely time consuming, particularly during the initial phases of establishing the programme and arranging for the first meetings of the new pairs within the programme. The coordinator also monitored the progress of the programme by providing ongoing support, troubleshooting and solving issues as they arise. There were various ways in which mentors and mentees can be paired, for example, in informal mentoring, the pairs are naturally and willingly created. The response from the nGAP managers highlighted the issue of ownership and autonomy that was alluded to earlier in the analysis, where some universities seemed to

have taken full ownership of the programme and were able to use their autonomy to make decisions which make the implementation of some the features of the nGAP easy, while others relied on guidance from government, even for issues that were within their capability.

“We realised that looking for mentors outside of the university are retired was a huge challenge, so we decided look for departmental mentors who are within reach for mentees to avoid frustrations. So, when I look for mentors, I usually ask the mentees first if they know anyone they would like to work with so that they have an opportunity to make their own choice and if they don’t have anyone, I would proceed to source someone with the help of the supervisor and the HoD/ Dean...This is a cumbersome process because many academics are overcommitted and they are often very difficult to convince to be part of the programme...”
(Manager 3).

One manager indicated that at her university it was an unwritten rule that mentoring formed part of the senior academics’ responsibilities. She indicated that because this area was not formally regulated through a policy and there was no compensation for internal mentors, there was resistance and a lack of commitment from some senior academics. She was of the opinion that mentoring for the nGAP was not attractive to senior academics at her university, because while it came with additional responsibilities, it was not a remunerated activity. The DHET did allocate funding for the remuneration of mentors; however, universities had been given the prerogative of using their internal remuneration policies to regulate this allocation. As a result, some universities had resolved not to compensate internal mentors, on the grounds that they already received a salary and that mentoring formed part of their responsibilities as senior academics.

The response below highlighted the need by both universities and government to investigate this important issue of the remuneration of nGAP mentors and how the lack of payment could affect senior academics’ participation by mentoring for the programme, taking into consideration that senior academics were overstretched in their responsibilities.

“Unfortunately, we do not have a set policy on how mentoring for the nGAP should be conducted, but most senior academics are aware that mentoring a junior staff is part of what they should do as part of their job...this is not formally done and not paid for, so you find that there’s some resistance because people feel that you are adding more to their responsibilities

and not paying them. The nGAP has an allocation for mentors but internally sourced mentors do not get paid as they are already earning a salary from the university...as a result people don't show commitment...” (Manager 2).

Among the managers interviewed, only one indicated that his university had developed a policy on mentoring for all staff members and that this policy covered the nGAP mentoring. However, at the time of the interview, the policy was still being approved by the university management and was therefore not yet effective. According to him, the policy would provide clarity on the process of selecting and pairing mentors and mentees, the roles and responsibilities of each party and the evaluation and assessment of mentors. He believed that the policy would alleviate some of the challenges experienced regarding the nGAP, such as incongruent pairing and a lack of commitment towards the mentoring relationship by some mentors and mentees. Similarly, Okurame (2008) suggests that despite mentoring being informal, structured approaches should be adopted to ensure that its effect reached a wider range of people, since mentoring without a formal structure would have limited impact.

“In our university, we have just developed a general mentoring policy for all academic staff members but it's not yet effective. The policy is noticeably clear on how mentors and mentees would be matched, what role each would play and how they would be evaluated and assessed. I think the policy would go a long way in alleviating some of the challenges we've been experiencing with nGAP mentoring where mentees are unhappy about their mentors, some people not taking their roles seriously or mentors using mentees to pursue their own research interests...” (Manager 5).

One of the managers felt that the absence of a policy has made it difficult to hold mentors accountable and ensure that the mentees benefited from the process. He stated that a consistently applied policy was necessary, as being mentored was a new experience for many nGAP lecturers and so they did not know how to benefit fully from it. He expressed the view that such a policy would empower the lecturers to commit to the mentoring relationship.

It should be noted that according to the DHET terms and requirements, at the end of their six-year training the nGAP lecturers were expected to have completed their PhDs and to have accumulated experience in teaching, research and other aspects of their work as academics. Further research on mentoring indicated that each party in the mentoring relationship must

focus on four major aspects: goals and expectations, progress monitoring, measurement and feedback (Austin Community College, 2012). Thus, by working collaboratively these areas, both mentor and mentee would strengthen their relationship, increase its chances of succeeding and in turn offering a higher level of fulfilment.

“I found that mentoring needs to be guided and regulated somehow so that we have a system of holding mentors accountable because there’s no commitment from some mentors. Some mentees also don’t know how to fully benefit from their mentors because this a new experience for them, they have never been mentored like this before and don’t how it should work. So, some standard policy to guide the process would be appreciated...” (Manager 1).

The same manager continued to talk about the challenge of holding mentors accountable:

“I just want to highlight that even if we don’t have a formal mentoring policy, mentoring has been happening before the nGAP. But it has been informal and often delegated to departmental HoD’s responsibilities. However, for the nGAP it is a bit complicated because it has to be formalised, documented and reported to DHET and so some people do not want to held accountable therefore very few people are interested in participating. This has become a challenge for mentees as they sometimes spend some time without mentors...” (Manager 1).

This manager’s response has highlighted the complications associated with the implementation of mentoring for the nGAP. It was evident from the above that the majority of participating universities employed similar approaches to mentoring the nGAP lecturers. They all followed a traditional mentorship model characterised by the ‘one-on-one’ mentoring relationship between the lecturer and a senior academic. It was also clear from the managers’ responses that coordinating a mentorship programme for the nGAP was not an easy task, and that this process could have been improved if there was a formal policy to guide it.

6.5.2 Institutional support

Earlier in the analysis, the managers spoke about their universities’ conceptualisation and interpretation of the nGAP; however, they did not delve deeper into the kind of support they had received from their universities. As they reflected on their experiences of managing the nGAP, they were asked by the interviewer to express their opinions about how they thought the support from their university constrained or enabled their efforts to implement the programme. The managers provided various responses, with some indicating that they received

the necessary support from their university leaders, and others stating that they lacked adequate support.

One of the managers commented that the introduction of the nGAP came as a surprise for the sector, and as a result, most universities were unprepared for it. However, the leadership of her university made sure that the necessary structures and processes were put in place to support the programme. In her opinion, they had seen to it that the roles and responsibilities of the relevant units were clearly defined, and drew on their experience of running similar projects to support the nGAP. She was, however, of the opinion that the nGAP is not an easy programme to implement, and in order for it to succeed it required regular engagement and collaboration among the relevant bodies within the university.

“I must say, despite the communication challenges that we had at the beginning of the programme because the nGAP just came out of nowhere and we were all caught off-guard, our VC and the DVCs teaching and research have been on top of their game when it comes to making sure that structures are put in place to support the nGAP...We have been given direction and guidance on how to approach implementation of this programme, each unit is clear on what role it should play...What also helped was that we had a more or less similar programme for a few years now...but the nGAP is not straight forward, it’s a bit complicated and requires regular consultation internally and with the DHET...working together collaboratively is very important for it to succeed...” (Manager 1).

Another manager stated that the vice-chancellor of their university was supportive of the programme and its ideals. It was said that the VC was in favour of transformation and was therefore able to ensure that all senior staff, such as the HoDs, deans, and other staff members were behind the programme. She mentioned perceived resistance from quarters of the university where there was little support for the programme. This manager’s response suggested that resistance might have come from people who were against transformation at the university. Emerging from this response is a concept of ‘resistance’, in this case, resistance to transformation, since some staff members seemed to be against the nGAP as it was a transformation programme.

Transformation in South African higher education is a subject that the sector has grappled with since 1994, and for it to be realised, it should be driven by all the parties within the universities.

However, the report compiled by the South African Human Rights Commission investigating transformation in public universities discovered that

there is notable resistance to change in certain higher education institutions and that the resistance is due to perceptions by some that transformation is being forced down the throats of many institutions and that this resistance illustrates deep-seated issues around social cohesion and the prevalence of racial, cultural and, likely, socio-economic bias” (SAHRC, 2018, p. 23). Furthermore, the report concluded that this resistance is, amongst others, caused by the fear that inclusive social change may result in the loss of employment, especially by White males and in other circles, the resistance to change was under the guise that change will lower standards and quality (SAHRC, 2018).

Earlier in this analysis, the managers indicated that some of the nGAP requirements for participating in the programme, such as the 70% aggregate at Master’s level, were being used in some quarters as a strategy to exclude the targeted candidates (Black South African females) while hiding behind a demand for quality. It should be emphasised that although white women were also discriminated against and are part of the target for the nGAP, their situation was not similar to that of Black African women and therefore their participation in the programme should not be at the expense of the latter:

“Our VC is pro transformation, and I must say he has managed to bring everyone on board and got us all to embrace the nGAP. There were a few pockets of resistance there and there, in some departments because you know transformation is not a comfortable subject for everyone. Some people would prefer to keep things as they are because the situation favours them...But I must say, our leadership has been very active, and they would like to see the programme succeed...Some of the HoDs and deans have shown commitment to the programme. Our head of HR is also working hard to make sure that policies are aligned with the programme, but it’s quite a challenge...” (Manager 5).

Another manager indicated that leadership at her university was not perfect in terms of the support for the nGAP; however, there were efforts by all partners to provide the necessary direction and guidance for its implementation. This manager indicated further that the university did employ measures to align internal programmes with the nGAP processes so that lecturers could gain access to training and networking opportunities. This response seems to

be contradicting some the lecturers' responses in the previous chapter, and highlighting the perceived lack of commitment by some senior managers towards aligning internal institutional policies with some of the features of the nGAP.

It must be stressed that the lecturers who made these claims were not from the same university as this manager. However, it could be that while some universities are struggling with aligning the nGAP policies, others have made good progress in this area. This response refers back to the concept of ownership of the nGAP by universities, since some managers have suggested that leaders in some universities have embraced and taken ownership of the programme, and in so doing, have managed to devise plans to support it. Failure to align the nGAP policies could also be an issue of lack of capacity and resources, since it was demonstrated that some universities are lagging in these areas.

“In my university, the leadership has not been perfect, but they are working really hard to give direction and guideline on how the implementation of the nGAP should be going...There’s a process in place to align the nGAP processes with existing programmes and they are working on a set of activities and programmes to get the nGAP lecturers to be part of the internal training programmes and participate in internal networking activities...” (Manager 3).

At another university, according to the nGAP manager, a change of leadership has affected several operations, including planning for the implementation of the nGAP. However, efforts have been made to catch up on lost time, regardless of what was perceived as resistance by other management staff. The response of this manager indicated that even though the leadership of a vice chancellor was not immediately available, other drivers of the programme, such as the HoDs and deans at the faculty and departmental levels provided the required leadership. The manager's response below echoed the statement by Ramsden (2000) that “leadership in the university environment is generally distributed in ‘academic departments, research teams, among administrators or academic research support”:

“We had some challenges because of change in leadership, so things got off to a rocky start when it comes to the nGAP...We relied heavily on deans, the HoDs and other administrative managers to provide internal leadership and support...Our finance unit and human resources are also instrumental in the programme and they are supportive of the programme, although

it's not as easy as it appears on paper...we're trying very hard to make it work... ” (Manager 2).

Lastly, another manager reported that the support from the university leadership did not meet her expectations, as she was ‘thrown in at the deep end’ although she was provided with additional assistance. She referred to her DVC being inactive, and struggling to come up with solutions to problems. She also experienced the apparent abuse of power by some HoDs and deans, who had been attempting to flout the rules of the programme. She appeared to be frustrated and helpless as she spoke about the lack of support from the DHET, as well as delays in responding to some of her queries.

It should be pointed out that even though this investigation only focused on implementation of the nGAP at university level, the response below pointed to the issue of capacity or lack thereof in the DHET to coordinate and provide support for the universities. From the researcher’s experience as a former DHET employee, she was aware that there were insufficient human resources within the University Capacity Development directorate, which was responsible for the nGAP, among its other commitments. Even though there were delays in some areas, efforts had been made to provide the necessary support to universities in relation to the nGAP. It could be true that the support was insufficient, particularly concerning issues that DHET deemed to be within the jurisdiction of the universities.

“In my case, I would say the support has not been the way I would have preferred because I feel like I was thrown in the deep end and I do not have much control...I have been asking for additional support but looks like my pleas are falling on deaf ears...I am not coping with the work, it's too much...There has also been some signs of power abuse by some of the Deans and HoDs attempting to flout the rules, but because I am just a lower level manager, I can't take them on...But they make my job a bit difficult sometimes because I am the one who has to always explain when the DHET asks questions...Our DVC has not been very active and has not been able come up with solutions to the many problems we have been encountering...The DHET has not been very helpful either also as they take their time to respond to queries sometimes...” (Manager 4).

6.5.3 The issue of leadership

The nGAP managers' responses demonstrated the complex nature of the implementation of the programme, as well the capacity-related challenges that prevailed in some of the participating universities. It was therefore not surprising that the issue of leadership featured strongly during the discussions. From the responses above, the construct of 'leadership' emerged as a strong element of institutional support towards the implementation of the nGAP. Some managers indicated that the senior leadership in their universities were instrumental in the implementation of the programme, and that as a result they had received the necessary guidance and support. On the other hand, some managers indicated that they lacked the necessary support, citing failure by senior leaders to address some of the problems that confronted their universities in relation to the implementation of the programme. They also alluded to perceived power abuse by some senior leaders, as well as a lack of guidance from them.

There is evidence in the study to suggest that the lack of robust leadership could be one of the main constraining factors in the implementation of the nGAP at various universities. According to Waheeda & Shaheeda (2018), leadership at institutions of higher education ought to be sensitive to and aware of changing social, economic and educational requirements. It is argued that contexts within which these institutions operate change continuously and quickly, leadership is required that is prepared to transform and take advantage of prospects of growth and to work towards excellence (ibid).

Studies of leadership in higher education show that 'transformational leadership' and 'transactional leadership' are able to promote organisational efficiency and success (Bateh & Heyliger, 2014). Although not explicit on this point, some of the nGAP managers' responses implied, especially those that indicated that they lacked support and guidance from their leaders, that there was a lack of leadership qualities that could have ensured that the academic and non-academic staff members worked together to implement the nGAP successfully.

Some of the leadership roles described by the managers seemed to align with some of the positive leadership qualities listed above. The majority of managers felt supported, guided, encouraged, involved and empowered to work as a team, within which there was good communication. It is possible that these advantages might lead to the successful implementation of the nGAP. It is not the intention of this study to determine whether the leadership in participating universities was effective or ineffective; however, it can be argued that some of the leadership traits described by the managers seemed to have enabled the

programme, while in other cases the leadership may have had a negative influence, thereby constraining its implementation.

6.5.4 Monitoring and reporting

In the previous chapter, the majority of the nGAP lecturers mentioned that the DHET reporting template afforded them an opportunity to reflect on their experiences of participating in the programme, but that they were limited to only providing progress reporting. They also indicated that there was no confidentiality in the reporting process, and this prevented them from being absolutely honest.

Monitoring and reporting processes also dominated the discussions with most of the managers, which indicated that they had been denied a voice in the reporting process, as the current DHET template did not make provision for their own accounts. There was agreement among most of the managers that the reporting process completely excluded them, and they emphasised that the reporting template did not provide for managers to speak about their experiences of being part of the nGAP. This perceived exclusion meant that the nGAP managers had not had the opportunity to communicate with the DHET, either formally or personally, regarding their experiences of the implementation of the programme in their universities.

One of the managers commented that although reporting was necessary, the existing processes did not make sense as they did not afford managers any opportunity for reporting. He indicated that the reporting focused only on the mentors, the mentees and the supervisors.

“I acknowledge that accountability needs to happen, but the mechanisms used for this reporting must also make sense. The template issued by DHET does not provide me space, as the manager of the programme to say anything. The template only focuses on the mentor, mentee and the supervisor. How am I supposed to inform the DHET about my challenges if not through this reporting process? (Manager 2).

Another manager felt that the reporting process was cumbersome and agreed that managers were not being afforded a suitable space to report on their experiences. She thought that they were being excluded because the DHET might assume that they represented the university and that they had nothing pertinent to add to the narrative of the nGAP implementation. She indicated that the way things were at the time implied that the managers’ stories were of no

importance. This response indicated that some nGAP managers were starting to question their importance and worth in the programme because of being excluded from the reporting process.

“Apart from the reporting process being cumbersome, it does not allow us managers any space to speak about our experiences. I am not sure if managers are viewed as the university or what, by my opinion is that I need the voice in that template and currently it is not granted...currently it's like we don't matter...” (Manager 4.)

A manager who also felt that she should be afforded an opportunity to tell her own story through the DHET reporting process indicated that she found the auditing process for the programme time-consuming and not user-friendly:

“Well, I coordinate the reporting for all the people that are accommodated by the template, but there's not space for me in the template to do my reporting to the DHET, managers not part of the report...another issue is the audit processes, I know it's necessary for us to report on the finances, but it's so time-consuming and not user-friendly...can the DHET just simplify the process?” (Manager 5).

Another manager felt that the reporting process deliberately excluded managers because they are considered part of the university management; however, he believed that this was a short-sighted approach, as managers also experience challenges that they would like to formally communicate to the DHET. The majority of the nGAP managers' responses demonstrated that they felt voiceless, as they were unable to communicate the challenges they were confronted with when they struggled to implement this important programme, and they had not been able to formally report them to the DHET. It was also clear that they would have liked to tell their own stories, but were prevented from doing so by the template that did not make provision for this.

“I feel like the DHET reporting deliberately excludes managers because they consider us to be part of the university management, but we are not. This is short-sighted because we also experience numerous challenges that we feel need to be formally communicated to the DHET through these reports. I know we meet with DHET staff to talk about issues, but I still feel like for us to be listened to, this has to be done through the annual progress reports...” (Manager 3).

Some of the responses above referred to “deliberate exclusion” in the reporting process, as well as ‘outcome reporting bias’ on the part of government. According to Vaganay (2016), ‘outcome reporting bias’ occurs in situations where government only reports on certain participants because their evaluations seem positive.

In this case, government was perceived to have intentionally or unintentionally overlooked the reporting of nGAP managers. As demonstrated in earlier responses, the nGAP managers played important roles in the implementation of the programme at institutional levels, and they seemed to be well placed to be to provide valuable information that could contribute towards improving the programme’s implementation at universities. Since the DHET has not made provision for this in its reporting template, the majority of managers felt excluded from this important process, which could allow them an opportunity to tell their personal stories about the implementation of nGAP at their universities. These managers were of the view that this was an unfair practice on the part of the DHET, and that it was a form of discrimination against them.

In the experience of the researcher as a former DHET employee and as one of the people who worked on the nGAP, the decisions about who needed to report to DHET and who did not were made by the senior individuals in the Department. A possibility therefore existed that such individuals could have had their own biases regarding decision making. It could be that those individuals considered their decision to focus only on reporting for lecturers, supervisors and mentors to be in the best interests of the DHET and its stakeholders, and that reporting by managers would focus more on accountability and monitoring and not on evaluation, which required engagement with participants’ experiences as opposed to progress on expenditure and data reporting. Since its inception, the nGAP reporting has been more focused on the performance of the programme in terms of participation, collection and analysis of data, as well as the collection of the data required to assess whether progress is being made towards achieving the set targets. The DHET has been preoccupied with assessing whether or not the project activities have been efficiently implemented, with a view to identifying any corrective measures that may be necessary to improve performance.

The managers’ responses were consistent with the responses of the lecturers, which were discussed in the previous chapter: some of them felt that the DHET was only interested in their progress with their PhDs and the allocated funding, and not in their personal stories. It can

therefore be argued that this was a strategy by government to present the nGAP in a more positive light than if it were to focus on personal stories that might project negative points of view. The managerialist approach that the DHET seemed to have adopted in the implementation of the nGAP was evident in its reporting processes, which prioritised efficiency in the expenditure of allocated funds, as well as the general efficacy of the programme. Again, it was evident that even though the universities had been given a modicum of autonomy in implementing some of the features of the programme, government was in control of who got to report and who did not, irrespective of the crucial role they played in implementing it.

The study is in no way inferring that the DHET reporting on the nGAP has been focusing on insignificant results; however, in the experience of the researcher as a government worker, government reporting on the nGAP has always been concerned mainly with the number of nGAP lecturers that have been recruited into the system since the programme's inception. There has not been any published report documenting the experiences of these lecturers or other role players such as the managers and mentors, who were also important participants in the programme. Given the important objectives and prominence of the nGAP in the higher education sector, it would not be surprising that any reporting related to the programme would attract scrutiny. It could thus be argued that as a result of the importance of the nGAP, the government might consider it safer to focus its reporting on presenting and publishing only positive results about the nGAP for the edification of the public and stakeholders.

Lastly, only one manager was not specific about the missing voice of managers in the annual reporting template. In fact, he emphasised the importance of reporting for the purpose of financially accounting to the DHET. Accountability is crucial in higher education as it relates to evaluating levels of efficiency and performance. It is required for higher education institutions to prove that they have achieved the targets they set for themselves

“The nGAP is a government programme and therefore needs to be accounted for, so reporting is appropriate for accountability purposes because the DHET needs to know what progress is being made or not being made and how money is being used” (Manager 5).

6.6 Concluding remarks

In this chapter an analysis of the data generated from the nGAP managers' interviews has been presented. The discussions have revealed that the coordination and management of the nGAP in participating universities brought additional responsibilities, which seemed to have

increased the workload for the majority of nGAP managers. Implementing these new responsibilities came with its own challenges and opportunities, which have constrained and enabled the programme's implementation to varying degrees. It has also been demonstrated that while the nGAP brought additional responsibilities, it was not an easy or a straightforward programme for institutions to implement.

The nGAP required major alignment with institutional policies and regulations that have been in place for many decades at most universities, and creating such an alignment came with its own challenges. Some universities have been able to overcome these, while others are still lagging. The discussions in this chapter have confirmed that participating universities adopted different approaches in conceptualising and interpreting the nGAP, with some universities viewing it as an administrative/human resources function and others interpreting it as an academic and research staff development programme. The approach adopted by each university has, to a certain extent, influenced the kinds of support mechanisms employed for the programme's implementation.

The responses also demonstrated that different levels of leadership were important aspects of support for the nGAP managers; however, this area has, to a certain extent, constrained the programme's implementation. Some of the requirements for participating in the nGAP are making the programme exclusive, and this might pose long-term challenges to the transformation agenda championed by the programme. The nGAP managers feel voiceless as they are excluded from the DHET reporting process, and this might influence how they view their role in the programme.

The subsequent chapter present the analysis of the data gathered through interviews with nGAP mentors. The issues that are carried forward into the new chapter are mentoring, institutional support, monitoring and reporting.

CHAPTER 7: PRESENTATION OF DATA FROM THE MENTORS' INTERVIEWS

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the interview responses from the nGAP managers. The discussions revealed that the coordination and management of the nGAP in participating universities brought with it additional responsibilities which seem to have increased the workload for the majority of nGAP managers. Implementing these new responsibilities came with challenges and opportunities, which to a certain extent have constrained or enabled the programme's implementation. It has also been demonstrated that the nGAP was not an easy or straightforward programme for institutions to implement, as it required major alignment with institutional policies and regulations, most of which had been in place for many years at the universities. Creating such alignment presented challenges that some universities had been able to overcome, while others were still grappling with. The discussions in this chapter also confirmed that participating universities had adopted different approaches in conceptualising and interpreting the nGAP, with some universities interpreting it as an administrative or human resources function, while others saw it as a development programme for academic and research staff.

The approach adopted by each university has, to a certain extent, influenced the kinds of support mechanisms employed for the programme's implementation. The responses also demonstrated that the different levels of leadership provided important aspects of support for the nGAP managers. However, some of the requirements for participating in the nGAP have made the programme exclusive, and this might pose long-term challenges to the transformation agenda championed by the programme. The nGAP managers said they felt voiceless as they were excluded from the DHET reporting process, and this might have affected how they viewed their role in the programme.

This chapter, which is the third of the three data analysis chapters, presents an analysis of the data gathered in interviews with six nGAP mentors. The main objectives of this aspect of the study were to explore the motivation for nGAP mentors to participate in the programme, discover how they were recruited into the programme and what mentoring activities they employed in order to fulfil their responsibilities, the types of mentoring relationships that existed within the nGAP in participating universities, and the institutional support provided for

them. This chapter also covers other issues that the mentors thought were constraining and or enabling to their nGAP mentorship activities at their respective universities.

7.2 Mentor's biographical and employment details

Table 7.1 below presents a summary of the background information of the six mentors interviewed for the study. The mentors occupied different positions two had been recruited externally but were still affiliated to the universities in terms of research, one was retired and another was working in industry. Three mentors were recruited internally and occupied professorial positions. In terms of gender, five were males and one was female. Their racial classification comprised three whites, two Black Africans and one Coloured, and their ages ranged from 48 to 65. All the mentors were from historically white universities. The interviews and the data analysis processes that were followed have already been outlined in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2), and will not be discussed in this chapter.

Table 7.1: Mentors participating in the nGAP

Position	Mentor 1	Mentor 2	Mentor 3	Mentor 4	Mentor 5	Mentor 6
Institution	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.	Univ.
Race	White	Coloured	White	Black Africa	White	Black African
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male
Age	48-65	48-65	48-65	48-65	48-65	48-65
Current occupation	Industry/ Private sector	Retired Professor	Univ. Professor	Univ. Professor	Univ. Professor	Univ. Professor

7.2.1 Mentor's appointments and responsibilities

The mentoring of young academics by senior and experienced professors has become a matter of interest in higher education. In the previous two data analysis chapters, it was indicated that mentoring was one of the most critical aspects of the nGAP, and the DHET made it a requirement that participating lecturers be allocated mentors within the first three years of their training. The process of sourcing the mentors was carried out by the universities, according to the nGAP partnership model, guided by the DHET through the SoP guidelines. Consequently, the issue of mentoring featured strongly in the interview discussions held with the nGAP lecturers and managers.

In Chapter 5 it was reported that most of the lecturers regarded the lack of a formal policy for nGAP mentoring as presenting challenges for their mentoring relationships, especially for the

mentor-mentee pairing process. In Chapter 6, the nGAP managers reflected on how they have facilitated the sourcing and appointment of mentors as part of their responsibilities as nGAP managers. Although the majority agreed that there was a need for a formalised process or framework for conducting mentoring, their responses highlighted their varied experiences, which suggested that the nGAP mentoring at their universities was constrained or enabled by a number of issues, including the lack of suitable people who were willing and had time to mentor the nGAP lecturers, the lack of an instrument or policy that would assist universities in holding mentors accountable, and the remuneration or incentives for nGAP lecturers.

For the purpose of gathering data for this chapter, the nGAP mentors were asked to reflect on their motivation for participating in the programme, how they were recruited as mentors, the mentoring activities they had employed in the course of carrying out their roles and responsibilities, the kinds of relationships that existed between themselves and their mentees, and the support their universities provided for them. Lastly, the mentors were asked to reflect on any other factors that they thought had the potential to hinder effective mentoring.

7.3 Motivation for mentors to participate in the nGAP

The mentors were asked to reflect on their motivation for participating as nGAP mentors; they gave varying responses, with some mentioning their seniority at their university and their experience of working with young academics as some of their main motivations. One of the mentors indicated that, as a senior professor, mentoring as part of his job and that he was committed to assisting the university in developing young academics.

“I am one of the senior professors in the Department and mentoring young academics is considered part of the job...I’m committed to my work and I feel like I have the responsibility to assist the university to develop and retain young academics...” (Mentor 1).

Another mentor’s response also highlighted his commitment to assisting his former university by agreeing to become a mentor to one of the nGAP lecturers, although he was semi-retired. One of the reasons he gave was that he was still affiliated to the university for research and other purposes.

“I’m retired as a senior professor, but I’m still attached to the same university working on different projects. I was approached to be a mentor for the one of the nGAP lecturers...I enjoy working with and developing young people...” (Mentor 5).

Two of the six mentors referred to their passion for working with young scholars, with one emphasising that working on transformation and redress programmes such as the nGAP was something he was happy to contribute towards.

“I have a passion for mentoring young people...I’m also passionate about transformation and redress, which the nGAP advocates for. I find the nGAP to be an exciting project, so I’m incredibly happy to make a small contribution as a mentor...” (Mentor 3).

“I enjoy the work and the challenge of working with young scholars...I am willing to contribute to South African scholarship through mentoring these young people...” (Mentor 2).

Two other mentors highlighted their qualifications and their many years of experience as senior professors as their motivation for participating in the programme as mentors. One of the mentors indicated that he thought mentoring required high levels of experience and that it was a specialised activity.

“I have the relevant qualifications, coupled with my experience of working for many years as an academic...I would like to believe that I have a good track record in this area, so I am happy to assist...” (Mentor 6).

“I guess my tenure as a senior professor in the university made me one of the relevant candidates for mentoring an nGAP lecturer...I believe mentoring is considered a specialised type of job and it needs high level experience and qualifications....” (Mentor 4).

The responses above demonstrate that the participants were motivated by different factors to participate as mentors in the nGAP. Allen (2003) asserts that “mentors primarily are motivated to serve their own developmental needs, and that these egoistic concerns can be classified as one of two types” (p. 139). This suggests that some mentors perform mentoring roles in order to improve their self-confidence, acquire new knowledge or gain satisfaction. The above responses provided by the nGAP mentors seemed to reflect both motivational factors, as identified by Allen *et al*, with some referring to their experience and their research affiliation with the universities, which could be interpreted as self-focused. Others spoke of the need to assist young people and their universities, which could be interpreted as other-focused. It could also be that by aligning themselves with talented, up-and-coming young academics who were

supported by a transformational government initiative such as the nGAP was seen as an opportunity to further their careers and boost their reputations.

Even though the responses by the majority of mentors indicated that they were part of the nGAP mentoring mainly to assist with developing the young academics, the responses of some of the lecturers and managers in the previous two chapters indicated that some nGAP mentors were engaged in the programme to pursue their own interests, such as furthering their own research agendas and to earn an extra income because the DHET has allocated funding to remunerate mentors. Based on the observations made by the lecturers and the managers, it cannot be firmly concluded whether the mentors were motivated by their own interests or by the need to help others. It is therefore safer to state that this cannot be decided conclusively.

7.4 Generativity as a motivation for mentorship

Emerging from some of the mentor responses is a construct used in the psychology of Erik Erikson, which he refers to as ‘generativity’. Generativity is defined by Curry (2015) as “the need to nurture and guide younger people and contribute to the next generation.” The concept of generativity provides theoretical support for the DHET’s decision to implement a mentoring programme for the nGAP. In the context of the nGAP, mentoring was understood as one of the mechanisms that were effective in cultivating the next generation of academics and empowering them to accomplish high levels of teaching excellence and research productivity. According to Smith (2005), mentorship presents a chance for senior and retired academics to undertake the role of mentoring future generation of academics. It is therefore not surprising that mentors referred indirectly to generativity when discussing their motivation to participate as mentors.

In the case of the nGAP mentors, some of their responses demonstrated that their participation in the programme was motivated by their need to foster generativity, that is, their commitment to and concern for developing the next generation of academics at their universities and in the higher education sector as a whole. Their responses also indicated that as senior academics and professors, they assumed the roles of generative adults who were dedicated, enthusiastic, and confident persons who are passionate and enthusiastic about making a positive difference in the higher education sector (Allen (2003). According to the author, these qualities lend themselves to effective mentoring relationships with mentees, resulting in higher job satisfaction for both.

It could thus be concluded that when recruiting mentors for the nGAP, and for any other mentoring programme in higher education, it would be worthwhile to follow the advice provided by Stukas, Clary and Snyder (2013), who suggest that the focus should be on the motivations of potential mentors, and then to increase their satisfaction and retention by ensuring that their experiences allowed them to achieve the desired benefits. For a potential mentor, this meant understanding one's own motivation in order to have it fulfilled more efficiently and effectively. For the institution, it means assessing incoming mentors so that motivation-relevant benefits can be provided and to allow the development of an approach to understanding current successful mentors with a view of recruiting new mentors with similar characteristics. (Stukas *et al.*, 2013).

7.5 Recruitment of mentors

According to the DHET guidelines, the universities may use a variety of approaches to attract the best possible mentors for the programme. In the words of the nGAP SoP guideline document:

Mentors are envisaged to be experienced and successful academics, semiretired or recently retired, recognized disciplinary experts who are also recognised as good teachers (DHET, 2018, p. 4).

This implies that in addition to being experienced and recognised academics, mentors should have sufficient time to provide ongoing mentoring support to the nGAP lecturers. Even though the DHET SoP guidelines do not provide guidelines on how universities should recruit the nGAP mentors, there are different ways, proposed in the literature, on how mentors can be recruited.

Garringer (2006) suggests various methods of recruiting mentors by pointing out that programmes seeking to attract mentors can make formal presentations to a variety of community and professional groups (e.g., businesses, churches, fraternities, universities). They can ask staff and current volunteers to make personal appeals to friends and associates, engage in media campaigns, or simply enlist available volunteers. However, it is worth noting that in South Africa, due to the unequal distribution of academic capacity among the universities, not every university was able to draw on a readily available supply of mentors with the necessary skills. Some universities might have had a larger pool of appropriate mentors than others, and

some might also have senior academics who had supportive values and attitudes, thus making recruitment for volunteer mentors an easier or a more difficult task.

For the purpose of gathering data under this theme, the mentors were asked to reflect on how they became part of the nGAP. Four out of the six indicated that they were recruited internally, within their universities and departments, and two were externally recruited. One of the external recruits indicated that he was employed in industry in the private sector, and another was a retired professor who, according to his response, was still affiliated to the recruiting university.

When it comes to how people became mentors, the survey conducted by O'Connor (2006) found that 'the ask' was the number one reason for engaging in mentoring, with 50% of all respondents indicating that someone had personally requested, either formally or informally, that they take on the role. The next highest frequency of responses indicated that membership of an organisation, or in personal and professional networks, was responsible for most mentors initiating their service (ibid).

"I was approached by the HoD to be a mentor for a recently appointed nGAP lecturer in the Department...it's not like I had a choice, it's part of the job...it's a bit complicated for the nGAP because it comes as an additional responsibility with its own rules..." (Mentor 6);

"I was asked to mentor a new lecturer in our department, and I had to comply since I'm one of the senior academics in the department...mentoring young academics is part of my responsibilities/job requirements as a senior academic..." (Mentor 3).

One of the mentors who was externally recruited indicated that even though he had retired, he was still attached to the university, and he was available and willing to assist the university with the nGAP mentoring. This response pointed to the construct of the generativist alluded to earlier, where senior academics engage in mentoring solely to leave a legacy and contribute towards developing the next generation of young academics.

"Even though I I'm on retirement, I still have links with the university because of some research projects, so I was happy to help...I was recruited by the HoD and was asked to mentor to a

lecturer appointed under the nGAP, However, there is no structured programme to follow. I came up with my own structure on how I will conduct the mentoring...” (Mentor 5).

Another mentor indicated that he had mentored young academics and staff before, and that he was happy to provide support to the nGAP lecturer as a mentor. He also referred to having some research links with the university and said that he was happy to assist in this area.

“I have mentored a few academics previously when I worked in the university and I still mentor young staff as their supervisor/ manager...I still have some research links with the department, so I am happy to assist the department with mentoring...” (Mentor 4).

Two of the mentors who were recruited internally by their departments indicated that mentoring for the nGAP was a different role which had been allocated funding by the DHET; however, when one of them enquired about the remuneration aspect of the programme, he was informed that he would not be paid because he was already receiving a salary from the university. The same mentor was also of the view that mentoring for the nGAP should be regulated through a dedicated policy framework, as it was a targeted government programme. Another mentor also felt strongly about the need for the nGAP mentors to be remunerated, indicating that the role brought additional responsibilities, which puts pressure on them as they also have their other commitments.

The two responses seemed to be in agreement with the statements made by some of the lecturers and managers in the previous two chapters, and supported by Allen (2003), that some mentors were participating in mentoring programmes to pursue their own personal interests. For instance, they might have needed to earn an extra salary from the nGAP mentoring. It was notable that even though the nGAP mentoring had been allocated funding by the DHET, not all the universities elected to remunerate the internal mentors, on the grounds that they already received a salary from the universities. The above responses also show that it is impossible to be certain what the real motivation was for some senior academics' participation as mentors, particularly in a government-funded programme such as the nGAP. The following are the mentor responses:

“Mentoring for the nGAP is different because it is a dedicated service that is even allocated funding. But for me, I do not get paid to do it and when I asked, I was told that I am already getting a salary from the university...I would have loved for this role to be regulated through its own policy or something because the nGAP is a government programme...” (Mentor 2);

“I was just told that I will be mentoring so and so who is an nGAP lecturer in our department...I don’t mind but because there’s so much work that I’m involved in, I feel strongly that the nGAP mentoring should be paid for, it takes time away from other responsibilities and it has to be done properly...” (Mentor 1).

The above responses also demonstrated that all the mentors participating in the study were approached and asked to become mentors for the lecturers; they did not apply for the positions or go through any form of special recruitment or selection process. Even though some of the mentors indicated earlier that they were driven or motivated by the need to help young people in the higher education system, some of the responses suggested that they might not have participated as nGAP mentors if they had not been approached to do so. This was evident in the responses of the two mentors, who said that they were, in fact, left with no choice but to agree to the requests to mentor the nGAP lecturer in their departments, and that they found mentoring for the nGAP complicated, since it came with its own rules.

Another mentor also indicated that he had to comply with the request to mentor in the programme. Even though some universities had elected not to remunerate their internally recruited nGAP mentors for the reason cited above, it cannot be denied that some researchers have argued for mentoring to be a remunerated activity.

7.6 Conceptualisation of mentoring in the nGAP

For purposes of this study, the phrase ‘conceptualisation of mentoring’ refers to what the nGAP mentors perceive mentoring to be and what they think it should look like in practice. In the nGAP, the mentor is considered to act as a chaperon or pioneer makes an effort to pass on practical information to the lecturer/mentee. Often, mentees regard their mentors as experts advising on how to approach specific tasks or situations, and they follow the advice they give.

Under this theme, the mentors were asked to reflect on their own understanding of mentoring for the nGAP. There were various responses, with one mentor indicating that he thought mentoring for the nGAP required a structured and dedicated approach. The issue of the lack of a dedicated policy for the nGAP mentoring was also prominent in the discussions reported in the previous two chapters. The response below demonstrated that even though some mentors considered themselves experienced as senior academics, they thought it would have been preferable if they had been provided with some sort of framework to guide their roles within

the nGAP mentoring. The reasoning behind this belief was that the nGAP was a structured programme that needed to be accounted for and reported on separately to the DHET.

“Mentoring for the nGAP is rather interesting as compared to the type that we do in our departments. Although I consider myself experienced, I think the nGAP mentoring is a bit different in that the programme is structured in approach and I think it requires a dedicated policy framework...” (Mentor 3).

Another mentor highlighted the reality that mentoring for the nGAP was challenging because the programme was government-led, while its implementation lay with the universities. He pointed out that the mentoring guidelines set by the DHET limited the mentors to only a few activities, and hinted that the mentors should also get involved in the PhD research, especially if they have expertise in the mentees’ research area. This mentor held a strong view that mentoring for the nGAP should not exclude providing advice in the area of the mentee’s PhD research, if possible. The DHET guidelines specifically indicate that the mentees’ PhD research is the jurisdiction of the research supervisor and that the mentor should not get involved in this area. This response points to the issue of motivation discussed earlier in the analysis, where it was intimated that the motivation to become a mentor could be driven by self-interest or the need to assist and provide support for the younger generation (generativity).

“For me mentoring for the nGAP is quite challenging...the nGAP for me is a government led programme and the universities are implementing the majority of its features...that’s where the challenge is, there are guidelines that limits the mentorship to a few items and restricts us to only focus on other aspects apart from the research component...I sometimes find myself conflicted because I’m an expert in my mentees research area and I would love to give advice...I don’t think we should be limited or restricted...” (Mentor 2).

One mentor referred to some of the activities that he thought mentoring should help with. For him, mentoring for the nGAP meant assisting the lecturers with career planning, helping them to improve their teaching and research skills and to identify professional development opportunities. The statement made by the mentor is in agreement with some of the mentorship guidelines proposed by the DHET in its nGAP SoP guidelines.

“For me mentoring the nGAP lecturers means helping them to make decisions that would help them to develop their careers, help them to become better in teaching, help them identify

different opportunities for professional development and improve their research skills..."
(Mentor 6).

Another mentor indicated that mentoring should be taken seriously, as it provided opportunities for both the mentor and the mentee to learn new skills. He was also of the view that for the mentoring relationships to be successful, they required appropriate support from the universities.

Over the past few years, various studies have highlighted the significance of mentorship. A study by Ehrich et al. (2004) demonstrated that despite its shortcomings in terms of lack of time and expertise, mentoring can yield many benefits for both mentors and mentees. They classified the benefits of mentorship in academia into three categories: (increased) job satisfaction, network building, and higher performance. These are essential provisions for academic career progression. The following response corroborates this opinion:

"In my view, mentoring for nGAP needs to be taken very seriously by all the participants because it is about learning on the part of the lecturers as well as myself as a mentor. I also think the university must make sure that this relationship is supported and properly monitored..." **(Mentor 5).**

Another mentor indicated that the higher education sector as a whole needed to take advantage of the lessons emanating from the nGAP mentoring, and develop a standardised mentoring programme that could be beneficial to all the universities. In the previous chapter, it was argued by some researchers that mentoring in South African universities is carried out in a haphazard manner and that even in universities where it is practised, it is not formalised or taken seriously. This response highlights the need for a mentoring framework for the entire higher education sector, as emphasised by the lecturers and managers in their responses.

"I think mentoring for the nGAP presents a great opportunity for the higher education sector to develop a formal standardised mentoring program because at the moment each university is doing its own thing, and some universities do not even have the enough capacity and resources to provide mentoring for other academics who are not in the programme..." **(Mentor 4).**

Lastly, one of the managers indicated that the role of the mentor was explained to him and that he was relying on the DHET guidelines as well on his own research for guidance. He indicated

that the DHET guidelines specified the difference between the mentor's and the supervisor's role. The response below demonstrates that some universities have not developed any form of framework to guide the mentoring programme for the nGAP and seem to have left the mentors to improvise while relying entirely on the guidelines provided by the DHET:

“My role as a mentor was sort of explained to me when I was appointed. I also read in the nGAP SoP that the role of the mentor is different from the role of the supervisor and line manager. I have honestly been using the DHET guidelines and some mentoring research I have done to guide my role as a mentor...” (Mentor 1).

This lack of a substantial response relates back to the issue of the perceived lack of ownership of the nGAP: some universities view the programme as belonging to the DHET and therefore leave everything to the Department, even issues that are within their own jurisdiction. The DHET recently conducted a mid-term review of the nGAP, based on the annual reports submitted by the universities. One of the findings of the reports supported the conclusions arrived at by the Department's study in relation to the issue of ownership of the nGAP.

The mentors' responses suggested that there was some form of understanding among most of the mentors about what the nGAP mentoring entailed. Even though the DHET provided the mentors with some guidelines of what they should and should not do, the responses demonstrated that there was a wide range of interpretations of what the mentors believed mentoring entailed. An understanding also seemed to exist among the participating mentors that there was no single recipe for carrying out mentoring successfully. In Ambrosetti's (2012) analysis of mentoring in higher education, mentoring is found to be complex, with many elements, depending on the individuals in the relationship. However, by knowing the nature of mentoring, the process of mentoring and the distinctive components of mentoring, the individuals involved can meet their overall objectives.

7.7 Mechanisms employed by the universities to support nGAP mentoring

Under this theme, the mentors were asked to reflect on the support provided for them by their universities in carrying out their mentoring responsibilities. There was general agreement that their universities did provide certain levels of support in the implementation of the nGAP mentorship programme. Some of the mentors applauded the way mentoring for the nGAP was coordinated and supported at their universities. Some indicated that even though there was no

formal structure to guide the nGAP mentoring process, their universities had made attempts to ensure that mentoring took place and that the relationships they had formed with their mentees were supported. Two of the participants disclosed that their universities had utilised lessons learnt from other programmes to guide the mentoring for the nGAP. As part of the support provided, their universities organised occasional gatherings and meetings for the mentors and mentees to meet and share their experiences and practices.

From the two responses below emerged the construct of communities of practice (CoPs) where the universities afford mentors and mentees opportunities to develop a sense of community and share practices and experiences. It should also be pointed out that the DHET organises an annual meeting in which all the nGAP managers, mentors and lecturers meet separately or together to discuss and share their experiences of participating in the programme. Molphy, Pockney & Young (2007) suggest that a community of practice is a group of people who share similar interests, or are in the same field or discipline, and are brought together by their desire to share best practices, models and templates. Community members strengthen their knowledge and understanding by working together on a continuous basis.

“I’m happy that there’s some mentoring experience in the university to tap from, particularly for the nGAP because it doesn’t have a mentoring policy to follow...there’s also good coordination by the nGAP manager who always tries to organise informal gatherings for mentors and mentees to just casually meet and share experiences...” (Mentor 4).

“There’s some sort of structure in the university for any nGAP mentor to follow, so that forces one to have regular contact and consultations with mentees...I have two mentees who are very active and passionate about their work...The university tries to now and then organise regular gatherings for the lecturers and their mentors...this is to sort of create a community that can now and then share experiences and advises on topics of interest...I think this is a great idea for these young people...” (Mentor 3).

Even though some universities were seen to be making efforts to support the nGAP mentoring, some mentors seemed to think such support would have been improved if there was better coordination of the mentoring programmes. They also decried the necessity for operating without a guiding policy framework, saying that this meant that the mentors and mentees were left to figure things out on their own.

“I honestly think the university is trying to give the nGAP mentoring a bit of a structure, but it’s coordination could be better...I think it will only get better with time...at the moment things are just left in the hands of the mentors and the mentees to get to know each other and hopefully establish good working relationships...I find that it’s a bit difficult to operate without a mentoring policy, specifically for the nGAP because it is a structured programme...there’s a bit of lack of direction in my view...” (Mentor 1).

At another university, the mentor was of the opinion that even though the university was making some efforts to support mentoring for the nGAP, there was poor coordination and mentors seemed to have been left to work things out on their own without proper guidance or structure. He likened his mentoring experience to “working without a job description” and indicated that there was no clarity on how his performance as a mentor would be evaluated, since there was no system for this purpose. The lack of assessment and evaluation tools for mentors seem to have left him wondering if he was doing a good job or not. However, he seemed to have received some form of affirmation from the fact that his mentee did not raise any grievances.

7.7.1 The lack of an evaluation strategy for mentoring

According to Ehrich, Kimber, Millwater & Cranston (2011), rigorous evaluation and assessment of mentors is essential and higher education institutions must make decisions on the best mentoring evaluation approach to implement. Literature demonstrates that there should be ongoing evaluation activities during the life of a mentoring programme, and a follow-up assessment after the completion of the programme to ensure good practice (Ehrich et al., 2011).

“There’s no structured programme for mentoring nGAP lecturers...so I had to devise my own plan of how I will conduct monitoring...I am sort of using a trial-and-error approach and figuring things out as I move...it’s like working without a job description... I very much rely on the DHET SoP for guidance and the document only speaks about the do’s and don’ts for mentors...no proper evaluation or assessment of mentor performance...I don’t know whether I’m doing a good job or not...But so far so good, no complaints from my mentee...” (Mentor 6).

One of the mentors who was externally recruited also decried the lack of a structure for the nGAP mentoring at his university, remarking that his appointment had been handled in a rather

casual and informal manner, without an appointment contract in place. This response indicated that even though the nGAP mentoring had some characteristics of a formal mentoring programme, as outlined by the DHET, and some institutions had attempted to develop processes for mentoring to take place, the appointment of mentors in some universities had not been formalised.

Samier (2000) found that several supportive activities had to be implemented in higher education institutions to make sure that a mentoring programme is sustainable. This implied that the senior management responsible for the implementation of the nGAP should establish a supportive institutional climate for effective mentoring. The responses by mentors in the study suggested that if the university leadership was not committed to supporting the mentoring activities for the nGAP, they may not succeed.

“Coming to think of it, I found my appointment to be a bit casual, without a proper structure and formal contract from the university... I found myself having to figure things without being provided with much guidance from the university...” (Mentor 5).

Another mentor seemed satisfied with his university’s handling of the nGAP mentoring and the support provided for mentors and mentees. He indicated that there was regular communication between himself and the coordinator, that he was provided with guiding documents from the DHET and that the university had a structure for implementing mentorship for the nGAP. This response demonstrated that even though that university uses the DHET guiding documents, there was an indication that it had embraced the programme and had developed structures to support the implementation of some its features. It was evident from the mentor's comments that mentoring relationships did not exist in isolation, but occurred within a wider institutional context. In other words, the characteristics of the institution have the potential to influence the ability of individuals, either negatively or positively, to develop effective mentoring relationships.

“The university seem to be doing well in its efforts to support the mentors and the mentees, there’s regular communication between myself and the coordinator, and I’ve been given the DHET SoPs as well as an internal programme to follow in terms of what topics to engage in with the mentee...there’s a bit of direction...” (Mentor 2).

There seemed to be a general agreement among the mentors that even though their universities had devised ways of support mentoring for the nGAP, their work could be enhanced if there was a standard, dedicated mentoring policy framework. This issue was also ventilated and supported by the discussions in the previous chapter, where some of the nGAP managers argued that in the absence of a structured mentoring policy or framework for the nGAP, the mentors continued to implement their own practices. Their performances were not being properly evaluated and assessed by the universities or the DHET.

7.8 Mentoring activities undertaken by participating nGAP mentors

Most mentoring researchers are of the opinion that mentoring is valuable for all the parties involved. Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima (2004) argue that for mentees, mentoring has been clearly linked to “increased job satisfaction, greater promotion possibilities, opportunities for increased pay, higher self-esteem, and a heightened sense of professional competence” (p. 133). On the other hand, Chun, Sosik, & Yun (2012) assert that playing a crucial part in a mentee’s development, leading to greater productivity and commitment, generates positive feelings for mentors.

Among other purposes, the nGAP SoP document from the DHET provides guidelines for mentors in terms of the ‘dos and don’ts’ related to their roles and responsibilities. According to the document, the mentor's role includes “keeping close track of agreed developmental milestones and plans” (which are not specified). The document further states that “nGAP mentors are envisaged to be experienced and successful academics and if necessary, recently retired academics may be contracted as mentors” (DHET, 2018, p. 4). The duties of mentors are outlined by the document as follows:

- “helping with the preparation of a personal plan for professional development
- assisting where necessary with the process of registering for a PhD
- assistance with matters such as personal problems; time management; and financial management
- provide opportunities for reflective discussions on teaching and research experiences, opportunities and challenges” (ibid).

Under this theme, the mentors were asked to speak about the mentoring activities and the kind of support they were providing to the nGAP lecturers and how often they met with them.

Responses indicated that each mentor reported several ways in which they had been supporting their mentees. The responses are listed in the table below and most of them show that the support provided by the mentors was focused on career planning, teaching and research support, professional networking and personal development.

Table 7.2: Mentoring activities undertaken by nGAP mentors

Participant	How often they meet	Mentoring activities
Mentor1	<i>Have meetings regularly</i>	-provide support for teaching and this includes preparing class material, -how to write study guides and course outlines, preparing student assessment and research-article writing and publishing. -how to successfully navigate academia
Mentor3	<i>weekly</i>	-advise on academic publishing and establishing professional networks, -PhD completion, -being part of faculty engagements, -how to develop a working schedule, module planning, work life balance, career planning, develop teaching strategies, compiling learning guides,
Mentor5	<i>frequent</i>	-encourage participation in different staff development workshops, induction workshops focusing on teaching and research methods. -try not to encroach in the supervisor's territory which is the research. -assist with setting goals and steps of how they will achieve the goals,
Mentor4	<i>meet from time to time</i>	-have two mentees who meet from time to time and ensure that we follow the university and DHET guidelines in terms of the do's and don'ts I rely on the DHET's guidelines.
Mentor2	<i>-try and meet every 1-2 months -encourage the mentee to take ownership and setup meetings</i>	-have discussions on activities of the nGAP lecturer, in particular teaching, research and community activities -have discussions on specific topics such as time management, safety issues, publishing etc.
Mentor6	<i>have regular contact</i>	<i>I believe the university is the one that should give direction, not the mentors...there's no structured programme, we just meet as and when there are issues that the mentee wants to discuss, I also speak to her about the different development and training opportunities that available in the university...</i>

7.8.1 Possible shortcomings of the nGAP mentoring system

Exploring the activities through which mentors provided support for their mentees revealed that teaching and research support was their main focus. Only one mentor referred to supporting activities that involved community engagement. This finding is probably a consequence of the mentoring guidelines provided by the DHET and referred to earlier, as well as the emphasis of the nGAP on the participants' completion of their PhD and their advancement in the development of teaching skills. The implication of this could be that other professional duties required of these young academics, such as community engagement, which the nGAP advocated, might not have received the required attention. The responses also demonstrated that even though some of the mentoring activities were stipulated in the DHET SoP guidelines, most mentors did not only focus on the outlined activities, but added more items in order to try to strengthen their roles. The responses were also an indication that the mentoring activities listed above seemed to have been tailored to the needs of the mentees. The responses by the nGAP managers in the study recorded fewer activities relating to psychosocial support; however, this does not imply that these kinds of support were not being provided at all.

It is not possible to overlook the issue raised by some mentors that mentoring brings with it an extra workload over and above the responsibilities of mentors who usually found it challenging to accommodate both to their own professional responsibilities and mentoring duties, if employed full-time, like most of the participating mentors. Okurame (2008) asserts that this situation may result in mentors being unable to provide the emotional support that the young lecturers require.

The mentors' responses also highlighted the frequency and regularity with which they met with their mentees. Since there was no standard framework or policy defining the terms and conditions for the nGAP mentoring, there seemed to be no uniformity in the frequency of the meetings. The responses indicated that some were meeting regularly, others from time to time, and some meeting decisions were left in the hands of the mentees. This demonstrated that in the absence of a guiding framework, mentors and mentees had been left to work this out for themselves. The responses spoke to the availability of the mentor or the mentee. The more regularly and often mentors met with their mentees, with whom they had formed strong bonds and to whom they provided valuable career support, the better the opportunities for the mentors to experience feelings of fulfilment for bringing about significant change in their mentees' careers, and therefore their lives. It can thus be argued that frequent meetings between a mentor and mentee strengthened the mentoring relationships.

The responses above again point to the issue of ownership of the nGAP by the universities, which was alluded to earlier in the analysis. Even though earlier responses and the previous two data analysis chapters indicated that some of the participating universities seemed not to have demonstrated full ownership of the nGAP, the above responses painted a rather different picture in relation to the mentoring activities enacted by the participating mentors. While the mentors also highlighted the lack of a mentoring framework, they seemed to have managed to improvise and ensured that mentoring of the nGAP lecturers took place.

7.9 The nature of existing nGAP mentoring relationships

Under this theme, the mentors were asked to reflect on the nature of mentoring relationships they had been able to establish with their mentees. The majority of the responses indicated that apart from some of the highlighted challenges by the lecturers and managers in the previous two chapters, mutually beneficial relationships seemed to have been established, characterised by trust, respect, engagement, motivation, support, collaboration and growth.

One of the mentors described her journey towards establishing a mentoring relationship with her mentee as challenging at first, but it was, at the time of the interview, progressing towards a more positive and trusting relationship in which the two were working towards a common goal. She believed that the relationship would afford both her and the mentee an opportunity to grow and learn from each other.

The response below demonstrates that mentoring has the potential to be both rewarding and frustrating. Some mentors mentioned earlier that they had agreed to participate in the programme so that they could play a role in assisting talented young academics as part of their contribution towards transformation. It might therefore be a fulfilling experience for a senior white professor to mentor and assist a young Black woman from a disadvantaged background or an under-represented group to flourish as an academic in the South African higher education system. On the other hand, like any other relationship, as demonstrated earlier through the mentor responses and the literature, mentoring can also bring its share of hindrances as a result of the need to balance the various mentoring needs of mentees and the multiple roles a mentor plays, such as conducting research or teaching or acting as a supervisor or an advisor. These may also add some complexities that threaten a newly-established mentoring relationship.

“It was not easy at the beginning, but over time we are moving towards a more positive relationship, we are starting to developed some trust and there’s respect on both sides...I can safely say we seem to be working towards a common goal, we are now sharing information and sort of work in collaboration...we are sharing valuable experiences which are important for growth and development for the both of us...” (Mentor 5).

Another mentor indicated that he and his mentee were progressing to a stage where they felt comfortable with each other and were beginning to engage in a more collaborative and supportive space, in which the mentee had an opportunity to make decisions on issues to be discussed during their meetings. The response by the mentor suggested that there was determination on the part of both parties to work together to make the relationship successful:

“I think we are getting to a stage where we can engage in a respectful and supportive manner, there’s some respect for each other’s time...I allow the mentees to set the tone for the meetings and in fact give direction to the relationship...we have to make it work irrespective of the challenges we encounter along the way...” (Mentor 2).

Another mentor admitted that their relationship got off to a rocky start, characterised by disagreements. However, there seem to be an improvement in how they were engaging. The mentor seemed hopeful that the relationship would progress to a point where they could work together and figure things out as a team.

In a study that surveyed teachers who had worked with pre-service teachers in a semester or year-long experience, it was found that mentors were satisfied that their principal responsibility was to socialise aspiring teachers into the field and provide opportunities for them to practise teaching (Garza, Reynosa, Werner, Duchaine, & Harter (2019). In support of these findings is research conducted by Van Ginkel, Oolbekkink, Meijer, & Verloop (2016). They found that mentors want and need to understand their role if quality learning is to occur for both the mentees and themselves.

“Honestly, the relationship was a bit hostile at the beginning, I’m not blaming the lecturer...we seemed not to agree on when to meet and topics to talk about...I can say now the relationship is becoming better and I hope it grows into an even better position with time...I have now encouraged my mentee to set the goals she needed to achieve and we will together work on the how part...” (Mentor 3).

7.9.1 Mentees’ lack of experience of mentoring

One of the mentors spoke about the worrying reality that not all the lecturers receiving mentoring under the nGAP had been exposed to mentoring prior to their participation in the programme, and therefore appeared to lack an understanding of what it entailed. He seemed to think that if there was a clear policy or structure laying out the rules of engagement for both parties, such mentees would have more clarity and understanding of how mentoring should work, particularly in distinguishing between the roles of the supervisors and the mentors.

This response highlighted the issue, raised earlier by one of the mentors, that there was a good possibility that some mentees may not have been formally mentored before, even though they had had research supervisors, or that even if they had received some mentoring, it could have been a different experience from the current relationship under the nGAP, or from the mentor’s own experience. In such a context, the mentees may or may not have known what they would like to get out of their mentoring relationships, or even how to properly articulate their

expectations. The situation painted above highlights and clarifies the lack of a policy framework or structure for the nGAP mentoring programme.

“It has not been easy because I found that in reality, some mentees do not really understand mentoring, they have never worked with a mentor before and they tend to confuse the role of the mentor with that of their supervisor...and with the absence of a policy or structure, it’s not been an easy ride...” (Mentor 6).

The same mentor continued to describe what had transpired in his mentoring relationship:

“At some point I thought my mentee didn’t take the whole thing seriously, not because she didn’t like me or anything, because she didn’t know how she could benefit from the relationship...She sort of started embracing the relationship after getting herself into a challenging situation where she needed my intervention...since then, we are more comfortable with each other, she is starting to open up, sometimes about really personal stuff that any young person would go through...I’m really glad to help...” (Mentor 4).

Another mentor indicated that during the first years of the nGAP, their mentoring relationship was more about advisory support, with the expectation that the mentee would initiate issues for their engagement and take the lead in the relationship as it developed. This response aligned with a statement by Navarro (2017), who recommends that mentors and mentees create trusting relationships so they can talk about practices and observations, and that their relationship should be based on a collaboration in which both parties gained from sharing their experiences. This implied that the relationship between a mentor and mentee should be collaborative in nature through the exchange of information; they should consider each other’s practices and inspire each other to generate good results.

“The relationship I have with the mentee is of advisory support at this stage, especially because these are still early days in the nGAP. My expectations are that the candidate takes initiatives and ownership of the meeting agenda going forward...” (Mentor 1).

The same mentor also touched on the issue of the lack of policy or structure, indicating that at the beginning of their relationship she would only engage on issues initiated by the candidate, but later realised that he needed to contribute in order for the relationship to benefit them both. Since implementing his own strategy, this mentor thought the relationship seemed to be bearing

fruit and they had been able to engage on substantial issues that contributed to the lecturer's development.

7.9.2 Key aspects of mentoring relationships

The above responses agreed with findings from mentoring studies by other authors, demonstrating that, in addition to fulfilling the mentee's needs, mentors also derived many benefits from the mentoring relationship. For instance, Terrion (2010) shows that peer mentors in a university context acquire skills and confidence in leading small, group-centred learning, a deeper knowledge of the subject matter and enhanced problem-solving skills. The following response supports this:

“At the beginning, because there was no guidance and structure to follow, I would just discuss the issues raised by the candidate and leave it that. Over time I realised that, for my own development and for the lecturer's benefit, I needed to do my own research on what mentoring a young academic entail and follow some online mentoring guides to develop my own plan...I must say it has been a learning curve for me and my relationship with the lecturer improved a lot. I was able to cover topics that are important for the career development of the lecturer without only focusing on complaints and frustrations she was encountering...” (Mentor 1)

The mentor continued speaking about the mentee, as follows:

“My mentee is very enthusiastic and opinionated, so such a person can be a bit of a handful because you'll disagree with her most of the time...but because I'm an advisor and not an expert, I also have to listen to her thoughts and support them...so I give her an opportunity to identify the areas that she feels like she needed to grow and develop and then I would assist her on the path to follow...” (Mentor 1).

Eller, Lev & Feurer (2014) conducted an extensive study investigating the mentor-mentee relationship in an academic setting. They discovered eight factors, perceived by both the mentees and their mentors, to be crucial elements of an effective mentoring relationship. These factors were organised into eight themes, termed key components. The figure below was developed by the study to provide a representation of the 'key components of an effective mentoring relationship' as proposed by Eller *et al.* (2014):

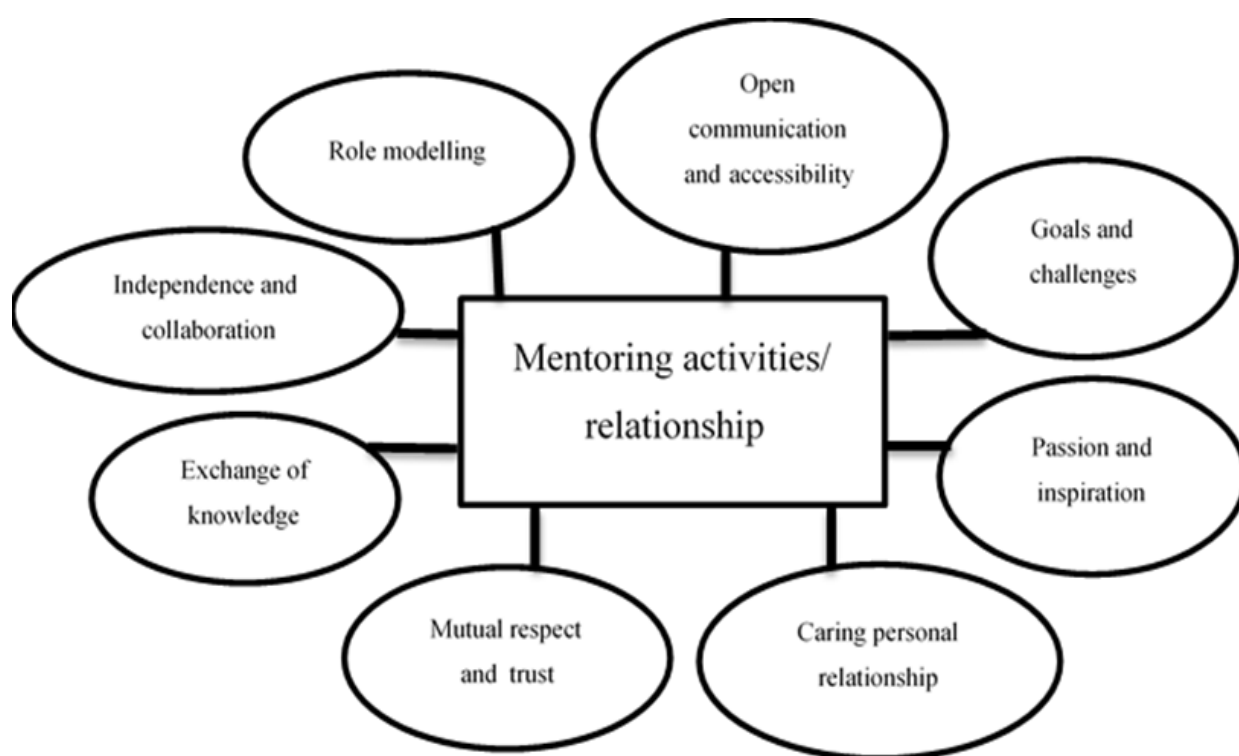


Figure 7.1: Key components of an effective mentoring relationship (Eller *et al.*, 2014, pp. 4-7)

7.10 Professional development and training for mentors and mentees

Under this theme, the mentors were asked to reflect on the mentorship training they have or have not received since their appointment as nGAP mentors, and to indicate how they thought such training could have enhanced their roles. It was evident from their responses that even though some appeared confident about the activities they have been engaging in with their mentees, they believed that mentorship training could have helped them to improve their roles. One mentor said:

“I mean; I am not an expert in mentoring...I need training as well...” (Mentor 2).

According to Malota (2017), it is important for formal mentoring programmes to involve quality mentors in order to be effective. Mentor training facilitates the development of leadership abilities by increasing awareness of the complexity of the profession (ibid).

Another mentor was of the view that mentorship training prior to engaging in the relationship could have enhanced his performance as a mentor. He indicated that because his mentee had not been exposed to mentoring before and did not know how it should be done, he was being misled into believing that he was doing a great job as a mentor. In Chapter 5, some of the nGAP

lecturers indicated that having the opportunity to be allocated someone “older and wiser” to guide them as they become academics in universities was one of the most important aspects of the nGAP. However, it cannot be denied that many of the lecturers had not previously been exposed to mentoring and therefore may not have known whether a mentor was effective or not; they just accepted what happened and, unfortunately, they may not have been able to reap the true benefits of mentoring.

“I believe if I had gone through some sort of training, I could have done even a much better job. I think we appear as if we are doing well simply because the people we are mentoring also do not have an idea of what mentoring should be like, therefore, they can’t tell whether we are effective or not, they are just grateful for the service...” (Mentor 6).

One mentor remarked that mentoring for the nGAP was not a straightforward exercise that could just be taken up without being properly inducted or prepared. He was of the view that the experiences mentors would bring to the mentoring relationship should be backed by theory and practice. Even though research had shown that mentors needed some form of training, there was no consensus regarding the amount of training. Some researchers are of the view that more training is needed when mentoring programmes are at the initial stages, in order to cover certain basic issues that are crucial for all first-time mentors; however, the time dedicated to such training should be reasonable and balanced with other needs and priorities.

“Mentoring is not straightforward thing that you can just take up, you need to know how it works and how your teachings/modelling would influence the person you are mentoring in the long run...remember, we are acting as role models but in a more superior and professional levels. So, what you are instilling in the person, would either put them in the right or wrong path, so you need to apply the techniques that have been tested and documented...” (Mentor 3)

At another university, the mentor indicated that he has not undergone any training for his role as an nGAP mentor and that when he raised the issue of mentorship training with the coordinator, the response was that the DHET was planning to organise training for all the nGAP mentors. The training had not taken place by the time of the interview, and the mentor was already three years into the mentoring role. The mentor’s response suggests that since the university was the implementer of the programme, he was expecting that it would assume the

responsibility of training its nGAP mentors, and not just rely on the planned DHET training, since the mentors were serving the university, not the DHET. The response above also highlights the fact that since the nGAP was initiated, there has not been any formal training or development organised for the mentors, either by the DHET or the participating universities. The nGAP is a partnership between the government and the universities, therefore the training of the mentors should be viewed as a team effort in which both parties are equally involved, and not just the DHET.

“At the moment we are mentors without training...you know I’ve raised this issue with the university I was told that the DHET would organise training for all mentors. But who’s responsibility is the nGAP mentoring? I sometimes feel like the university doesn’t want to admit that they don’t have a plan because you can’t talk about DHET when you are the one implementing the programme...are other mentors in the university not trained as well?”
(Mentor 5).

The mentor quoted below thought the mentorship training should not be targeted only at mentors, since her experience has demonstrated that the mentees were found to be ill-equipped and would therefore require some sort of preparation. The mentor believed that mentee preparation would assist the mentees in benefiting from the programme. Research has shown that it is indeed essential that mentors must be prepared and trained for the task at hand, so that they are conversant with the aims and nature of the relationships they would be engaging in.

“I think not only the mentors should be trained, but the mentees also need to be taken through some sort of workshops or something similar so that they can learn how to actually use the relationship to benefit them professionally...I’ve indicated earlier that the lecturers sometimes don’t take mentoring seriously, simply because they don’t know how it works...prior training would benefit them a whole lot...” **(Mentor 4).**

Lastly, another of the mentors indicated that since his appointment as a mentor, he had not received any training in preparation for the mentoring role he had to engage in. He seemed to think that the university viewed him as an expert and therefore regarded him as not requiring any mentorship training, when in fact he had indicated he needed it.

“I took this important role without being provided any training or induction, I mean, I am not an expert in mentoring...I need training as well...the workshops organised by DHET cannot

replace the actual mentorship training, they are just meetings where we complain and no one seem to do anything about it...” (Mentor 1).

The study has demonstrated through literature that there is a general lack of mentors in the South African higher education system because most senior academics have retired and those that are still in the system are overcommitted and are unavailable to take up mentoring roles. It can thus be argued that since there are few professionally trained mentors, the professional development and training of the current nGAP mentors on current mentoring practices could be crucial in improving the quality of mentoring provided to the lecturers participating in the programme. The literature does not provide concrete strategies or ideas for training mentors so that they can do their work efficiently within their mentoring relationships, or for how mentoring skills can be achieved, or the amount of time required for mentors to grasp these skills.

It can thus be concluded that building mentoring skills seems to require sufficient time and the process may vary from person to person, which could make preparation of these interventions complicated.

7.10.1 Potential hindrances to effective mentoring at all three levels

At the end of their interviews, the mentors were asked to reflect on issues they perceived to be potential barriers towards effective mentoring. One of them spoke about his experience with a mentee who was not keen to participate, simply because she thought mentoring was meant for people who were struggling, and therefore assumed that she would be perceived as weak by her colleagues who did not receive mentoring. Research has shown that some people might not be interested in being part of a mentoring programme because they perceived such developmental programmes to be corrective, and therefore likely to affect their progress record.

“I had a mentee who at some point pretended as if she did not need mentoring and that mentoring is for people who are struggling...maybe because normally mentoring in undergraduate studies targets students who are ‘at risk’...I understood where she was coming from because she has been an excellent student all her life, she’s been excellent generally...”
(Mentor 1).

Another mentor indicated that issues of time and heavy workloads on both his and the mentee’s part posed challenges to their mentoring relationship. The mentor considered academia a

challenging environment which was even worse for new lecturers who found it difficult to adapt to their roles while also trying to establish their own academic identities. Bezzina (2006) maintained that the young lecturers often feel that they are not ready to deal with the doubts, truths and trials that await them in their new roles. It was obvious that there were expectations of young and emerging academics in most higher education institutions that they should be effective lecturers and active researchers who contributed to the teaching and research in their respective departments and fields of study. It should be pointed out that the most important focus of the nGAP is to provide candidates with experience of doctoral study while also accumulating experience of teaching and developing as researchers, as well as getting opportunities to participate in their universities' and departments' community engagement programmes.

“Time and workload sometimes stand in the way of engagements and meetings...Academia is just too hectic for all of us, it's even worse for the mentees who are having a hard time adapting to their new roles and are also desperate to prove themselves in the academic space...at the beginning we struggled a lot to commit to meetings because we were both very busy...if not properly handled, lack of time can spoil a good mentoring relationship...” (Mentor 4).

One of the mentors indicated that she had experienced a situation in which the mentee found it difficult to confide her problems, fearing that the shared information shared could be used to her detriment. This highlights the difficulty of being a line manager and a mentor at the same time, especially for a programme such as the nGAP, which had already attracted negative responses in other universities and departments. In most situations, professional relationships such as mentoring suffered when the mentee, the mentor or both failed to honour their agreed responsibilities.

“My experience has taught me that it can be a bit difficult for a mentee to open up and be vulnerable with their mentors, especially to someone like me who is also in the same department...I think it's a trust issue and fear that personal information may be used against them at some point...It'll take time some before we can overcome this phase...I'm sure we will be fine...” (Mentor 2).

In earlier discussions, some mentors indicated that they had allowed their mentees to provide the direction in terms of the issues they discussed during their meetings. In a situation where a mentoring policy was in place, the roles of the mentor and mentee would have been more

explicit. It was therefore important that for any mentoring relationship to be fruitful, both the mentor and the mentee were equally accountable, since the intervention was not just about one individual, it was meant to benefit all those participating, including the institution. In this way, the mentee would be encouraged to prepare, record progress and provide their mentors with feedback, and the mentor would give relevant advice regarding what the two parties had agreed upon.

“Well, not preparing for meetings and engagements (on both sides) can sometimes stand in the way of a good mentoring relationship because if the mentees doesn’t prepare and guide the direction of the discussions/ meetings, they will not be able to reap the benefits. If the mentors do not prepare, this may taint their reputation in the eyes of the mentees...so preparation is key...” (Mentor 3).

It cannot be denied that mentors and mentees might not always agree on every issue; however, research supports the notion that the mentoring relationship ought to be calm and well-matched. so that they are able to get along and work together.

“For me one thing that could have potentially ruined my mentoring relationship was incompatibility...my mentee was at first not happy that I was assigned to her and that she wasn’t part of the placement process - she was honest with me though...secondly, during meetings, she would always want to unnecessarily assert herself and I always found myself having to explain myself...but I’m proud to say we now have reached some form of understanding, especially about what needs to happen and who needs to do what by when...We are finding a way...” (Mentor 5).

Lastly, one of the mentors reflected on how a lack of communication and what appeared to be competing interests affected his mentoring relationship, indicating that he and the mentee were speaking but not really communicating or understanding each other. Hudson (2014) suggests that it is possible that mentoring relationships comprise deep interactions between mentors and mentees and it is therefore crucial for both to have good personal skills to maintain and construct these relationships. A quantitative study looking at 331 pre-service teachers found that the mentors needed to have attributes that allowed mentees to communicate openly and honestly, to listen actively, and to be effective, supportive communicators with a strong sense of accountability (Hudson, 2014).

“...lack of clarity of expectations and bad communication...we were both talking but we were not hearing each other. My mentee is very assertive and sometimes appears over-confident, so we would just talk and not agree on many things because she would want me to engage in things like her PhD research...The DHET is very clear on this issue that, mentors are not to engage in the supervisor’s role...” (Mentor 6).

Hudson (2014) agrees with the response above, explaining that “mentor-mentee relationships can have negative experiences that cause emotional distress, however, mentoring preparation and positive mentoring relationships can minimize conflicts.”

7.11 Concluding remarks

The discussions in this chapter have demonstrated that mentoring for the nGAP has not been a straightforward activity for the participants, as there have been both opportunities and challenges associated with the mentoring role. Literature demonstrated that mentoring is a multi-faceted and vigorous interpersonal responsibility that may be engaged in willingly or could be a designated responsibility. The nGAP mentors’ responses suggested that most of them had not volunteered for the role: they were assigned mentees, who did not take part in the selection process. Therefore, no process of matching suitable partners was undertaken by the mentoring coordinators. The discussions also revealed that the nGAP mentoring was based on the assumption that mentors were committed to the programme and that they would be competent in their roles and compatible with their assigned mentees. This analysis has also demonstrated that some universities have experimented with the nGAP mentorship, leaving the mentors with no choice but to improvise in order to be effective in their roles.

It also emerged from the responses that in most universities. No mentoring policies or guidelines were in place. Research indicates that for mentoring to be effective and efficient, guidelines and processes must be established to ensure both parties' commitment and participation. Some of the mentors’ responses suggested that the lack of policies and procedures may have resulted in a situation where the nGAP mentoring was not explained to the mentees, so they did not know how to benefit from it, and mentors being unclear on the evaluation processes.

It was also evident from the mentor responses that the mentoring guidelines provided by the DHET did not give any guidance on the roles and responsibilities of mentees. Based on the

literature and some of the mentors' responses, it was evident that the roles of mentees should be clear from the outset, and that the mentees should be afforded opportunities to initiate issues for discussion with their mentors.

The literature used to explain some of the constructs that emerged during the analysis provided a clear direction in terms of interpreting the factors that promote good mentoring. It was evident from the literature that for mentoring relationships to succeed, there needed to be dedication from the three partners involved: the mentor, the mentee and the university.

One of the responses indicated that the mentor needed guidance about how mentoring for the nGAP should have been carried out, but this was not provided by the university as a result of the lack of structure. It is evident from the responses that the mentors were left to figure things out on their own, drawing on their own diverse experiences. Even though the DHET guidelines did provide some guidance, the mentors indicated that this was not sufficient. There is, indeed, a need for a policy and structure from the nGAP.

CHAPTER 8: DATA ANALYSIS, SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary and discussion of the findings from the study, as well as a synopsis of the themes and constructs that emerged in the analysis of data presented in the previous three chapters. The summary is organised in terms of the secondary research questions posed by the study, which guided the interview discussions with the three categories of participants.

8.2 Summaries of key findings

The overarching question for the study was: What are the issues constraining and enabling the implementation of the new Generations of Academics Programme (nGAP) at the selected South African universities?

Responses to this question resulted in six main findings:

- Firstly, the study was able to answer the research question by establishing that there are indeed factors that constrain or enable the implementation of the nGAP in participating universities, and these result from the policy provisions of the programme itself, as well as the individual and institutional environments within which the nGAP operates.
- Secondly, even though the programme offers excellent advantages, such as the reduced teaching workload, the mentoring programme, the international mobility component and the evaluation and reporting component, there is unhappiness across the three categories of participants about how some of these have been conceptualised, interpreted and implemented within their respective universities.
- Thirdly, it was established that even though the participating universities have instituted mechanisms to support the implementation of the features of the nGAP, the data across the three categories of participants revealed that these mechanisms are insufficient and therefore constrain the effective implementation of the programme, as well as the participants' experiences of the programme.
- Fourthly, the study found that there was no policy framework or structure guiding or regulating the mentoring aspect of the nGAP. This left the three categories of participants, and their universities, confused and frustrated due to lack of guidance in this important area of development. Hence, as part of the study's contribution to knowledge from research, the study proposes a model for the development of the nGAP

mentoring framework that can guide the development of a mentoring policy for the programme (see Diagram 9.2).

- Fifthly, it was found that the nGAP involved limited individual and institutional autonomy or freedom to make certain decisions about the programme. This was due to the perceived government interference and overreach in decisions and processes that were outside its jurisdiction. Therefore, the nGAP appeared to be a ‘one-size-fits-all’ systemic intervention that was initiated by government for the 26 public universities, which did not have any choice but to participate in its implementation, in spite of their different backgrounds and contexts. Even though the programme’s implementation assumed a partnership model, the DHET had overall control and exercised power on most decisions regarding the implementation of the programme’s features.
- Lastly, the study established that there was a huge disconnect between the nGAP policy provisions and institutional practices and processes relating to the implementation of the programme. This evident mismatch seemed to play a huge role in constraining the effective implementation of the nGAP and impacting negatively on the experiences of participants. The clash between policy and practice seemed to create confusion and tension between the participating lecturers and the implementers and coordinators of the programme at institutional levels. The perceived discretionary power of the DHET was a critical factor that seems to have worsened the gap between policy and implementation, since it influenced how participants experienced the programme, because of the action or inaction of the universities. The universities exercised their judgement and authority regarding how the programme’s features were implemented, sometimes in opposition to the rules and guidelines set out by the nGAP policy, with detrimental consequences for the participants.

As another contribution to new knowledge, Diagram 8.1, below, presents a summary of the wide-ranging issues that appeared from the participants’ interview data as possible constraints and enablers of the implementation of the nGAP at institutional levels, thus impacting both negatively and positively, on the experiences of participants in the programme. It can be seen in the figure below that the constraining factors are those which participants identified as having affected their experiences negatively, and which may have hampered the implementation of the nGAP in their universities. These included:

- unwelcoming institutional climate and cultures characterised by racism, aggression, discrimination, stigma, gender stereotyping;

- lack of clarity and consistency in the allocation and application of reduced workload;
- lack of flexibility and differentiation in the structure of the programme;
- role overload and insufficient remuneration for managers;
- recruitment characterised by institutional inbreeding practices;
- inconsistent application of lecturer requirements for participating in the programme;
- lack of a mentoring framework to regulate mentoring practices such as mentor-mentee pairing; training, evaluation, and assessment; role clarity; recognition/ remuneration).

The enabling factors are those which participants identified as having impacted positively on their experiences of participating in the nGAP and contributing to efficient implementation of the programme. These included:

- supportive institutional climate and culture; and environment that is welcoming, accommodative and supportive where lecturers have positive experiences;
- freedom and agency to give input towards improving the nGAP implementation processes;
- adequate administration and management capacity, with additional staff to coordinate and manage the programme;
- strong leadership and governing structures;
- the ability of leaders to exercise institutional autonomy and make decisions that enable the programme;
- standard mentoring policy framework and structure for the programme as a whole;
- clearly defined institutional support for mentors;
- institutionally and nationally coordinated mentoring communities of practice.

In Figure 8.1, below, the arrows on the left and right sides of the boxes for the three categories of participants indicate that both the constraints and enabling factors impact equally on the participants' experiences in the nGAP, thereby influencing the effectiveness of the programme at the institutional. The vertical lines joining the large boxes show that these issues are not exclusive to one category, they are interconnected.

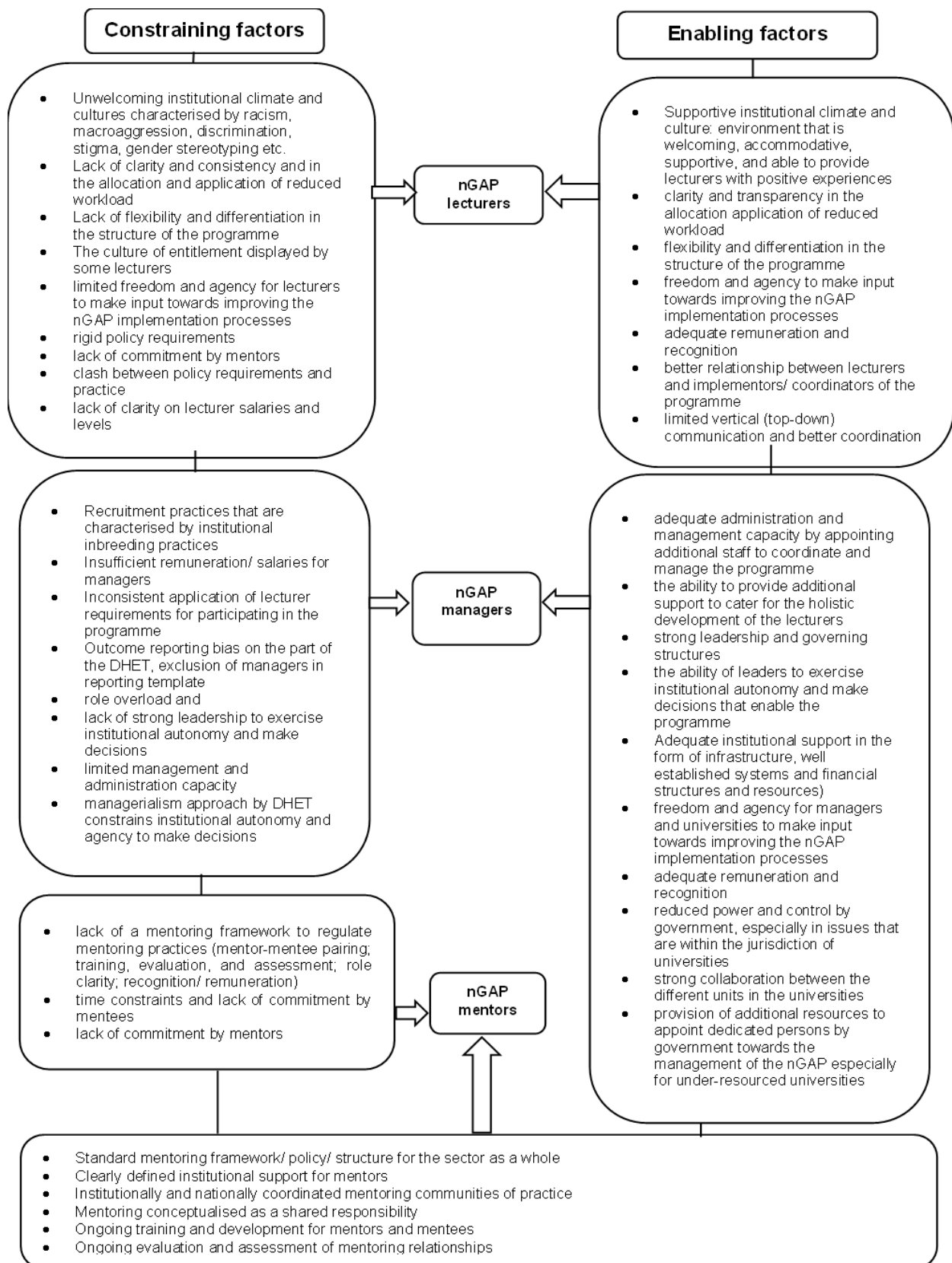


Figure 8.1: Factors constraining and enabling the implementation of the nGAP in universities

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 presented an analysis and interpretation of data collected from the three categories of participants by means of interviews. The participants' responses are presented and analysed in detail, using empirical research to discuss and interpret the constructs that emerged from the data.

This section provides summaries of the findings from the study, guided by the secondary research questions. This is followed by the constructs that emerged from the analysis of the data for each category of participants, and is an indication of how these could constrain or enable the experiences of the participants and the implementation of the programme. These issues are first presented in a table format at the beginning of each question for each category, then followed by the summary and discussion of the emerging constructs.

8.3 Responses to Question 1: What motivated participants to join the nGAP?

In responding to this question, all three categories of participants (lecturers, managers and mentors) were asked questions listed in Appendix D (interview schedule).

8.3.1 Responses from the nGAP lecturers

The lecturer responses highlighted the different motivational factors that they thought played a role in their journey to become academics, in this case, utilising the nGAP as a means. These factors were both individual and institutional and also involved the capabilities offered by the nGAP.

From the conversations with the lecturers, it was evident that some of them had carefully constructed their own career plans by maintaining their affiliations with their alma maters through part-time tutoring and assistant work within their departments, as well as by pursuing senior postgraduate qualifications such as Masters and PhDs. However, these developments were not all the lecturers' own doing; the responses iterated that the role models provided by the university, the supervisors and mentors afforded them support and guidance as well as tutoring and assistant positions as part of their preparation, socialisation and talent management processes.

The responses from the participating lecturers highlighted differences in how they had learnt about the nGAP and been recruited to participate in the programme. Six of the eight became aware of it through people they had worked with since early in their m such as their supervisors,

HoDs, and deans, the other two learnt about the nGAP through advertisements in the media. These issues are discussed extensively in Chapter 5, which presents an analysis of the data collected from the nGAP lecturer interviews.

The table below provides an overview of the responses from the lecturers, the constructs that emerged from the analysis of data and a brief indication of how these could constrain and enable the experiences of lecturers in the nGAP, as well as the programme's effective implementation. The presentation below also highlights the implications for the programme itself, as well as for the participants, the government, and the universities.

Table 8.1: Summary of nGAP lecturer responses to Question 1

Findings	Emerging constructs	Constraining (how)	Enabling (how)
• Passion for academia • Education qualifications • Features of the nGAP (full time employment, reduced teaching workload, PhD study, mobility etc.) • Work experience/ skills/ training/ socialization (tutorship, assistant lecturer, teaching assistant etc.) • Supervisor's encouragement to pursue senior postgraduate research •	• Capabilities, functionings and conversion factors • Institutional inbreeding • Freedom, agency and well-being	• The prevalence of inbreeding in the nGAP recruitment processes may render the programme exclusive-exclude capable candidates-reproduce the disparities that the programme seeks to eradicate • lack of freedom and agency for managers and lecturers to make input towards improving the nGAP implementation processes • Lack of flexibility in the structure and implementation of the features impacting negatively on the experiences of participants	• individual motivation could be the main push for competency development • Inbred participants may be guaranteed an enabling environment by providing them with resources, technology, policies, infrastructure, administration, coordination and management of the nGAP, leadership etc • The nGAP has proved to be an enabler for the achievement of functionings for lecturers • Inbreeding may enable recruitment of well-groomed/ trained and quality/ talented internal individuals • The implementation of the nGAP provides the universities an opportunity to evaluate and transform their internal recruitment processes
IMPLICATIONS • nGAP positions could be viewed as potential drivers of research productivity seeing that the recruitment of lecturers in some universities were mainly guided by the need to grow new research areas, the supervisors' and the departments' research interests • the nGAP could have the unintended consequence of reproducing the disparities that it was established to eradicate by mainly providing opportunities to inbred, privileged candidates and this could be at the detriment of most aspiring and deserving young academics in the country who should rightfully benefit from a transformation programme such as this. • the nGAP could have the unintended consequence of producing lecturers who are disgruntled, who feel controlled and voiceless and whose well-being is negatively affected by the reality that they are unable to exercise their agency and freedom in altering the nGAP features			

The following constructs emerged from the analysis of the data from the lecturers' responses to the above question: capabilities, functionings and conversion factors; institutional inbreeding; agency, freedom, and well-being. The discussion of these constructs was carried

out in detail in Chapter 5 and supported by empirical literature. A summary of the emerging constructs is provided below as part of the final reflection on the study.

- *Capabilities, functionings and conversion factors*

Nussbaum (2000) differentiates between combined capabilities, which are the various opportunities available to a person, and internal capabilities, and which can be fluid and dynamic. In her work, Nussbaum (2011) argues that 'internal capabilities' should be distinguished from innate equipment: they are learned or acquired traits and abilities that are influenced by social, economic, familial and political factors.

This research established that for the lecturers participating in the study, their capabilities were strongly highlighted as some of their motivational factors for wanting to become research academics in universities. Most lecturers found the nGAP to be a very useful resource, providing them with unmatched features and opportunities to develop their capabilities to become future academics. It was also evident from the data that even though the lecturers highlighted a passion for academia as one of their motivations for participating in the nGAP, their supervisors played a critical role in nurturing this capability and by encouraging to apply for lecturer positions in the programme. These supervisors were supportive of the lecturers since their early socialisation as tutors or assistant lecturers, while pursuing their honours and Master's degrees.

It was also established that these young research academics were informed that one of the capabilities they needed to develop in order to become academics was a PhD degree. Their responses indicated that they were aware that PhDs would enable them to gain entry to the academic field and become eligible for positions in the higher education sector. Their association with the NGAP would be a means of enabling this capability. These results are supported by statements made by Pager, Holden and Golenko (2012) cited in Van Rensburg, Armstrong and Geyer (2019). The cited authors assert that 'intrinsic motivators' and the availability of support mechanisms like mentors and links to higher education institutions was likely to encourage the lecturers to pursue a PhD and engage in research. Morrison, Wheeler-Smith & Kamdar (2011) propose that the 'main motivation' for young people to pursue a PhD is so that they can secure a position in an institution of higher education institution, mainly in research and teaching.

It also emerged from the data that the nGAP afforded some of the lecturers an opportunity to achieve their functionings. A functioning is defined by Sen (1999) as an accomplishment of an individual, meaning “what he or she manages to do, be or achieve, and any such manifestation reflects a portion of that person's being.” Alkire (2005) suggests that the functionings are various and distinct facets of life that people appreciate. For example, the lecturer who valued academia as a career did not have the freedom to leave his well-paying job in the private sector until he was given an opportunity through the nGAP. It was clear that the lecturer valued an academic career but did not seem to have had the choice to leave his job to pursue his passion. He had to find a way of achieving his functioning, and as he says, when the nGAP position emerged, he saw that it could provide him with quicker access to what he had been wanting to do - pursue an academic career.

Lastly, the capabilities approach identifies conversion factors as personal, social and environmental traits that explain why individuals can benefit differently from the same resources or arrangements, and these factors illustrate “how individuals make choices under diverse conditions, and what internal and external forces influence those choices” (Robeyns, 2005a). In relation to the nGAP, the conversion factors explain why some lecturers have been able to benefit from the reduced workload while others did not. The institutional conditions and different circumstances and preferences of the lecturers acted as both constraining and enabling factors, hampering or helping them to benefit from the reduced workload feature.

- *Institutional inbreeding*

While trying to establish how the lecturers were recruited to be part of the programme, the researcher found evidence of ‘institutional inbreeding’ in the recruitment of nGAP lecturers in some of the participating universities. It has been suggested that institutional inbreeding can occur where senior leaders recognise the potential of in-house candidates from the beginning of their studies and try to involve them in teaching and research activities as early as possible in preparation for a career at the university. The positive and negative effects that come with institutional inbreeding were identified and discussed in the previous chapter.

The research also established that the supervisors played an important role in encouraging and nurturing some the lecturers’ research capabilities. However, evidence from the lecturers’ interviews also suggested that the supervisors might have strongly influenced who was considered for the nGAP posts in the university departments, since the data revealed that some

supervisors may have had strong links with the nGAP application processes. The data also suggested that these supervisors could be in positions where they knew well in advance which positions would be available, and when.

One of the explanations that emerged from the study was that most universities seem to have conceptualised the nGAP as one of their internal talent management programmes, and therefore viewed it as a instrument for recruiting their own ‘inbred’ candidates. It is also possible that the supervisors and HoDs perceived the nGAP as for a means of pursuing their own research interests by recommending their supervisees for nGAP positions. The evidence suggests that this practice had the potential to exclude externally recruited candidates and render the nGAP an exclusive programme that could only be accessed by a few connected individuals.

On the other hand, research demonstrated that inbreeding could be a good and unavoidable practice, particularly where higher education systems are still in the initial stages of building their research expertise and intellectual capacities, where academic job markets are still rigid and developing, and where universities are expanding into new area of research or enlarging departments, particularly in scarce skills areas where it is difficult to recruit excellent candidates at the national level (Horta & Yudkevich, 2015). These could be some of the reasons for encouraging these practices in some of the participating universities. It could also be that inbreeding practices were so entrenched in some universities that they had become almost unavoidable.

The important message coming out of this analysis was that the exploitable nature of the nGAP's post application process may have inadvertently given some senior faculty members enormous power and influence over the nGAP positions, and this could have endangered the transformation aspect of the programme. The researcher cautions that if this issue is ignored completely, the perceived institutional inbreeding practices have the potential to undermine the whole purpose of inclusion and transformation that the programme seeks to promote.

- *Agency, freedom of choice, and well-being*

Sen's capabilities approach “respects the fact that individuals must be free to make their own choices, since people have different conceptions of what a valued life entails” (Robeyns, 2005a, p. 101; Crocker & Robeyns, 2010, p. 76). The concept of voice is imperative in this study, as ‘voice’ is the ability for nGAP lecturers to communicate their anxieties, opinions and wishes,

and be understood by their universities, so that their views can be taken seriously and ultimately improve the effectiveness of the programme.

The study found that some lecturers realised that being part of the nGAP limited the freedom and agency associated with being an academic. Once enrolled in the programme, they became voiceless and were denied the opportunity to contribute towards making the nGAP a programme that was more favourable to their various situations. There is evidence suggesting that the lecturers viewed the nGAP as a ‘top-down’ initiative that did not allow sufficient autonomy for them to identify and determine the professional requirements necessary to guide and inform the implementation of the programme at institutional levels. The lecturers felt strongly that the programme’s structure was too prescriptive, and recommended that it should be reviewed in order to become more differentiated and flexible.

In the next sections, the matter of the reduced workload is discussed. The data shows that some lecturers were convinced that the implementation of the reduced workload feature at their universities could have benefited them more if it was customised to each individual’s circumstances. They felt that the implementation of this feature was flawed and riddled with inconsistencies.

- *Autonomy and freedom of choice*

The findings also indicated that the lecturers’ freedom to become agents of change and make their own choices in relation to the workload implementation was constrained by the same structures and processes that were expected to protect and support them. These results are compatible with findings made by Brancto (2008) & Hunzicker (2010), who found that mandatory professional programmes were irrelevant and contrary to the needs of the participants, and that they were likely to lead to low motivation and poor commitment if they did not include the voices of participants (Brancto (2008); Hunzicker (2010)). Moreover, these two authors both concluded that a lack of consultation might result in the implementation of programmes that are not client-centred and therefore risk losing significance and legitimacy. The data gave a strong indication that the lecturers felt disgruntled and disempowered, and were in desperate need of a platform to vent and talk openly and formally about internal institutional issues that had affected them. It was possible that the nGAP lecturers found themselves in these constraining situations because their expectations when entering the programmes had not been met and the details of their terms of employment were not clarified.

It appeared that they were not informed at the outset that the nGAP structure and features were fixed and that the universities were not able to effect any changes to the programme because it was administered by a government department, which was the only entity with the authority to control how it was implemented. Consequently, it was not possible for the nGAP to offer the lecturers the kind of flexibility they thought they would get because the structure of the programme was fixed.

Although Sen (1999) stresses the importance of agency and choice within the capabilities approach, the conclusion was reached that the environment in which they are exercised can facilitate or constrain agency and freedom. While most people possess the potential for agency, their ability to become active agents also relies upon their contexts. It became clear to the lecturers that participating in the nGAP might not be a solid confirmation that once appointed in the programme they would be afforded a ‘freedom-based approach’ to engage in purposeful processes that comprise the design and implementation of the programme (Crocker, 2008). Thus it is argued that the policy environment around which the nGAP was conceptualised represented a limitation to the lecturers’ ability to exercise their freedom and agency.

8.3.2 Summary of responses from the nGAP managers

There were similarities among most of the managers’ responses, in that they had all been employed by their universities long before the introduction of the nGAP. Some managers indicated that they were informed by their seniors that they would be coordinating the nGAP because they had experience of implementing similar programmes within their universities. The responses of some managers seemed to suggest that being part of the nGAP was not something they voluntarily decided on – that it was an assigned work area that could not be avoided. The managers’ responses highlighted the diverse and multi-faceted nature of the nGAP processes and the fact that its implementation at the institutional level brought with it huge amounts of work, which appears to have placed tremendous pressure on the universities, and particularly on the people who had been nominated to oversee the implementation.

It was also clear from the responses that the responsibilities of the nGAP involved a great deal of coordination, communication, financial management, monitoring and evaluation, understanding and interpretation of policies and regulations, advocacy and marketing. Carrying out all these tasks involved required the requisite skills, capabilities and capacities. It can also be deduced from the responses that the universities expected the managers to cope with the

load while they delayed on responding to the manager's requests for additional staff to assist with the work. The table below provides an overview of the responses from the lecturers, the constructs that emerged from the analysis of data and a brief indication of how these could constrain and enable the experiences of managers in the nGAP and hinder the programme's effective implementation. The presentation below also highlights the implications for the programme itself, as well as for the participants, the government and the universities.

Table 8.2: Summary of nGAP manager responses to Question 1

Responses/ findings	Emerging constructs	Constraining (how)	Enabling (how)
- previous work experience and length of service - skills and qualifications - similarity of the nGAP with existing staff development programmes - opportunities for promotion and growth - passion for staff development and transformation in HE - no choice but to do mentoring, not voluntary, had to comply with request - additional roles and responsibilities - nominated to oversee the implementation of the programme - expected to cope without additional staff	- Role overload - Managerialism, Institutional Autonomy, and Ownership	- the additional responsibilities and seem to cause stress and dissatisfaction among some managers - The new/ additional roles could affect efficiency and quality of support provided to the programme participants - Managerialism by DHET may be hampering effective participation and the ability to take ownership of the programme - there is a visible gap/ clash between policy and practicalities during implementation which creates inconsistencies and tensions in the system - DHET managerialism may be hampering the ability of leaders to exercise institutional autonomy and take ownership of the programme, and make important decisions	- nGAP presents an opportunity for universities to provide additional and new skills to existing staff - the nGAP should enable universities to put additional measures in place to support young academics and strengthen their administrative capacities - the challenges that come with the nGAP should enable universities to improve efficiency in internal reporting and financial management processes for many universities - the nGAP presents an opportunity for universities to strengthen leadership at departmental and faculty levels - the universities should recognise the importance of leaderships as an important driver for fostering change and transformation
IMPLICATIONS - The inequalities in the distribution of administrative and management capacities in South African higher education system could become persistent through the implementation of the nGAP where well-resourced universities are able to put additional financial resources in place to support the programme while others cannot. - The managerialist approach by government seem to be taking away the freedom of universities to exercise their autonomy and puts unwarranted pressure on universities that are under-resourced as they struggle to achieve the required efficiency and effectiveness due to lack of administrative and managerial capacity. It could be that because of this behavior/ approach, some universities are rebelling and may have decided to rather leave every decision to the DHET and not take any ownership of the programme.			

From the analysis of data collected for this question, role overload, managerialism, institutional autonomy and ownership emerged as constructs, and are dealt within the summary below.

- Work/ role overload*

The study established that most nGAP managers participating in the study experienced 'role overload' because of the additional responsibilities that came with the implementation of the programme at their universities. According to Bolino & Turnley (2005); and Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman (1970), 'work/role overload' refers to situations in which employees have too many responsibilities, or when they are expected to perform well over a limited available time, with

only few job resources and under a certain pressure. Therefore, when employees experience high role overload similar to that described by the nGAP managers participating in the study, Bolino & Turnley (2005) argue that this implies that “their job demands exceed their capabilities, which will lead to higher levels of job stress” (ibid). The data in the study showed that most universities repurposed their existing human resources and systems to accommodate the implementation of the nGAP, therefore the nGAP managers, who were already employed and had other responsibilities that were part of their job descriptions, inherited the additional responsibilities of coordinating and managing the programme.

In the same vein, conversion factors may explain why not every university has been able to successfully implement some of the components of the nGAP, even though the nGAP is a nationally funded programme. It was indicated in the introductory chapter that universities participating in the study comprised both HDIs and HWIs, and that these universities are different in terms of resources, capacities, location, infrastructure and funding. For instance, even though all managers indicated that the nGAP brought with it additional responsibilities, managers in the HDIs indicated that their universities did not have the funding or financial reserves to employ additional staff to manage the programme.

Even when the allocated nGAP funds were utilised, they were still unable to attract and employ experienced senior people who could competently implement the programme. This was often due to their locations and other issues, such as their inability to retain talent due to poaching by universities located in big cities. Although the DHET attempted to ensure that every university had the same and equal opportunity to be part of the nGAP, it is likely that some universities, particularly those HDIs in rural areas, will still struggle with implementation. In summary, this study's results corroborated the theory that context matters when it comes to executing conversion factors. Thus, it is not possible for every university to utilise their budgeted resources for the successful implementation of the nGAP.

The data from the managers' interviews demonstrated that the nGAP is multifaceted and multi-layered, and therefore its implementation was not as simple as it might appear. The data also demonstrated that the nGAP's implementation demands certain dimensions of knowledge, interpersonal skills, technical competence and understanding of institutional and government policies and regulations. As a result of assuming additional roles as nGAP managers, some participants indicated that they were overwhelmed and stressed. It was clear that the new

responsibilities came with additional pressures. The managers were also unhappy that these new responsibilities did not come with additional remuneration. Literature by researchers such as Demerouti *et al.* (2001) reports that employees who experience high workloads are more prone to experiencing higher levels of work pressure. This statement is supported by Bolino and Turnley (2005) who emphasise that that “when employees experience high role overload, this means that their job demands exceed their capabilities, which may lead to higher levels of job stress” (p. 4).

Even though the study did not establish the nGAP managers’ turnover intentions, it was considered important to highlight this issue, as it was shown to be one of the antecedents that could have a bearing on the employees, decisions to consider leaving the organisation. The overall feeling amongst these nGAP managers was that the role overload resulting from the additional nGap work would become unsustainable in the long term, specifically due to the growing number of lecturers in the programme. Anderson *et al.* (2002), Barkhuizen *et al.* (2004), Gillespie *et al.* (2001) and Olivier *et al.* (2004) argue that most employees contemplate leaving organisations particularly where there are remuneration-related issues.

While managers from certain universities were overwhelmed by the additional responsibilities, data also revealed that some universities were able to adapt and accommodate the new nGAP responsibilities without their managers experiencing role overload. It was demonstrated in the analysis that well-resourced universities were able to appoint dedicated persons to coordinate and manage the nGAP. Even though the DHET had made provision for universities to utilise 5% of the accumulated interest to appoint additional support personnel, the allocation was found to be insufficient for under-resourced universities.

These findings highlighted existing inequalities in the distribution of administrative and management capacities in the South African higher education system that resulted from historical inequalities due to apartheid. Moyo (2018) points out that the differentiated nature of the higher education system played a substantial role in the daily administration of higher education institutions, with particular reference to the legacy of apartheid and the uneven distribution of resources and people within the system (with expertise concentrated mainly in urban, better-resourced universities).

- *Agency, freedom and well-being*

The construct of agency, freedom and well-being also featured strongly in the managers' interviews. Some of the managers in the study felt that they did not have the option of saying no to the nGAP management or to having the additional responsibility allocated to them. The managers also felt strongly about their inability to contribute to or influence nGAP requirements for lecturers because of their level of employment at universities. Sen and Nussbaum argue that capability should not be constrained, but must be enabled or supported in order for it to achieve agency and freedom. This is a clear demonstration that this important capability has been constrained by the managers' respective contexts and environments.

The issue of well-being also came out strongly as the managers spoke about their responsibilities. The responses of the majority of the managers demonstrated unhappiness at the additional responsibilities that came with the implementation of the nGAP. Most managers indicated that they were overwhelmed with the amount of work and the pressure that came with the nGAP work. Researchers such as Huang (2017) establish in their research that employees who experience role overload are more likely to experience higher levels of job stress, because their job demands exceed their capabilities.

The capability approach argues that well-being ought to be understood in terms of what opportunities and substantive freedom of choice are available to individuals, and that this should be based not only on the outcomes that individuals achieve, but on external factors as well. Consequently, being part of and managing the nGAP may represent some sort of achievement for the managers; however, the capabilities approach supports the view that the achievement of a person's considered goals and objectives may improve or lessen their sense of well-being if these goals have been autonomously chosen to pursue, and not imposed by others - even if the same goals are often shared.

- *Managerialism, institutional autonomy and ownership*

Chetty & Louw (2012) describe managerialism as a set of management processes and instruments with the main objective of creating superior performance through the measurement of the outstanding performance of higher education. Chaharbaghi (2007) notes that managerialism emphasises conformity and norm-following behaviour; this is a focus from which professionals are described in the terms of what they are capable and incapable of doing

(p. 326). In other words, the managerialist approach is concerned with promoting values such as effectiveness, power, duty (responsibility), and management within universities.

The data in the study revealed that the government's approach to the regulation of the implementation of the nGAP may have hampered institutional autonomy and freedom for the universities to make important decisions when it comes to the programme. Data in the study indicated that as a result of this, some universities appeared to have opted for a tentative approach and had not taken full ownership of the programme. Participating lecturers and managers indicated that the DHET seem to be interfering in decisions that should be taken by universities, thereby affecting the ability of universities to effectively implement some of the nGAP features. While universities were deemed to be autonomous by government, under the managerialist approach they had little room to give input or make important decisions that could improve the implementation of the programme. The government, through its regulations, remained in control of how the nGAP managers, mentors and lecturers should behave and work. It can therefore be argued that by behaving in this manner, the government implied that universities were not entirely trusted, and therefore it should continue maintaining a firm hand and withhold some decision-making powers in certain areas of the programme. It could be the case that because of this approach, some universities had rebelled and would therefore rather leave every decision to the DHET in the future, and not take any ownership of the programme.

In contrast to the above, the study found that some universities were, in fact, able to exercise their autonomy and assume full ownership the implementation of the nGAP, irrespective of the approach adopted by government. These universities adopted a proactive approach in managing the programme, enabling them to avoid situations where they remained completely dependent on the DHET. For instance, some of these universities appointed dedicated persons to coordinate and manage the nGAP. They also owned and managed to resolve issues relating to lecturer salaries by utilising their own funds or accrued interest from the nGAP funds to ensure that lecturer salaries were on par with those of their counterparts. Therefore, data in the study indicated that ownership of the nGAP seemed to be clearly visible in well-resourced universities. The focus was again on the disparities in the allocation of resources and administrative capacities in the higher education system, therefore an argument can be advanced that the approach by government seemed to act only as a constraint in under-resourced universities, as they relied entirely on DHET for funding and additional resources for the nGAP support.

The recently published report on the mid-term review of the nGAP made findings similar to the above. The report established through the analysis of institutional progress reports submitted to DHET that the various levels within institutions participating in the nGAP perceive the programme as ‘belonging’ to the Department (DHET, 2020). The report indicated that this was particularly evident in the progress reporting by the nGAP lecturers, in which difficulties were not resolved at institutional levels. This impelled the lecturers to seek and expect intervention from the DHET, especially on matters that needed to be owned and resolved at institutional level (ibid). This study concludes that the managerialist approach removes the freedom of universities to exercise their autonomy and eventually puts unwarranted pressure on the universities that are under-resourced, as they struggle to achieve the required efficiency and effectiveness because of a lack of administrative and managerial capacity. Thus, managerialism by government seems to have become an obstacle for some leaders to effectively champion the successful implementation of the nGAP in their universities.

Once again, this relates to the notion of capabilities, functionings and conversion factors, as defined by Sen, Nussbaum, Robeyns and other scholars. As explained in earlier chapters, the nGAP salary allocations were capped at R2.5 million for a six-year period. Universities that had the additional financial resources had no problem in topping up the salaries so they were on par with their existing lecturer posts. Unfortunately, those that have insufficient financial resources experienced challenges in attracting suitable candidates for the allocated posts. Retention also became a huge challenge once the candidates had been recruited. Therefore, context is important in assessing how the different components of the nGAP were implemented at the participating universities.

8.3.3 Responses from the nGAP mentors

The mentors provided varying responses, with some flagging their seniority in the university, their many years of experience as academics and working with young academics as some of their main motivations for considering and accepting mentoring roles in the nGAP. One of the mentors indicated that as a senior professor, mentoring young academics in his department was part of his job, and that he was committed to assisting the university in developing the new intake of young academics. Some of the other mentors also indicated that they were driven or motivated by the need to help young people in the higher education system.

Others disclosed that they were, in fact, left with no choice but to agree to mentor the nGAP lecturers in their departments, and that they found mentoring for the nGAP complicated, since it came with its own rules. Others referred to their qualifications and many years of experience as senior professors and academics as their motivation for participating in the programme as mentors. The table below provides an overview of the responses from the mentors, the constructs that emerged from the analysis of data and a brief indication of how these could constrain and enable the experiences of mentors in the nGAP as well as the programme's effective implementation. The presentation below also highlights what the study believes would be the implications for the programme itself, the participants, government, and the universities.

Table 8.3: Summary of nGAP mentor responses to Question 1

Responses/ findings	Emerging constructs	Constraining (how)	Enabling (how)
- Retired but still has institutional research linkages - The need to help young generation of academics - Passion for working with young people - Previous work experience and skills - Commitment to working on transformation and redress programmes such as the nGAP - Mentoring part of the responsibilities of senior academics - Requested to become a mentor - Seniority in the department and research alignment with the mentees'	- Generativity - Lack of clarity on nGAP mentor recruitment strategy - Lack of clarity on what nGAP mentoring entails	- Mentors could use the nGAP mentoring to pursue their own interests (career growth and improving their own profiles) rather than those of the lecturer - The nGAP's emphasis on internal mentors could result in the reproduction of institutional cultures and practices - Lack of clarity on mentor recruitment processes could have a negative impact on mentor-mentee pairing practices - The general lack of policy/ framework on nGAP mentoring could hamper the universities' ability to facilitate and support the mentoring relationships. - The lack of clarity on what mentoring for the nGAP entails leaves the mentors confused as they are expected to figure out things on their own without much guidance and structure - Confusion among mentors could hamper progress on nGAP mentoring in general	- Good mentorin practices could enable the ability of lecturers to achieve high levels of teaching performance and research productivity - There is an opportunity for universities to develop mentoring frameworks and guidelines - Some of the identified challenges could encourage the universities to embrace and support mentoring for all staff who require it
IMPLICATION - Universities are struggling to clarify the intricacies of the nGAP mentoring aspect such as the objective and scope of mentoring, the requirements, how mentoring would be put into practice, the guiding principles, mentor-mentee expectations, expected outcomes/ outputs/ goals, setting of boundaries, clarification of roles and responsibilities etc. They do this without any policy or formal structure. - The lack of a mentoring policy indicates that this crucial area of professional development of lecturers is not prioritized and taken seriously by the DHET and the universities			

The constructs that emerged from the analysis of data gathered through this question are: generativity; the lack of clarity on mentor recruitment practices; and the lack of clarity on what nGAP mentoring entailed.

- *Generativity*

This study has established that participating mentors had different reasons for participating as mentors in the nGAP. Allen (2003) affirms that mentors are largely encouraged to engage in mentoring to achieve their own developmental needs, and that these are deemed to egocentric in nature and can be categorised either as intrinsic or extrinsic. In his research, Allen (2003) discovered that mentors often assume this role as a means of self-enhancement motivation or self-fulfilment motivation.

The data in the study revealed that the nGAP mentors in the study reflected both motivational factors as identified by Allen *et al.*, with some speaking about their experiences and passion for working with young people as motivators, and others highlighting their affiliation with the universities (which could be interpreted as self-focused) as a motivational factor, and some who spoke about their personal commitment to assisting young people (which could be interpreted as other-focused).

The data further demonstrated that mentors in the study were motivated by what researchers refer to as generativity. According to Hastings (2012), social perceptions of an individual because of their age is considered a basis for the external motivation behind generativity. This author argues that the generative attitude can be understood as a desire to contribute to the future for those who follow. For instance, in the case of the nGAP mentoring, and mentoring in general in higher education, it is expected that senior academics in universities and those that have retired, should make themselves available to mentor a new generation of academics joining the system.

It was not surprising for the concept of generativity to emerge as one of the motivational factors for nGAP mentors in that, according to the DHET guidelines on the nGAP, mentors should be retired or semi-retired academics who are experienced, successful and recognised to be good teachers. This statement by the DHET is an acknowledgement that even though the lecturers joining the nGAP have been students in the system, they are new to their academic roles. Therefore, in their journey towards becoming the next generation of senior academics, they

may require guidance from someone who has been part of the system for a long time. Therefore, in the nGAP, mentoring is considered one of the mechanisms for nurturing the next generation of academics and supporting their capacities to accomplish excellence in their teaching performance and research productivity.

- *Lack of clarity on nGAP mentor recruitment strategy*

In the literature reviewed for the study, recruitment or selection has been identified as one of the most important components of mentoring. There are, however, different strategies that can be utilised to identify or recruit mentors, depending on the type of mentoring programme.

The study found that the mentoring aspect of the nGAP displayed the characteristics of formal mentoring, where the university is responsible for coordinating the mentoring relationship. Like mentoring for the nGAP, formal mentoring relationships have been sanctioned by the institutions, and there is usually a third party, in the role of a coordinator, who connects the mentor with the mentee (Foote & Solem, 2009). According to Davies & Slattery (2010), an institution plays an important role as part of a formal mentoring programme, by providing structures, guidelines, policies and assistance with regard to initiating, maintaining and ending the relationship between mentor and mentee. These definitions distinguish formal programmes from informal mentoring in an academic context, in which, according to Scandura & Pellegrini (2007), it is the main duty of the mentor and/or mentee to start, sustain and terminate a mentoring relationship, without much support or intervention from the organisation.

Despite this, the nGAP mentoring process seems to diverge from some of the processes outlined above, because a clear strategy has not been defined for recruiting and selecting mentors for the programme. All the mentors participating in the study indicated that they were not recruited in line with any specific policy or framework; instead, they were informally approached and asked to become mentors for the appointed lecturers. It therefore appears that there was no clearly outlined application or recruitment process for nGAP mentors that was implemented by participating universities. Even though some of the mentors indicated that they were motivated by the need to help young people in the higher education system, some of the responses suggested that they may not have participated in the programme if they had not been formally or informally approached. This was evident in the responses of the two mentors who said they were left with no choice but to agree to the requests to mentor the nGAP lecturers in their departments.

The researcher therefore concluded that even though the nGAP displayed some of the characteristics of a formal mentorship programme, it lacked clarity on the mentor recruitment processes to be followed for the nGAP mentors. Clutterbuck & Ragins (2002) highlight that formal mentoring programmes can differ with regard to the objectives, focus groups, and specific implementation or purpose.

- *Lack of clarity on what nGAP mentoring entails*

Ambrosetti (2012) points out that mentoring is diverse, and that it is reliant on the persons in the relationship; however, being able to conceptualise its nature and processes, as well as its different mechanisms, offers a reliable approach that can permit all the participants to achieve their objectives. Byington (2010) argued that since there are diverse terms applied to defining and clarifying the role of a mentor, identifying the kind of mentoring favourable to the environment is a crucial component.

Even though the mentors' responses demonstrated that there was a general understanding and wide interpretation of what the mentoring involved, they agreed that there was a lack of clarity on precisely what mentoring for the nGAP entailed. The DHET provided the mentors with a brief description of who could become an nGAP mentor, as well as some 'dos and don'ts' for nGAP mentors; however, the mentors in the study agreed that these were insufficient.

As indicated earlier in the analysis, the nGAP guidelines view the mentor as someone who should act as a leader who is well-versed in their field and in academic practice and tries to contribute towards a mentee's learning. However, the mentors in this study maintained that these are not enough, and that this area of the programme should be regulated by means of a mentoring policy and framework. Their reasoning was that mentoring for the nGAP was not straightforward, therefore it should be supported through a policy of framework. The data points to the importance of clarifying in advance the intricacies of a mentoring programme or relationship, such as the objective and scope of the programme, the criteria for the selection of mentors, how mentoring would be put into practice, the guiding principles, mentor-mentee expectations, expected outcomes/outputs/goals, setting of boundaries, clarification of roles and responsibilities, and so on. For universities to be able determine all these, a mentoring policy or framework must be in place.

It was well and good that most mentors in the study were able to use their capabilities to cultivate and sustain mentoring relationships, irrespective of whether there was a formal policy regulating mentoring in the nGAP. However, not all mentors across the 26 universities would be able to undertake this task without assistance in the form of policy, or some sort of institutional guidelines. Firstly, not all mentors have mentorship experience, and therefore may not know how to execute mentoring in the absence of such guidelines. Not every mentor has the capability or the resources to improvise, as those participating in the study have done, simply because their experience, environments and contexts might have been unfavourable.

The possibilities outlined above point give indications of the limitations or constraints on lecturers in accessing adequate mentoring and being part of a good mentoring relationship. This could have strained the lecturers' capabilities to exercise options in relation to nGAP mentoring. However, some lecturers may not have been at risk, as they may have the capabilities and functionings to be able to access the kind of mentoring they value. Despite this, many factors can hinder the mentoring process, so the long-term sustainability of access to mentorship is an important factor in the evaluation of the nGAP mentoring programme.

In the course of the nGAP it will be important to consider the specific ways that mentoring knowledge, skills, and perspectives has contributed to lecturers' ability to think critically and creatively about themselves, their careers as academics and their contributions to academia. It becomes possible to show that mentoring knowledge builds the capabilities of the nGAP lecturers to have successful careers as academics. Thus, a mentoring component is key to the development of nGAP lecturers, and without it, they might not be able to develop these abilities.

8.4 Responses to Question 2: What mechanisms have universities employed to support the implementation of the nGAP?

For this question, the three categories of participants were asked to reflect on the mechanisms that their universities have employed to support implementation of the nGAP. They were also asked the extent to which they thought these were constraining and enabling for their participation in the programme, as well as its implementation. It was indicated in previous chapters that as part of their arrangement with government the universities had an obligation to facilitate its implementation by providing training; professional development opportunities to support research and teaching; coordination; administration; management and leadership;

infrastructure and resources. The responses by the three categories of participants indicated that the mechanisms to support the nGAP did exist; however, they were deemed insufficient by the respondents.

8.4.1 Responses from nGAP lecturers

The data from the lecturers' interviews revealed that mechanisms to support the implementation of nGAP were indeed in place, and they were repurposed to accommodate the nGAP. These mechanisms and structures included human resources policies and practices, finance and procurement departments, and academic and research support policies. In some universities, there are dedicated persons employed to coordinate and manage the programme, working in collaboration with different units. However, other universities have not been able to appoint new staff for this purpose.

The table below provides an overview of the responses from the lecturers, the constructs that emerged from the analysis of data and a brief indication of how these could constrain and enable the experiences of lecturers in the nGAP as well as the programme's effective implementation. The presentation below also highlights what it is believed would be the implications for the programme itself, and well as for the participants, the government, and the universities.

Table 8.4: Summary of nGAP lecturer responses to Question 2

Responses/ findings	Emerging constructs	Constraining (how)	Enabling (how)
- Repurposing of existing mechanisms to support the nGAP such as: human resources policies and practices, finance and procurement departments, academic and research support policies. - Appointment of dedicated persons to coordinate and manage the nGAP - collaboration between the different units within the university - monitoring and evaluation processes	- Unequal distribution of resources and capacity to coordinate/ manage the nGAP - nGAP a ‘top-down’ approach suppressing the lecturers’ voices	- increased responsibilities limited the ability of under resourced universities to develop strong financial management structures - existing institutional resources and systems may become overstretched to accommodate the nGAP - the ‘top-down’ approach of the nGAP does not allow for sufficient autonomy for the lecturers to identify and determine their own professional requirements to guide and inform the implementation of the programme at institutional levels. - Lack of consultation on many aspects of the programme could also negatively influence the relevance and authenticity of the nGAP - Reporting processes that do not provide for confidentiality exposes lecturers to victimisation, which could affect the integrity and honesty in their reporting - Fear of victimisation by lecturers could create working relationships that are characterised by distrust/ suspicion	- The nGAP provides an opportunity for universities to increase administrative and managerial capacity - enable universities to apply and enforce standard rules and regulations - enable universities to improve their internal reporting systems to be efficient and protect lecturers from victimization - the identified challenges provides an opportunity for government to recognise the need to provide additional resources to universities for the appointment of dedicated staff to coordinate and manage the nGAP
IMPLICATIONS - Under resourced universities will continue to struggle with the implementation of the programme due to lack of capacity and resources. Hence, the study proposes that dedicated funding be provided for them to employ additional persons to coordinate/ manage the programme. - The programme runs the risk of producing lecturers who are disgruntled, who feel controlled and are in desperate need for a platform to vent and talk openly and formally about internal institutional issues that have been affecting them. If in the long run the programme is perceived to not be able to improve lecturer experiences, it could experience low uptake among aspiring young black academics because of the negative experiences of their predecessors who seem to have lost confidence in the system and government. - It remains to be seen if the programme would reduce the existing inequalities through the provision of more opportunities for young black academics and those from other underrepresented groups or it would in fact increase these inequalities by unreasonably expanding opportunities for those already privileged.			

The following constructs emerged from the analysis of data gathered from the lecturers’ interviews: unequal distribution of resources and capacity to coordinate/manage the nGAP; and the nGAP as a top-down approach, suppressing the lecturers’ voices.

- Unequal distribution of resources and capacity to coordinate/ manage the nGAP*

It was revealed from the study's data that there are inequalities at participating universities in the distribution of capacity to coordinate and manage the nGAP. Earlier in the chapter it was stated that some universities have been able to appoint additional personnel to specifically focus on the coordination and management of the nGAP, while others were unable to do this and had to repurpose their existing staff. Unfortunately, in universities that have not been able to appoint additional staff for this purpose, the nGAP managers are dealing with a situation in which their responsibilities have increased considerably due to this new function. These managers commented that these new responsibilities had caused what researchers refer to as 'role overload'. However, at other universities that were well capacitated and resourced, existing staff were able to accommodate this new function within reasonable workloads because they had additional support.

The data agreed with the findings of a study conducted by Temwa Moyo, who analysed the implementation of the Teaching Development Grant in the South African higher education sector. Moyo found that the unequal distribution of capacity in South African universities during apartheid was not limited to teaching and research development expertise, but also manifested in various areas such as financial management, institutional planning and expertise in human resource management (Moyo, 2018). These findings confirm statements made by Bunting (2002), McKenna and Boughey (2014) and Leibowitz (2014) indicating that capacity in these areas, which are key to the healthy management, functioning and sustainability of the academic enterprise, was also thinly and unevenly distributed across the system, with some universities being better capacitated than others. Therefore, based on the biased apartheid policies in supporting universities, some institutions had been able, over the years, to establish capacity to manage funds, as they had been allowed to manage and invest unused allocated state funds for decades (Bunting, 2002; Bozalek & Boughey, 2012), whereas other institutions had been tightly managed and had no freedom in managing and investing unused funds, as at the end of each financial year these funds had to be returned to the state (Bunting, 2002; Bozalek & Boughey, 2012). This limited these institutions' autonomy and their ability to develop strong financial management structures.

According to Quinn (2012), the role and impact of apartheid inequities on expertise distribution at institutions cannot be overestimated and have been widely raised in literature as major conditioning factors.

- *A top-down approach to the lecturers' voices*

Matland (1995) asserts that the “top-down approach expresses the view that power ultimately rests with the central decision makers at the top, who define clear policy objectives and hierarchically guide the process of putting these objectives into practice” (p. 146). However, this approach has been criticised by numerous authors because of its depiction of an old-style, superior understanding of representative democracy, where designated government officials are regarded as the only people in a society who have the right to make the necessary decisions that are compulsory on behalf of the entire population. Sabatier (1986) holds that the ultimate defect of the top-down approach is that it emphasises the role of the dominant leaders and disregards the deliberate interventions and status of the local community members, who have the necessary awareness of the challenges, who have direct linkages with the targeted groups and are in a stronger position to recommend and implement targeted plans.

The study's data indicates that the nGAP has been conceptualised as a ‘top-down’ initiative that does not allow for sufficient autonomy for the lecturers to identify and determine their own professional requirements in order to guide and inform the implementation of the programme at institutional levels. Evidence suggests that the implementation of the features of the nGAP, from funding allocations and workload to reporting processes, is carried out without considering their input or voice. Based on the above definitions, and the data from the lecturers' interviews, it can be argued that the government's top-down approach in the nGAP's conceptualisation has indeed excluded the lecturers' participation. The lecturers in the study were unhappy about being denied the voice to make changes to some of the programme's features, which they thought were constraining their participation in the programme. For instance, some lecturers pointed out that the reporting template did not provide them with confidentiality or protection, and that allows for victimisation by their senior managers if they report issues that implicate them.

One lecturer was of the view that the universities were trying to police and control information going to the DHET through the reports. She indicated that she would like to see a situation where lecturers could report separately from the managers, supervisors, mentors and HoDs and directly to the DHET, so that they are able to reflect on the pertinent issues that affect them and the programme. It should be clarified that the reporting template originated from the DHET, so universities cannot alter it to suit the lecturers' requests. However, the universities can use their autonomy to develop a system that considers the lecturers' request for confidentiality and

protection. In other words, the data implied that even though the reporting process might have been considered suitable for the universities and the DHET, it exposed them to possible victimisation by their seniors if they were found to have submitted reports that presented those people in a negative way. These results were consistent with discoveries made by Branto (2008) and Hunzicker (2010), who established in their research that imposed professional programmes were irrelevant and entirely opposed to the needs of the participants and that professional programmes that do not capture the voices of participants, particularly their needs, are likely to experience low motivation as well as lack of commitment in programme uptake and implementation.

These findings supported the statements made by participants that the nGAP seemed to have been imposed on them and their institutions and was therefore a top-down intervention that lacked consultation, therefore was not client-driven, and somehow seemed to not prioritise them or some of their needs.

8.4.2 Responses from nGAP managers

Like the lecturers, the responses from the managers indicated that numerous existing institutional policies regarding human resources, financial/procurement policies, and development and training of academic staff were central to supporting the implementation of the nGAP. This implied that the different departments and faculties should collaborate in order to ensure that the programme was properly implemented. Other managers indicated that the implementation of the nGAP was guided and supported by their universities' strategic priorities, resources and infrastructure, and that they relied on the university leadership to provide direction. Central to the discussions with managers were issues relating to how human resources management practices were carried out in relation to the appointment of lecturers and the implementation of some of the features of the nGAP. The table below provides an overview of the responses from the managers, the constructs that emerged from the analysis of data and a brief indication of how these could constrain and enable the experiences of managers in the nGAP, as well as the programme's effective implementation. The table also emphasises the possible implications for the programme itself, the participants, government and the universities.

Table 8.5: Summary of nGAP manager responses to Question 2

Responses/ findings	Emerging constructs	Constraining (how)	Enabling (how)
- Existing human resources and financial/ procurement policies and practices central to the implementation of the nGAP - institutional policies and processes that have a bearing on academic staff development and training - the involvement and collaboration of different departments, faculties - attempts made to align the nGAP to the universities' strategy/ strategic priorities, resources, infrastructure, availability of funding, institutional autonomy etc. - university leadership expected to provide direction and guidance - institutional governance structures play their oversight roles in evaluating the programme	- The disconnect between nGAP policy and practice - Culture/ Sense of entitlement by lecturers	- the university systems and practices do not align with policy proposals and processes made by the nGAP - uniform approach of the nGAP hampers universities from implementing their different policies and systems - government constrain the behaviour of universities by interfering in decisions that are outside its jurisdiction - the disconnect between policy and practice constrain internal university processes - universities may feel that they are not necessarily in charge of the programme since government is too involved. - The disconnect between policy and practice negatively affects the relationship between academic and administrative staff resulting in the labelling and strained working relations - As a result of the clash between policy and practice, managers feel that they are forced to deal with lecturers who (in their view) appear to be making unreasonable demands while they are also overwhelmed with additional responsibilities that came with implementing the nGAP.	- Provides the universities an opportunity to clarify the lecturer expectations in relation to funding allocations, salary levels, support for developmental opportunities for teaching and research, and policies around the and management of the reduced workload etc. - The universities could consider the lecturers' experiences and improve their internal processes to allow for lecturer input as far as the implementation of some of the features of the nGAP is concerned - The clash between the nGAP policy and practice could be a great opportunity for universities to review some of their outdated and untransformed policies
IMPLICATIONS - The DHET/ government views the nGAP policies and procedures as authority prescripts that can only be complied with and it is expected that the programme's outcomes should be achieved irrespective of institutional dimensions and complexities - The visible clash/ disconnect/ gap between policy and practice may overshadow the good intentions of the programme as they seem to be creating unnecessary tensions and inconsistencies in the system - The lack of clarity of lecturers' expectations has the potential of creating an impression among managers and other implementors that the nGAP is breeding entitled lecturers who have unreasonable expectations about what being an academic means.			

The data from the interviews with managers focused on the human resources practices in the nGAP, issues relating to lecturer requirements for participation in the programme and their remuneration and levels of employment.

The constructs that emerged from the analysis of data from the interviews are entitlement and the disconnect between the nGAP policy and practice. Even though evidence in the study indicated that the nGAP was conceptualised as a top-down approach, its implementation assumed a partnership model in which both the DHET and the universities shared responsibilities. In the case of the nGAP, the human resources aspect of the programme was delegated to the universities, with the DHET providing direction through its guidelines on how universities should go about the recruitment and selection of lecturers. The guidelines outline the requirements for participating in the programme and determine the financial allocation towards lecturer remuneration. For carrying out these human resources-related processes, the universities apply their own administration policies.

- *The disconnect between nGAP policy and practice*

According to Bayeni and Bhengu (2018), there is a plethora of evidence from research conducted by various scholars such as Lungu (2001) and Smit (2005) indicating that most policies implemented in South African higher education, especially after 1994, have had intentions that were not reflected in policy or practice. These authors suggest that there was disengagement between higher education policies as texts and their practical implementation at institutional levels. However, this has been acknowledged, not only in South Africa, but by scholars in many countries the world over (Honig, 2006; Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009; McLaughlin, 2006; Spillane, Gomez, & Mesler, 2009). It can therefore be argued that there is agreement between studies conducted locally and internationally that the interpretation of policy into practice presents a critical challenge to effective application (Honig, 2006; McLaughlin, 2006; Spillane *et al.*, 2009).

The data in the study supported these statements and the arguments raised above, as the responses by participants also emphasised the disconnect between policy and practice, indicating that the university systems and practices did not align with the policy requirements made of the nGAP.

The managers in the study spoke in general about the clash between policy and practice when it came to the implementation of some of the features of the nGAP, in particular the 70% pass requirement that potential applicants should have obtained at Master's level. There was a general feeling among some of them that this requirement made it extremely challenging for

universities to recruit lecturers, particularly those in scarce skills areas such as engineering, mathematics and accounting. Another issue raised was that this requirement has been inconsistently applied by the DHET and therefore created confusion in the system. An example of this was that in some universities and fields of study, a percentage or aggregate mark was not provided at the completion of a Master's qualification, only a comment indicating that the candidate has met the requirements for the degree and therefore had passed. This was especially common for research degrees, however, in some universities and fields, such a mark was provided. The data suggested that the DHET's nGAP policy requirements only seemed to acknowledge and recognise one system (where a percentage was provided) over the other (where no percentage was provided). Managers complained that they were expected to contact universities and departments, looking for evidence and explanations on why marks were not provided. They argued that this created tensions in the system and suggested that the DHET doubted the quality of qualifications from some universities. It was the view of the nGAP managers in the study that this requirement also failed to recognise that the system was differentiated and diverse, therefore universities could not be expected to operate the same way when they had different administrative policies and practices. Even though the universities had the autonomy to recruit and interview candidates, the DHET still had the final word in terms of whether the candidate got appointed or not. These findings echoed the argument made earlier that government's approach may be constraining the behaviour of universities by interfering in decisions that are outside its jurisdiction.

The data further indicated that the inconsistencies in the application of the 70% requirement opened opportunities for exploitation at some universities, where it was indicated that people who were not targeted by the programme ended up being appointed to positions. It was argued that in fact, in some participating universities, the 70% was used to exclude designated candidates simply because there was a percentage on their transcript, even though they demonstrated potential. These managers said that if this practice continued, the programme could have the unintended consequences of maintaining the status quo in terms of academic staff demographics and continuing to allow universities to practise the same discriminatory practices that the programme was trying to eradicate. The general sentiment was that the nGAP 70% requirement has the potential to constrain the transformation aspect of the nGAP simply by excluding the most deserving beneficiaries of the programme. The managers argued that instead of focusing on a mark when recruiting candidates, the government should focus on the

quality of support provided to the lecturers once they had gained access into the programme to ensure that the system receives the desired quality.

There is thus sufficient evidence in the study to suggest that the DHET regarded the nGAP policy as an ‘authority prescript’ that could only be complied with and expected that its outcomes should be accomplished, notwithstanding the institutional factors and difficulties. This notion ignores the view by Berkhout & Wielemans (1999) and Young & Lewis (2015), that policy implementation is not an uncomplicated process, but is questioned, tested and reinterpreted on the basis of the different perspectives and entrenched practices. The data agrees with statements made by Webb & Gulson (2012) that there is a mistaken belief by policy-makers that policy processes are one-directional and simple. The study concludes that these interesting disconnections between policy and practice in the system should be researched more thoroughly so that these can be carefully handled to avoid causing tensions.

- *Culture/Sense of entitlement*

Cited in Coutts (2019), the studies on ‘entitlement’ by Fisk (2010); Moeller *et al.* (2009) give the general impression that “entitled individuals have a self-centred and uncaring view of others and tend to respond negatively when their demands are not met” (p. 2). In their research on employee entitlement, Harvey and Harris (2010) define ‘psychological entitlement’ as “a stable tendency toward highly favourable self-perceptions and a tendency to feel deserving of high levels of praise and reward, regardless of actual performance levels” (p. 1640).

The above definitions are supported by responses that emerged during the discussions with nGAP managers about the implementation of lecturer salary scales in their universities. It was striking to learn that some managers thought the nGAP lecturers displayed a culture of entitlement in their handling of the situation about salaries.

The researcher found these responses interesting, and she thought it was particularly important for the study to foreground this issue, as it highlights the character of some of the nGAP lecturers, who are expected to become future leaders in the higher education system. Even though the construct of entitlement emerged as a surprise in the analysis of the study’s data, it was not entirely surprising for the researcher (as a South African citizen) to hear that in fact there are nGAP lecturers who display a sense of entitlement. It is known and has been said by

many leaders and academics in this country on different media platforms that a sense of entitlement seems to exist among the youth, specifically those in higher education institutions.

A renowned human rights activist, Rhoda Kadalie, spoke at a seminar hosted by Stellenbosch University's Business School and the Institute for Future Research at the Medical Research Council in 2016. She criticised the South African education system for "creating a culture of entitled youths". She said "...but, because our education system is so pathetic, we compensate for what is going on at universities and breeding a culture of entitlement." She was referring to the attitude displayed by the 2015 #Feesmustfall protesters. Yet again, the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, observed that a culture of entitlement existed among young people within the higher education sector. He highlighted this issue in an interview with journalists during the #feesmustfall protests that took place in 2015. Prior to the #feesmustfall protests, he made a similar comment in 2013 while also addressing journalists regarding another student protest: the one organised by medical students who were studying in Cuba on government scholarships (News24, 2013). Although not formally documented in terms of research, there are general observations made in many quarters of society about the South African youth displaying such attitudes, particularly when it comes to government-sponsored initiatives.

The researcher attempted to make sense of the perceived of entitlement displayed by some nGAP lecturers and arrived at three possible explanations of what could be generating this perception among some nGAP managers.

- Firstly, in the data from the nGAP lecturer interviews, they decried the exploitation, the lack of support and the power abuse by some nGAP managers. It could therefore be the case that this culture was a form of retaliation and a way of expressing and communicating the lecturers' frustrations about the managers. It is possible that the lecturers felt that they were being ignored, that their requests were not being attended to with the urgency they deserved and that they felt they had no choice but to throw tantrums.
- Secondly, it should be remembered that the nGAP lecturers are mostly young academics who are transitioning from being students. As students, they were used to projecting the mentality of 'the customer' who should be provided services by the university administrators. From the researcher's experience as a student, she knows that such services are sometimes demanded with the 'customer is always right' attitude.

According to Paricio (2017), high-tuition university fees encourage students to adopt an attitude of demanding value for money and thinking more like customers than as members of a university community. As customers, they demanded what they thought they needed from their provider, in a concrete and specific way (ibid). Thirdly, this culture of entitlement could have resulted from unclarified lecturer expectations, by both the universities and government.

The responses provided by the lecturers in Chapter 5 demonstrated that they had their own expectations when they joined the programme, some of which were not clarified and were certainly not fulfilled. These expectations related to several issues, such as funding allocations, salary levels, support for developmental opportunities for teaching and research, policies around management of the reduced workload, and other concerns. The data from both the lecturers and managers reveals that on the one hand the lecturers were frustrated about not being afforded opportunities to give meaningful input on the features and implementation of the nGAP; on the other, the managers found themselves having to deal with lecturers who appeared to be making unreasonable demands on them while they were experiencing role overload as a result of additional responsibilities that came with implementing the nGAP. Due to all these frustrations, the emotions on both fronts are highly charged, with individuals resorting to labelling each other. This data confirmed statements made by several researchers who referred to the relationships that existed between academic and administrative staff members as “uneasy and ambivalent and further characterising academic/faculty staff as anarchists” (Kuo, 2009, p. 49) and who viewed “administrative culture as stuck in slow motion, blissfully ignoring efficiency and leadership” (Meyer & Kaloyeros, 2005, p. 16).

8.4.3 Responses from the nGAP mentors

The responses from mentors indicated that the universities did provide certain levels of support towards the implementation of the nGAP mentorship. Some of the mentors applauded the way mentoring for the nGAP was coordinated and supported at their universities. The participating mentors indicated that even though there was no formal policy or structure to guide the nGAP mentoring process, their universities attempted to ensure that mentoring took place and that the relationships they formed with their mentees were supported. Other mentors indicated that they lacked guidance and that they were left to figure things out on their own. The table below provides an overview of the responses from the mentors, the constructs that emerged from the analysis of data and a brief indication of how these could constrain and enable the experiences

of lecturers in the nGAP as well as the programme's effective implementation. The presentation below also highlights what the study believes would be the implications for the programme itself, the participants, government, and the universities.

Table 8.6: Summary of nGAP mentor responses to Question 2

MENTORS			
Responses/ findings	Emerging constructs	Constraining (how)	Enabling (how)
- Universities utilised lessons learnt from other programmes to guide the mentoring for the nGAP. - Attempts made to support mentoring even though there is no guiding policy/ framework - universities organised occasional gatherings and meetings for both the mentors and mentees - no formal structure to guide the nGAP mentoring process - mentors left to figure things out on their own without proper guidance and structure. - lack of assessment and evaluation tools for mentors	- Mentoring a shared responsibility - Mentoring communities of practice	- mentoring relationships may not succeed. - Creates a situation where there is a lack of ownership of the mentoring component of the programme by universities and viewing it as a responsibility of the DHET - Mentoring carried out haphazardly and not formalised and taken seriously.	- The nGAP affords mentors an opportunity for senior management to create an enabling institutional climate for the nGAP mentoring to take place - The nGAP affords mentors and mentees an opportunity to develop a sense of community, which could act as a great enabler for mentoring nationally - Enables universities to conceptualise mentoring as a shared responsibility between academics and the university leadership and management. - nGAP mentoring provides an opportunity for government and universities to appreciate the reality that there is no one recipe for carrying out mentoring and that its success is dependent upon the individuals in the relationship as well as the support provided by the universities
IMPLICATIONS Mentors and mentees would appreciate the opportunities to connect with other colleagues beyond their faculties, departments, and institutions. Hence, the study recommends a well-coordinated national platform created for nGAP mentors, mentees, and managers to adopt CoP principles as proposed by scholars such as Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002			

Two constructs emerged from the analysis of data gathered from the interviews with mentors: mentoring as a shared responsibility and mentoring communities of practice. These constructs are summarised in the discussions below.

- *Mentoring, a shared responsibility*

There has been a surge of studies on mentoring over several years and results from these studies indicate that mentoring does not only benefit mentors and mentees, there are also organisational benefits, as outlined by Schalekamp, 2005:

- mentoring promotes a positive image of the organisation and reflects employee-centred values;
- it improves morale and develops greater career satisfaction for the mentee and mentor;
- it enhances the competence of the mentee and mentor, which directly affects organisational efficiency;
- it increases employee commitment and loyalty (cited in Nundulall and Dorasamy (2012, p. 132).

There is a clear indication in the literature that mentoring relationships in general do not exist in a vacuum, but are nested within the institutional context (Eby *et al.* 2006). In other words, commitment by the university leadership and management of the organisations plays a pivotal role in ensuring that institutional policies and structures shape the mentoring interventions. The role of university leadership and management could include establishing formal mentoring policies, systems, and structures for identifying mentors and matching them with mentees, developing systems for evaluating and monitoring mentees' progress and relationships with their mentors, and providing incentives to encourage mentors to provide effective mentorship (Eby *et al.* 2006).

In the study, it was established that universities, in one form or another, have made attempts to support the nGAP mentoring. However, there was a general view among the participating mentors that the brief guidelines provided by the DHET were silent on the types of support that universities should provide. There is evidence from the data suggesting that some mentors did not think the support that they received was sufficient and that they had been left to figure things out on their own without much guidance, and this was attributed to the absence of a policy framework for mentoring practices. According to Rankhumise (2015), for mentoring to succeed, policies and procedures must be put in place to secure dedication from the organisation as well as from both the mentor and the mentee. Samier (2000) posits that several supportive activities must be put in place to make that sure the mentoring programmes are viable. In this case, senior management ought to establish a supportive institutional environment for the effective implementation of nGAP mentoring and possibly thrive. Both

the literature reviewed, and the study's findings suggest that if the leadership in the faculties and academic departments are not committed to the mentoring programme, the mentoring relationships may not succeed.

Based on the data and literature presented above, it was concluded in the study that, like any professional development programme, mentoring should remain the sole responsibility of the academics, as it is a shared responsibility between them and the other stakeholders: government (through a national policy framework), and the university (in terms of policy guidelines and processes, leadership and management). Even though, in its guidelines. The DHET had not provided any clarity on the types of support universities should provide for the mentors, the data revealed that some efforts were being made by other universities to support the nGAP mentoring relationships. This study determined that most of the mentors were not the mentees' direct supervisors, allowing for a separation between the two roles. The aspects of the scope of mentoring identified in this study focused more on career development and role-modelling, with limited attention paid to emotional development. The leadership and supervision dimensions were contribution, affect, loyalty, and professional respect.

It is the view of the researcher that supervisors should be allowed to perform mentoring functions, as they are naturally closer to the mentees and appear to have an advantage in terms of influencing the mentees. This is of significance in formal mentoring programmes. The authors also state that mentoring-type functions performed by supervisors (or even co-workers) might be more effective than mentoring by anyone else.

- *Communities of mentoring practice*

There are several definitions of communities of practice (CoPs); however, for the purpose of this analysis, the researcher finds the definition from Hildreth, Kimble and Wright (2000) relevant. These authors attribute CoPs to professionals "who have become informally tied through their exposure to a common set of problems and pursuit of solutions, and therefore become exemplars of specific knowledge" (Hildreth *et al.* 2000). A similar definition was proposed by Wenger *et al.* (2002), who described CoPs as a relationship between people sharing a similar concern, agreement or passion about a particular subject, who develop their expertise and knowledge through regular interaction. In his view, the term has become increasingly prevalent in research, and it stems from recognising that learning is a social activity.

Even though there was no policy or framework clarifying the mentoring programmes and structure, data from the interviews with mentors indicated that some universities utilised experiences gained from implementing programmes similar to the nGAP to develop a mentoring structure for the programme. However, other universities did not have any specific programme or structure for guiding the nGAP mentoring. As part of support for the nGAP, universities that had mentoring experiences were able to organise occasional gatherings and meetings for both the mentors and mentees. Through these gatherings, mentors and mentees were afforded opportunities to develop a sense of community and share practices, lessons and experiences. It should also be pointed out that, as part of its support to universities in relation to the nGAP, The DHET also organised annual meetings at which all the nGAP managers, mentors and lecturers could meet, separately and sometimes together, to discuss and share their experiences of participating in the programme. It was clear from the data that the mentors appreciated the opportunities to connect with colleagues outside their faculties, departments and institutions. Even though the mentors in these universities indicated that they appreciated the idea of a community within their universities, there was evidence that they wanted more opportunities to be created externally to encourage a systemic collaboration. This would allow them to network with their counterparts from other universities.

Based on the above findings, the study recommends that the DHET and universities facilitate the development of mentoring CoPs and support their growth through funding, resources and infrastructure. A well-coordinated national platform for nGAP mentors, mentees and managers to adopt CoP principles is proposed by scholars such as Wenger *et al.* (2002) and would go a long way to improving mentoring practices in the higher education sector. The latter scholars propose the following six principles for designing CoPs:

- adaptability of organisational structures such as assigning a coordinator;
- allowing communication between internal and external views;
- opening up for diverse levels of involvement;
- initiating both public and exclusive community spaces where members network with one another;
- ensuring that members see the value as the community evolves; and
- allowing the members to be comfortable with accustomed ways of engaging and conduct by creating a lively rhythm (Kezar & Gehrke, 2017).

This initiative would serve as a great investment by the DHET in ensuring that the participants do not only meet and complain regularly, but encourage them to generate knowledge in the form of research, develop good practices based on lessons, and work collaboratively to contribute towards improving the quality of nGAP mentoring. It was clear from the interview data from all three categories of participants that some universities have long-established experience in mentoring, which others do not have; some have developed mentoring guidelines and others have not; some struggle to recruit available and capable mentors and others have enough academic and research capacity to provide for sufficient mentoring capacity. Therefore, a CoP on nGAP mentoring could help to combine all these capabilities and be used as a knowledge resource for mentoring in general, and for the practices they have found useful in their learning during the programme – this is highly recommended. It would be great achievement for the study if the proposed nGAP mentoring CoP could come alive and bring to reality what Wenger and his colleagues have proposed.

8.5 Responses to Question 3: What are the views and experiences of participating in the nGAP?

During the interviews, the three categories of participants could speak freely about their experiences of being part of the nGAP with the discussions focusing on their views and experiences of how their respective universities have implemented the programme's different components. The different themes and issues were discussed and the summary of these is presented in a table format for each category.

8.5.1 Responses from the nGAP lecturers

The focus of the discussions was on how some of the features of the programme, such as the reduced workload and mentoring, were implemented at their respective universities. The lecturers' responses highlighted the opportunities and challenges associated with the implementation of these features and how they thought this constrained and enabled the programme's effectiveness in their universities. Even though there was general agreement that these two features were important for the lecturers, it was clear that most lecturers were unhappy about how they were implemented by their universities. The table below provides an overview of the responses from the lecturers, the constructs that emerged from the analysis of data and a brief indication of how these could constrain and enable the experiences of lecturers in the nGAP as well as the programme's effective implementation. The table also highlights

what, according to this study, the implications are for the programme itself, the participants, government and the universities.

Table 8.7: Summary of nGAP lecturer responses to Question 3

Responses/ findings	Emerging constructs	Constraining (how)	Enabling (how)
- reduced teaching and administrative workload is a great feature of the nGAP - no flexibility relating to the timing of the reduced workload - have not benefited from the reduced workload feature because it is not properly implemented - no freedom to decide on when and how the reduced workload should be effected - no formal policy for the selection and allocation of nGAP mentors - mentors imposed on lecturers - one-sided selection and allocation of nGAP mentors - co-workers' negative attitudes - the use of language as an exclusionary mechanism, - perceived jealousy and envy, discrimination, stigmatisation - no clarity on salaries and levels of employment	- lack of clarity on the implementation of the reduced teaching workload - mentor-mentee pairing - Retention and turnover intentions as a result of negative institutional cultures and climates, the psychological contract and remuneration	- If not properly implemented, could leave lecturers frustrated and could negatively affect their well-being - If not well conceptualised, might disadvantage lecturers when it comes to performance evaluation - The lack of policy affects mentoring relationships and practices such as pairing processes - Feelings of frustration, dissatisfaction, disappointment, exclusion and isolation, as a result of negative institutional climates - young aspiring black academics could view South African universities as spaces that are characterised by unwelcoming cultures and climates and therefore consider leaving the system for other jobs-may be difficult for most universities to retain dissatisfied lecturers - poor remuneration may be one of the key factors driving the lack of commitment by young academics in the nGAP and influencing their turnover intentions.	- Could afford lecturers additional time to adapt to the new careers (academic profession) as well as to organise and balance their work and personal lives - An opportunity for universities to be transparent about the allocation of academic workloads - Universities could consider introducing a differentiated and flexible approach to the timing of the implementation reduced workload - Clearly defined mentoring policy could enable mentoring processes and procedures and enhance participation of mentors and mentees in the selection process - Participation of both mentors and mentees in the pairing process could consider issues such as race, gender, culture etc.
IMPLICATIONS - Historical inequities related to higher education could remain a constraining factor in under resourced universities when it comes to the implementation of the nGAP - Excessive workload and additional work pressure could negatively impact on academics' ability to devote time to additional activities such as mentoring, particularly in universities that were viewed to be struggling to properly implement the reduced workload as stipulated by the DHET guidelines - the discriminatory climate and culture experienced in some universities and academic departments by some of the participating lecturers, may create the perception that South African higher education is an unwelcoming space for young black academics and particularly women. - Based on the findings from the literature and from the study, it could be concluded that the ability of universities to retain the nGAP lecturers could either be determined by how well they were able to handle the psychological contract issue between themselves and the lecturers.			

The following themes or constructs emerged from the analysis of the lecturers' interviews: lack of clarity on the implementation of reduced teaching workload, mentor-mentee pairing and

antecedents to quit or stay, with the following subthemes: institutional culture and climate lecturer remuneration and the psychological contract.

- *The lack of clarity on the reduced teaching load*

Dhunpath & Subbaye (2018) report that the lack of time to effectively balance research and teaching roles is documented as one of the sources of stress for ECAs. Academic staff workload is determined by a variety of factors, including the number of courses offered, the total credits and contact hours, instructional and non-instructional hours and student-teacher ratios, as well as scholarly activities and administrative duties (The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 2014).). It is evident that academics are required to perform a broad range of activities, including preparation for class instruction, student assessments, publication of research papers, implementation of research projects and administration of academic programmes (Ocvirk & Sirca, 2012). However, literature indicates that equitable workload allocation among the academic staff in universities is a challenging task (Cohen, Hickey, & Upchurch, 2009). The workload changes over time due to factors such as student numbers, commercialisation of specialised programmes, more research-orientated performance appraisals, more dependency on part-time instructors, and additional pressure on faculty members to obtain external research grants (Robbins, 2013; Papadopoulos, 2017).

The nGAP reduced workload model seeks to avert some of the challenges highlighted above. The model stipulates that the lecturers only allocate 20% of time to teaching and administrative duties during the first three years of their training, while 80% is allocated to working on their PhD research. This is done as an acknowledgement that the nGAP lecturers' teaching responsibilities are mainly teaching undergraduate students, which entails a lot of administrative responsibilities.

Although the study indicates that the lecturers thought the reduced teaching workload was an essential feature, some lecturers have benefited from it while others have not. Those who did not decried the timing of its implementation and the lack of clarity on what the specified 20% entailed and how it should be determined. There was a general opinion among the lecturers that the 20% was too broad and difficult for the universities to interpret and measure. On the other hand, the lecturers who did benefit from this feature indicated that it provided them with additional time to adapt to their new teaching and research responsibilities and enabled them to organise and balance their work and personal lives. The lecturers who did not benefit from

the reduced workload, due to reasons cited above, were convinced that the implementation of the reduced workload should be customised to each lecturer's unique circumstances and not simply implemented as the DHET prescribed it. Some lecturers thought that this feature was not properly implemented at their universities but they were afraid to question the processes for fear of victimisation. Researchers such as Cohen *et al.* (2009), Meyer *et al.* (2006), Bernasconi (2003), Robbins (2013) and Papadopoulos (2017) recognise that the allocation of academic workload in universities is a difficult and challenging process because faculty member roles are not only in the primary domains of teaching and research, but also in the administration and academic services. Acton *et al.* (2015) advise that university authorities must intervene in the implementation of balanced workload distribution schemes to reduce the stress on academic staff. This statement supports the data from lecturers, who felt that the DHET should leave this function to the universities, as they would know best how to handle it.

The findings echoed those in a recently-published DHET report on the nGAP mid-term. The report argues that the interpretation of a reduced teaching workload in the first four years of the programme is a serious challenge in the sector, and that there is little concrete guidance on what constitutes the 20% or 50% of teaching and related activities, including serving on committees and postgraduate supervision (DHET, 2020). These findings echo the argument made by McLaughlin *et al.* (1981), Parveen (2013) and Adrian *et al.* (2014) that if there is any mismanagement in the distribution of academic workload, the academic staff may feel more stress in teaching than in research and administrative work. The study concludes that the reduced workload is a highly contested area in the nGAP across all the universities. This is an even bigger problem for universities that do not have the financial resources to hire assistant or contract lecturers to assist the lecturers with the load.

There is also no consensus in the system regarding what the reduced workload for nGAP lecturers really means and how it could be effectively implemented without any contestation. This is because the term "workload" has different meanings across the various universities, departments and faculties. There is also a great deal of variation among universities in South Africa because of their institutional types and missions. An individual at a University of Technology (UoT), for example, would have a significantly different workload to someone working at a large university that has a high student population and conducts extensive research.

- *Mentor-mentee pairing*

Literature on mentoring in the South African higher education context indicates that this feature has been conducted informally and haphazardly and its practices are embedded within institutional cultures and daily experiences that incorporate interpersonal relations shared in the institution (Mapasela & Wilkinson, 2005). However, since the introduction of the nGAP, universities are under pressure to source and allocate mentors for participating lecturers, as it is one of the most important requirements of the programme. The DHET SoPs stipulate that each lecturer must be allocated a mentor (aside from the supervisor) for the first four years of their participation in the programme (DHET, 2015b).

The data in the study revealed that some lecturers were unhappy about the nGAP mentoring practices, especially around the way mentors are selected and assigned to them. They felt that mentors were imposed on them and that they would have preferred to participate in the process of selecting their mentors. Most lecturers agreed that even though some form of mentoring occurred at their universities, the processes were informally coordinated. The main reason cited for this comment was that there was no formal policy or framework regulating the nGAP mentoring practices. As observed earlier in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, the issue of lack of a mentoring policy or framework came across the data sets from the three categories of participants. According to Zachary (2005), one of the most difficult aspects of mentoring is the process of matching potential mentors with eligible candidates, which can be disturbing and uncomfortable for all involved.

According to Gardiner (1999), in formal mentoring programmes, such as the one in the nGAP, mentor-mentee pairs are usually coordinated by the programme coordinators and the pairing is usually done by taking into cognisance the concerns of the mentees and the capabilities of the mentors. However, Clarke (2004), Lawson (1992) and Murray (1991) claim assigned mentoring relationships are associated with negative effects, such as uneven power relations, with communication generally one-way, created collegiality and personality conflicts. Bell & Treleaven (2011) assert that in some formal programmes, the benefits of letting mentees choose their own mentors and helping them to do so can be a challenging process. Firstly, choosing by mentee's decreases the possibility of incompatibilities, and secondly, it develops their autonomy, leaving them more secure in terms of the one-sided power relations that are unavoidably manifest in institutions, and consequently in mentor-mentee relationships.

One of the female lecturers, who was allocated a male mentor whom she said was old enough to be her father, held the view that her mentoring relationship could have been better if she had been paired with someone she had participated in sourcing. This comment supported research showing that matching mentors and mentees from the same ethnicity (and gender) would help foster the relationship, since people from the same groups are more comfortable relating to each other (Meschitti & Lawton-Smith, 2017). However, the study indicated earlier that South Africa is currently experiencing a shortage in mentorship capacity, particularly women mentors. For this reason, it could be a challenge trying to match female lecturers to female mentors in the nGAP, specifically because most senior professors who are experienced and available for mentoring are male and the lecturers are mostly female. This argument is supported by Adusah-Karikari (2008), cited in Mlambo (2017), who argues that owing to the low percentage of women in higher education, women often lack mentorship from other women and are unable to leverage the informal support systems that are available to men. The under-representation of women in senior academic positions in South African higher education is a pertinent problem that needs to be addressed.

- *Antecedents to quit or stay (turnover intentions)*

The study found that the nGAP has, to a large extent, been able to position higher education institutions as the employers of choice for young people who are passionate about pursuing academic careers. However, the question remained of whether these universities were able to provide the participating lecturers with valuable experiences so that they were encouraged to remain in the higher education sector and grow into fully fledged academics who are able to take over from the retiring senior academics. The study found that there were several issues that the lecturers thought were contributing negatively to their experiences and therefore influencing their turnover intentions. These issues should be foregrounded as they were found to constrain the participation of lecturers in the nGAP. They included institutional culture and climate, honouring (or not) of the psychological, and remuneration decisions.

- *Institutional culture and climate*

According to Moghimi & Subramaniam, 2013, ‘organisational climate’ is a set of measurable features of an organization which a person can experience directly or indirectly and which is likely to influence their motivation and behaviour. Rožman & Štrukelj (2021) argue that organisational climates reflect what employees think or perceive of the policies, practices, and

procedures that are expected, supported, or rewarded in relation to human resources within the organisation. Armstrong (2014) expresses the opinion that organisational culture is the combination of "values, norms, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions" that may not have been explicitly stated, but nonetheless affect how individuals behave.

The study cited literature demonstrating that the culture and climate in some of the South African universities continued to convey 'racist and sexist' tendencies, which made it difficult for young black academics to adjust and created challenges for universities in retaining these academics (Austin, 2001; Mabokela, 2002; Mabokela, 2003; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004; Perumal, 2003; Portnoi, 2005; Potgieter, 2002; Potts, 2000; Schulze, 2005; Subotzky 1998, cited in Portnoi, 2009).

Rabe and Rugunanan (2012) explain that, in academic departments, individuals who hold a minority status are at risk of experiencing racial or gender discrimination. These authors have noted that the South African higher education system is not without gender discrimination; however, its impact on women was filtered through a rigid system of racial discrimination. While white women continued to suffer from discrimination, black women were forced to deal with both gender and racial discrimination. Heleta (2016) contends that whiteness continues to be privileged in higher education, which means that the appointment of nGAP lecturers through a transformation programme that seeks to restore the rightful place of women from historically under-represented groups in higher education, may appear to threaten longstanding white male dominance.

The data in the study revealed that issues relating to institutional climate and culture, such as negative attitudes and perceptions by departmental colleagues, the use of language as an exclusionary mechanism, jealousy, discrimination, stigmatisation and lack of engagement have contributed negatively towards some lecturers' experiences in the nGAP. One of the lecturers indicated that some of her departmental colleagues generated gossip around her position as an nGAP lecturer, insinuating that the programme was a BEE scheme. She believed that the stigma created around the nGAP was negatively affecting her integrity as a young professional. Another lecturer felt discriminated against when her colleagues tried to exclude her from participating in departmental activities by issuing meeting communications in a language (Afrikaans), which they knew she did not understand. She was made to feel as if she did not belong and that her contribution in meetings and departmental activities was not valued.

Another lecturer thought her being a young Black woman pursuing a PhD through a transformation-driven programme within the discipline dominated by white males could have made her a target for discriminatory practices. As a result of some of these practices, some lecturers thought of either resigning from their universities or the programme.

It is not disputed that the nGAP has been able to help position the South African higher education sector as one of the employers of choice for young, aspiring academics from previously under-represented groups. However, the study concluded that the discriminatory climate and culture which some participating lecturers experienced at some universities and academic departments might foster the perception that higher education is a hostile space for young Black academics and for women. Therefore, as argued by Netswera, Rankhumise and Mavundla (2005), this could make it challenging to retain participants who feel discriminated against, causing them to leave their nGAP positions to pursue positions at other universities or in sectors where they believe their identities would be better received.

- *Remuneration*

Glaeser (2012) identified ‘financial remuneration’ as one of the major issues of occupational unhappiness within higher education institutions in South Africa and other parts of the world. However, some researchers suggest that the issue of low salaries in academia may not be as prevalent among white academics as it appears to be among Black academics. Potgieter (2002) posits that “most Black academics leave higher education institutions due to poor financial remuneration” (p. 22).

In this regard, the study findings revealed that some of the participating lecturers had thought about leaving their current university and the programme due to the low salaries paid by the nGAP. Some of the lecturers specifically indicated that they would leave their current positions if opportunities occurred that offered better salaries. There was consensus among the lecturers that they deserved higher salaries. It was indicated earlier in this chapter that universities that were well resourced had been able to use their internal funds to top up the nGAP lecturer salaries so that they were on par with the salaries of lecturers outside of the programme. In such situations, the lecturers were satisfied with their salaries and did not have any intention of leaving the programme. However, this practice indicated that universities who were unable to meet the demand for higher salaries could lose some of their nGAP lecturers to better-resourced universities. These findings agreed with those of Tettey (2006), who argues that when

academics are poorly remunerated, they are likely to develop low morale and lack of commitment, thereby influencing their turnover.

Even though the study has noted that the issue of low salaries is not unique to the nGAP and that it has been in contestation for several years in many countries across the world, the study recommends that the nGAP salaries be standardised across the system. This would afford all universities an equal opportunity to recruit and retain the best talent and avoid a situation where, due to their privileged position, well-resourced universities become the only true beneficiaries of talent offered by the nGAP.

- *The psychological contract*

According to Abarantyne, Naidoo & Rugimbana (2019), the ‘psychological contract’ is an unwritten contract which comes in the form of employee expectations. Kissoonduth (2017) underscores the fact that employees form their own psychological contracts based on recruitment experiences, the career development opportunities they are exposed to, and the rewards received as a result of their work. However, since the contractual nature of the agreement is largely unwritten and somewhat subjective, the employer may experience difficulty in managing the expectations of employees. It is emphasised by Abarantyne, Naidoo and Rugimbana (2019) that when an employee perceives that the contract has been breached, hope and trust are lost, engagement drops and the employee is more likely to consider leaving the organisation.

The study further established that the nGAP lecturers came into the programme with certain expectations which appeared to form part of what researchers refer to as the psychological contract. Kissoonduth (2017) further states that that “the psychological contract influences the employee's job satisfaction, institutional commitment, trust in the employer, employee relationships in the workplace, motivation, institutional citizenship, and the intention of the employee to leave the institution” (p. 60). Coming into the programme, the lecturers expected that the reduced workload feature would be properly implemented and would therefore be of benefit to them; that they would experience transformation and inclusion in their different departments; that they would have the freedom to voice their concerns and make input towards improving the implementation of the programme; that they would experience a welcoming environment and culture; that they would receive teaching and research support; and that they would experience good mentoring practices. The study established that some universities and

departments might have failed to meet their lecturers' psychological contracts, resulting in negative experiences.

On the other hand, some universities may have been able to meet the lecturers' expectations, which resulted in positive experiences. The lecturers at these institutions indicated that they intended to stay in the programme, and their current employers because of their positive experiences. Naidoo, Abarantyne & Rugimbana (2019) found that fulfilment of psychological contracts increases employee engagement, positive attitudes toward their work and lower turnover intentions. These authors assert that employees are more likely to invest more into their work and to contribute more to the organisation when they are convinced that they are engaged (ibid). Deriving from the study's findings and the literature consulted, it could be concluded that the ability of universities to retain the nGAP lecturers could be determined by how well they were able to handle the psychological contract issue between themselves and the lecturers.

8.5.2 Responses from the nGAP managers

The discussions with managers revolved around their views and experiences in relation to mentoring, institutional support, monitoring and reporting. The managers agreed that there was a need for a formalised process to conduct mentoring for the nGAP, and that the nGAP mentoring at their universities was constrained or enabled by several issues. The managers gave various responses, with some indicating that they received the necessary support from their university leaders, while others confided that they lacked the required support. The managers agreed that the DHET reporting process completely excluded them, emphasising that the reporting template does not provide space for managers to report on their experiences of being part of the nGAP. The table below provides an overview of the responses from the managers, the constructs that emerged from the analysis of data and a brief indication of how these could constrain and enable the experiences of lecturers in the nGAP, as well as the programme's effective implementation. The presentation below also highlights what the study believes would be the implications for the programme itself, the participants, government and the universities.

Table 8.8: Summary of nGAP manager responses to Question 3

Responses/ findings	Emerging constructs	Constraining (how)	Enabling (how)
- a need for a formalised process for conducting mentoring for the nGAP - the limited number of suitable mentors who are available and willing to mentor the nGAP lecturers. - there is a lack of an instrument that would assist universities to hold mentors accountable. - There is no remuneration or incentives for nGAP mentors. - the process of finding mentors for lecturers as a huge challenge - most senior academics in her university were already overcommitted and were therefore not keen to partake in the nGAP mentoring - mentoring forms part of the senior academics' job/ responsibilities - mentoring for the nGAP does not seem attractive for senior academics - the lack of payment/ remuneration could affect senior academics' participation - the absence of a policy has made it difficult to hold mentors accountable - leadership must put the necessary structures and processes in place to support the programme - leadership change impacted on several operations	- The challenges relating to mentor recruitment - Outcome reporting bias on the part of the DHET - Leadership	- Lack of mentoring policy/ framework could deter interested mentors from participating - lack of strong leadership may constrain the programme's implementation. - The non-remuneration of mentors could cause resistance and lack of commitment from some senior academics - Managers are hampered by the reporting template to report the challenges they are confronted with as they grapple with implementing the nGAP - The exclusion of managers in the reporting template left them feeling insignificant even though they possess the requisite expertise and knowledge of the challenges and are in a much better position to provide solutions to these problems	- for mentoring to be effective, policies and procedures should be developed to allow commitment from both mentor and mentee - enable the universities to develop a policy on mentoring for all staff members that require mentoring - the policy would provide clarity on the process of selecting and pairing mentors and mentees, the roles and responsibilities of each party, and the evaluation and assessment of mentors - strong leadership would be supportive to the programme and drive transformation in their universities - evaluation and assessment of mentoring relationships could enable effective participation of both mentors and mentees - the following could enable the nGAP implementation and improve experiences of participants: support, guidance, encouragement, leadership involvement, empowerment, teamwork, and good communication

relating to the nGAP • VC supportive of the programme and its ideals • efforts made by all partners to provide the necessary direction and guidance • DHET reporting processes are cumbersome and completely excludes managers			
IMPLICATIONS • coordinating a mentorship programme for the nGAP is not an easy task and that this process could have been better enabled if there was a formal policy/ framework/ structure to guide it. • The general lack of mentors in the South African higher education system due to aging/ retiring academics, overcommitment and unavailability of tenured academics to take up mentoring roles, makes it urgent and necessary for universities and government to develop a national programme that focuses on the mass training of mentors who would mentor the next generation of academics in the sector. • As a result of being excluded from the reporting template, the managers felt as if they are insignificant and are not valued irrespective of the important role that they play in the implementation of the programme at institutional levels.			

The three themes that emerged from the data were the challenge of recruiting mentors, outcome reporting bias on the part of government, and leadership. These constructs are summarised in the discussions below.

- *Challenges relating to mentor recruitment*

Geber (2003) notes that coordinating a mentoring project is a role that requires intense relationship building and is extremely time-consuming, especially during the establishment phase and the first meetings. Throughout the programme, the coordinator monitors the progress, provides periodic feedback and resolves any disagreements or problems that may arise. The study established through the reviewed literature that there are a range of ways mentors can be recruited. However, in the absence of a mentoring policy clarifying the recruitment process, managers found themselves improvising their own processes.

The data in the study demonstrated that mentoring was one of the most critical components of career development and success for the nGAP lecturers, and that the participating mentors displayed some capacity to mentor the lecturers. However, the managers raised a strong concern around the difficulties in securing mentors for the programme. The managers decried the reality that most of the mentors who are within the universities are overcommitted, as they are employed full time and that nGAP mentoring adds an additional load to their already busy

schedules. There is evidence from the managers' data suggesting that most senior academics who could become mentors for the nGAP seemed to be shying away from participating in the programme, citing different reasons. Some of the issues the managers thought were contributing to the struggle to recruit mentors included busy schedules comprising teaching, research and administrative duties, and being discouraged by the lack of remuneration for internal mentors. One of the managers felt that mentoring for the nGAP did not seem attractive for senior academics at her university because it came with additional responsibilities and it was not a remunerated activity. Some of the mentors in the study indicated that even though they have retired, they are still affiliated with a university and to some extent still engaged in research and other academic responsibilities.

The issue of the shortage of mentoring and supervisory capacity in South African higher education in general has been a concern for a while and has been highlighted several times in different forums and through research. The lack of mentoring capacity became even more noticeable with the introduction of the nGAP. The requirement that each nGAP lecturer be allocated a mentor put even more pressure on the universities, particularly on the faculties and departments which are required to implement it. One of the issues that adds to the pressure is the reality that the sector as a whole is experiencing an aging and shrinking population of academics and researchers, and that there has not been adequate development of mentors and supervisors.

Based on these findings, it is deemed critical for the DHET and the higher education sector to invest in a large-scale mentoring programme that aims to recruit a dedicated and skilled pool of mentors for the nGAP. The DHET should also consider making it a requirement for nGAP mentees to undergo mentorship and supervision training during their six years of training, so that they are able to immediately take up mentoring roles for newly appointed academics. These lecturers could become possible replacements for retiring senior academics, not only in teaching and research, but also in relation to mentoring capacity. Regarding academics who are still employed by the universities and have taken up mentoring roles, the framework could make provision for them to qualify for workload reduction and some financial incentives to encourage commitment and participation. According to Nundulall and Reddy (2011), mentorship should be integrated into work allocation so that mentors have more than one group of mentees that they can support, and reward them for doing so.

This researcher is of the view that if the issue of developing mentoring capacities in the South African higher education sector is left unattended, specifically for the nGAP, the pressure to nurture a new generation of academics, who will take the sector into the future, could remain just a dream.

- *Outcome reporting bias by government*

According to Vaganay (2016), ‘outcome reporting bias’ in government occurs in situations where government only reports on certain participants because their reports and evaluation seemed positive. Vaganay (2016) further asserts that there are certain negative effects linked to this, since researchers and policymakers can use such reports and results to inform subsequent policies. This could be misguided, and a lack of rigorous evidence could lead to conclusions about an intervention that are incomplete or inaccurate.

The nGAP managers in the study reported that they were being excluded from the DHET reporting process and this meant that they have not been able to formally report on the challenges they had been encountering. This exclusion occurred regardless of the significant part that the managers played in the implementation of the programme at institutional levels. There was evidence in the study demonstrating that the managers were the main players when it came to the implementation of the nGAP within the universities. Their experiences in the coordination and management of the programme could be of great assistance in improving the implementation processes at both institutional and government levels. Therefore, it did not make sense that they were not afforded an opportunity to provide their own feedback. The managers in the study viewed this exclusion in reporting as an unfair practice on the part of the DHET.

Since the nGAP’s inception, its reporting has been more focused on the performance of the programme in terms of lecturers’ participation, numbers, statistics, assessment of whether the activities were implemented within the allocations and according to the budgets, expenditure, reporting on PhD progress, and generally assessing whether progress is being made towards achieving the targets set by DHET. In July 2020, the DHET published a report on the mid-term review of the nGAP. The analysis given in the report was based on the annual progress reports submitted by the universities, which excluded reporting by the nGAP managers.

Some researchers argue that outcome reporting bias in government could result in what is referred to as ‘spin’ or ‘selective reporting’ by government. This kind of reporting has been described as an approach that is seen to be biased, in that emphasises the benefits of a certain treatment or intervention. According to Chiu, Grundy and Bero (2017), “in government, spin is commonly associated with propaganda, public relations, and the media, and is understood as a biased presentation, intended to ensure that audiences view matters favourably” (p. 1). However, in this research, ‘spin’ describes accounting patterns that report misleading outcomes and deceives the audience so that results are perceived to be positive and in their favour (ibid).

Even though the data confirms that the nGAP managers had been excluded from reporting on their experiences relating to the programme, the study has not obtained any evidence indicating that ‘spin’ is prevalent in government when it comes to its reporting. However, it is clear that the managers’ objections to this bias was justified because their actual stories and experiences did not get to be formally recorded for as long as they were excluded in the reporting template. The study therefore concluded that government’s managerialism seemed to be manifest in the programme’s reporting processes, which were only concerned with the efficiency and statistical performance of the programme.

- *Leadership*

According to Jooste, *et al.* (2018), effective leadership is a critical component of overall organization success, and its effectiveness in universities is of considerable importance to policy-makers, leaders and academics. Therefore, good leadership plays an important role in maintaining and improving the quality of higher education. Mischelhorn (2005) points out that a good leader needs to transform the whole institution, paying particular attention to changing people’s basic values, beliefs and goals rather than focusing only on changes in behaviour and performance. An important task of a leader is to realign the identities of people with the institution itself.

Research conducted by Ramdass (2015) identified traits that are relevant to leadership, including: drive, the ability to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, intelligence and job-relevant knowledge. This often requires leaders to get their people to go beyond their own self-interest to serve the interests of the institution. Leadership, in this case, refers to senior leaders in the departments and faculties of universities participating in the nGAP, and these include deans, deputy deans and HoDs.

This research established that strong and effective leadership may have played an important role in the fact that some universities were able to exercise their autonomy and take ownership of the nGAP. Data indicated that in some universities, senior leadership showed strong commitment towards supporting the nGAP by being actively involved and instrumental in guiding the processes for the implementation of the programme. At these universities, the nGAP managers were satisfied with the guidance and support they received from their senior leaders. Managers in these universities indicated that they felt supported, guided, encouraged, involved, empowered, allowed to work as a team, and there was good communication. In their view, these characterised strong leadership that helped to champion the implementation of the nGAP at their universities. This data supports a statement made by Sebopetsa (2018) who emphasises that in order for a leader to succeed, he or she needs to possess the following skills: ability to inspire others, vision, honesty and integrity, decisiveness, and problem solving.

There was also complementary evidence, derived from the data, that suggested that the absence of strong and effective leadership in some universities could have been one of the barriers to effective implementation of the nGAP. It should be noted that the issue of leadership responsibilities in relation to the nGAP were located within various offices, such as those of the deans, deputy deans and heads of departments, as there was an expectation that they would provide vision and leadership regarding its implementation. Basically, these leaders, particularly the deans and HoDs, should have provided leadership in ensuring that mechanisms and systems were put in place to support the lecturers once they were appointed, the roles and responsibilities of various role players in the faculties and departments were clarified, the lecturers have the necessary space and equipment to operate, mentors were identified and allocated to the lecturers, the implementation of some the features of the programme, such as the reduced workload and mentoring, was carried out properly, and so forth. However, Seale (2015), found that the majority of Deans and Heads of Department at South African universities did not possess the skills necessary to manage faculties and departments. Among the reasons for this gap was that deans and HoDs emerged from a traditional collegial context and suddenly found themselves thrust into the unfamiliar world of executive management, with its unique challenges and demands (*ibid*). Seale (2015) suggests that the present systemic and institutional environments are not sufficiently empowering and encouraging to enable productive personal and organisational development. Seale (2015) concludes that the arrival of managerialism in the country's higher education institutions has had consequences for the development of

academic leadership, particularly as deans are conventionally trained to be academics and not leaders.

The study also indicated that, by virtue of the positions they occupy, the deans and HoDs were entrusted with providing leadership in the implementation of the nGAP. However, the blame for leadership inefficiencies in the programme could not be ascribed solely to them, as the nGAP is a shared responsibility, with its features implemented by different units within the universities. The broader university leadership must also be held accountable, since the nGAP is a national programme that is placed in the care of vice-chancellors and other senior leadership such as deputy vice-chancellors. It was demonstrated in the data analysis chapters that the implementation of the nGAP followed a top-down model in which VCs and DVCs were the first points of communication from the DHET. Therefore, the VCs and DVCs were responsible for ensuring that leadership on the programme was provided to lower structures and ensure their buy-in; ensuring that nGAP posts were available and that they were funded, and ensuring that reporting and accounting to the DHET was compliant with regulations and policies.

8.5.3 Responses from the nGAP mentors

The responses from mentors revolved around the mentoring activities, the kinds of support they have been providing to the nGAP lecturers, and the regularity of their meetings. Each mentor reported several domains in which they had been supporting their mentees (see Table 7.2). Regarding the mentoring relationships, the responses indicated that despite the identified challenges, the mentors and mentees managed to establish mutually beneficial relationships. These relationships seemed to be characterised by trust, respect, engagement, motivation, support, collaboration and growth. It was also evident from the responses that even though some mentors appeared confident about the activities they had engaged in with their mentees, they believed that mentorship training could have helped them to effectively engage in their roles.

The table below provides an overview of the responses from the mentors, the constructs that emerged from the analysis of data and a brief indication of how these could have constrained and enabled the experiences of lecturers in the nGAP, as well as the programme's effective implementation. The table also highlights what was believed would be the implications for the programme itself, the participants, the government and the universities.

Table 8.9: Summary of nGAP mentor responses to Question 3

Responses/ findings	Emerging constructs	Constraining (how)	Enabling (how)
- limited understanding by mentees of what nGAP mentoring entailed - no clear policy or structure laying out the rules of engagement - implementing own mentoring strategies - establishing mentoring relationships, a challenging experience - mentoring can also bring its share of hindrances - engage in a more collaborative and supportive space - relationship got off to a rocky start, characterised by disagreements - no mentorship training prior to engaging in the relationship - the nGAP mentoring not a straightforward exercise, need to properly inducted or prepared for it NB: A full list of all mentoring activities and support areas that participating mentors engaged in with their mentees, see table 7.2	- Lack of clarity on what nGAP mentoring entails - Lack of clarity on the mentoring activities - Lack of clarity on the training and development for mentors and mentees - Lack of clarity on the assessment/ evaluation of the mentoring relationships	- Lack of clarity on nGAP mentoring could create confusion and uncertainties on the part of the universities as they experiment with the implementation of nGAP mentoring practices - Lack of clarity on key performance areas for mentors and mentees could limit the mentoring relationships to a few activities, therefore disadvantaging both parties - Lack of clarity on what nGAP mentoring entails could negatively affect the ability of both mentors and mentees to have a better understanding and conceptualisation of mentoring and the benefits thereof - lack of policy may hamper the evaluation and assessment of mentor and mentee performance - the ability to benefit from mentoring by mentees who have not been mentored before could be hampered by the lack of clarity and guidance on what mentoring relationships should entail	- The lack of policy/ framework/ structure presents itself as an opportunity for universities to recognise that mentoring should be taken seriously and that the mentoring practices should be backed by theory and practice - A formal mentoring policy/ framework could promote the mentoring practices for the mentors and mentees, - the universities should be able to recognise that the mentor and mentee orientation/ training could be effective for both parties - The provision of detailed mentorship training would enable high quality engagement and developmentally progressive support for young academics'
IMPLICATIONS - The implication could be that other professional duties required of these young academics such as community engagement, which the nGAP advocates for, might not be receiving the required attention from the mentors due to lack of clarity and guidance. - The lecturers who have not been previously exposed to mentoring may not know whether a mentor is effective or not and may unfortunately not be able to reap the true benefits of mentoring. - Assessment and evaluation of mentoring relationships would certainly be a difficult and daunting task to conduct given the lack of clearly defined performance indicators for both mentors and mentees - Mentorship can be considered as a possible vehicle for promoting research capacity among academics and that it is a widely favoured capacity building strategy by academics. Therefore, for the nGAP mentoring to be successful, there should be active involvement of all the relevant parties such as line managers, the human resource department and support from senior management in faculties and departments.			

The themes that emerged from the data included a lack of clarity on the following: what nGAP mentoring entailed; the mentoring activities, training and development for mentors and

mentees; and the assessment/evaluation of the mentoring relationships. These constructs are summarised in the discussions below.

- *Lack of clarify on what nGAP mentoring entails*

There is sufficient data in the study indicating that mentoring in the nGAP was not guided by any formal policy or framework. Out of the eight universities that participated in the study, only four had had mentoring guidelines, some of which were still in the process of being approved by internal governing bodies/committees. It should be highlighted that these mentoring guidelines were not developed specifically for the nGAP, they were adapted to accommodate the programme where possible. Data from the three categories of participants suggested that universities were left to figure things out on their own and to continue to experiment with the mentoring practices. The participating mentors indicated that they would have preferred to have a dedicated policy framework for nGAP mentoring to provide them with the direction they needed. They had a general understanding and interpretation of what they thought mentoring entailed.

For some mentors, nGAP mentoring meant assisting the lecturers with career planning, improving their teaching and research skills and helping them identify professional development opportunities. The view is supported by Dunkin (1990), who argues that mentoring young academics should enhance their ability to adapt to the institution, improve and sustain high morale amongst employees, and lead to their improvement as academics. (p. 48). These statements also align with the few guidelines proposed by the DHET in its nGAP SoP document, indicating that even though insufficient, the guidelines did, to a certain extent provide direction to mentors.

In addition to the above, Monaghan & Lunt (1992) find that in the absence of a policy framework, as was the case with the nGAP, mentors and mentees could conceptualise and formulate a mentor role. Koballa & Bradbury (2008) are, however, of the view that the resulting differences in perception can influence the relationship that develops, as well as the learning process, for both members of the pair, by affecting how and what they discuss. (p. 2133). Thus, the participating mentors were of the view that their understanding and conceptualisation of mentoring for the nGAP could have been clarified if there was a dedicated mentorship policy framework to guide and assist the mentors. It was therefore clear that in carrying out their mentoring duties, the mentors were mainly referring to their own experiences.

- *Lack of clarity on the mentoring activities*

Literature indicates that mentoring frameworks may assist in clarifying the mentoring activities that mentors and mentees can engage in during or within their relationship. However, the study established that due to the absence of a mentoring framework, the nGAP mentors in the study were left with no choice but to improvise while ensuring that mentoring for the nGAP lecturers took place. In carrying out their responsibilities, the mentors went beyond the guidelines provided by the DHET, thereby focusing mainly on teaching and research support (see Table 7.2). The mentors in the study also reported fewer activities relating to community engagement and psychosocial support; however, this does not imply that these kinds of support were not being provided at all. It could be that these were being provided through other support programmes within the universities. The data indicated that the participating mentors agreed that a policy framework could have clarified the roles of both mentors and their mentees, firstly, to guide them with the conceptualisation of mentoring, and secondly, to help them better understand the mentees' expectations. Barker *et al.* (2013) provide evidence that a substantial number of mentoring initiatives in higher education institutions fail to establish clear goals and outcomes at the individual level. They also fail to emphasise how effective mentoring programmes can have substantial effects on the broader institutional goals.

In view of the above, the study concluded that many lessons can be learned from the practices enacted by the participating mentors to improve the efficacy of mentorships in higher education, particularly taking into account the contextual factors that influenced the intended outcomes of these relationships.

- *Lack of clarity on the training and development for mentors and mentees*

The mentors participating in the study indicated that they required training prior to their assumption of their mentoring roles. There was a general view that this important area of mentoring could have been improved if there had been a clear policy regulating the nGAP mentoring. The general view among the participating mentors was that mentoring for the nGAP was not a straightforward role that one could just take up without being properly inducted or prepared. This view is supported by some researchers who believe that the preparation of mentors has not been taken seriously in many mentoring programmes that are currently implemented (Hudson, 2013). There was a general view among the mentors that the roles were left almost entirely to their own interpretations, with no approaches specified for their

development. Even though there were talks of mentorship training in the pipeline, none of the participating mentors had undergone no mentorship training since their appointments and the training spoken about had not taken place by the time of the research interviews. Participating mentors concurred that universities also needed to take responsibility for the training of the mentors and mentees, and should not rely entirely on the DHET to organise it. Even though it was reported that some universities did organise informal sessions and meetings for the mentors and mentees, it was clear from the data that these gatherings could be regarded as formal training on different aspects of mentoring.

- *Lack of clarity on the assessment/evaluation of the mentoring relationships*

The mentors in the study were of the view that due to the absence of a mentoring framework, there was no formal instrument used to evaluate their performance as mentors. The mentors agreed that some of the mentees who have never experienced mentoring before may not have been competent to assess whether their mentoring relationships were effective or not. The literature reviewed for the study indicates that evaluating the mentoring relationship candidly and regularly helps the mentors and mentees to stay focused, to remain effective, and to be productive. It allows both parties to adjust the activities as the relationship progresses and ensure that the mentoring relationship is of highest quality. Most of the participating mentors concurred that the lack of policy made it difficult for them to be accurately assessed, since there were no clear key performance indicators against which they could be evaluated. As pointed out by one of the mentors, mentoring for the nGAP is like performing a job without a clear job description. Therefore, a mentoring policy framework for nGAP mentors could serve as a useful tool to determine the indicators for evaluating their mentoring relationships.

The literature indicates that the personal achievement of the mentee needs to be assessed in relation to professional and social development, as well as to the overall success of the mentorship programme in achieving the outcomes agreed upon. However, in the case of the nGAP, assessment or evaluation of mentors would certainly be a difficult and daunting task, given the lack of a clearly defined or formalised structure for the purpose.

Overall, evidence in the literature indicates that a formal mentoring policy framework would promote the mentoring practices for the mentors and mentees, especially mentees who had not been mentored before and might not know how to engage in a mentoring relationship. In a

study conducted by Rankhumise (2015), it was found that for mentoring to work, policies and procedures must be established to ensure both mentors and mentees are committed.

8.6 Concluding remarks

The study was only conducted in eight universities and its intention was not to generalise the findings. However, the researcher argues that the study's findings could be useful and applicable at universities that were not part of the study, as these universities are not immune from the issues emerging from the study. The study has made significant contribution to knowledge by producing new evidence that could enhance the implementation of research capacity development programmes such as the nGAP in the South African higher education system. This study has produced sufficient evidence indicating that the nGAP may be an excellent programme offering useful features and motivated by the best of intentions; however, its implementation at institutional level was constrained and enabled by several individual and organisational factors which tended to affect,) the experiences of the three categories of participants in the programme, and the manner in which it was implemented, both negatively and positively.

The study has produced enough evidence indicating that the mentoring aspect of the nGAP could have been better enabled through a formalised policy framework that would have provided clarity and guidance on several issues, such as mentor-mentee pairing, the recruitment and assessment of mentors and mentees, the training and development of mentors, and the kinds of support to be provided by universities. The study also found that the visible clash between the nGAP policy and the practicalities of implementing the programme at institutional levels was a constraining factor as far as the effectiveness of programme was concerned. It was also established that the control exerted by government over the decisions relating to the implementation of some of the features of the programme hampered individual and institutional autonomy, creating uncertainty when it came to the universities' capability to take full ownership and control of the programme.

CHAPTER 9: REFLECTIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented an analysis and discussion of the data collected from the interviews conducted with the three categories of participants, the nGAP lecturers, the managers and mentors. This chapter focuses on the researcher's reflections, and on the implications of the study's findings for the higher education sector, policymakers in government as well as for future research. It also describes the study's contribution to methodology and theory, highlights the limitations of the study and provides a concluding observation.

9.2 Overview of the study

The study was designed to investigate the concept of research capacity development in South African higher education, focusing on investigating and analysing the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of the nGAP at selected South African universities. I initially struggled to narrow down the study's focus: in the initial research proposal, since I wanted to concentrate broadly on research capacity development. Upon working on the nGAP at the DHET, and observing some of the challenges that were experienced by universities regarding the programme, I decided to narrow down the study to look specifically at the nGAP. It is for this reason that the study focused on investigating the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of the nGAP from the point of view of nGAP lecturers, managers and mentors in selected South African universities. The broad objective of the study was to investigate the factors affecting the implementation of the nGAP in participating South African higher education institutions, noting that these factors could be both constraining and enabling.

Chapter 1 outlined the nature of the phenomenon under investigation, as well as the plan that was put in place to achieve the objectives set out in the study. The chapter also contextualised the study by providing a brief history of South African higher education; the background of funding support for research capacity development in higher education; and the historical developments and conceptualisation of the nGAP, its policy provisions and implementation processes. Several government initiatives have been undertaken over the past 25 years in an attempt to equalise the higher education system, such as the development of policies and regulations that promote transformation, quality of provision, equity and redress, as well the

strengthening of research and research capacity in universities. The nGAP was one of the programmes introduced by the DHET in 2015 to transform the academic and research staff demographics in the higher education system. The nGAP officially began with the appointment of lecturers in 2016 and all the 26 South African universities participate in the programme.

Chapter 2 provided a general overview and assessment of the main concept at the core of this study. The conceptual framework for the study focused on research capacity development in higher education, locally and internationally. These concepts were used to interpret and understand the nGAP as a research capacity development programme. Chapter 3 outlined the theoretical framework for the study. The study drew on the capability approach, which provided the logical viewpoints. Chapter 4 outlined the methodology followed by the study. The research question was related to the quality of the study's secondary data, so the choice of methodology was particularly important.

It was found that face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were the most reliable data collection strategy for the study. The interview discussions were guided and organised according to the study's secondary research questions:

- What motivational factors influenced the participants to be part of the programme?
- What mechanisms have universities employed to support the implementation of the nGAP and to what extent do these constrain or enable its implementation?
- What are the views and experiences of participating in the nGAP?
- What are the factors constraining and enabling the implementation of the different features of the nGAP?

I believe all the study's research questions were effectively addressed as a result of the reliability of the secondary data sources. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 presented the data from the interviews conducted with the three categories of participants, the nGAP lecturers, the managers and the mentors. Chapter 8 presented an analysis and discussion of the data collected from the interviews conducted with the three categories of participants.

9.3 Message emanating from the research

The message emanating from this research is that, firstly, the nGAP is an effective programme that has been well received in the higher education sector. However, its implementation at

institutional levels is highly complex and to succeed it requires, at the very least, institutional commitment and support in the form of strong leadership that is able to drive transformation, adequate human resources, enabling financial and management systems, and institutional cultures and climates that embrace transformation, engagement, diversity, inclusivity and institutional autonomy.

Secondly, the study strongly indicates that the success of the nGAP should not be judged only by the number of young academics employed at universities, but by the extent to which it is able (or unable) to provide a true transformational experience for the participants. It would be interesting to see, in the long term, if universities view the nGAP as just another window-dressing programme for reproducing the same inequalities that the programme was trying to eradicate. In other words, the study shows that there should not be any distance between the experiences of nGAP lecturers and what the reported numbers of participants are claiming. Therefore, if there is perceived transformation in the form of numbers, there should also be transformation in the lecturers' experiences as academics, so there is transformation of the academic profession in South Africa in its entirety.

If no such transformation takes place, the reported numbers of participants will remain political and symbolic. This is because the study has produced sufficient evidence suggesting that the experiences of participants in the programme seemed to be ignored, while there is more attention paid to the number of lecturers the programme has managed to recruit. Thus, the programme should not just be another capacity development programme that is only concerned with increasing the numbers and not with the genuinely transformational aspect of academia.

9.4 Limitations of the study

Firstly, the study was limited because it only focused on the implementation of the nGAP as one of the many strategies for developing research capacities in South African public higher education institutions. Although there are other research capacity development programmes implemented by universities, the majority are not government sponsored and are therefore not very well known. It would therefore have been a daunting task to even begin to expand the focus of such programmes, especially considering the time limitations and financial constraints of the study. This limitation provides an opportunity for further research to be conducted on how these other programmes compare to the nGAP, and how their implementation and support vary at different universities.

Secondly, the study was based on multiple case studies, which is a limitation in itself, in the sense that the findings generated from the few selected cases might not be generalisable to other, similar institutions. Only eight universities out of the 26 that participated in the implementation of the nGAP took part in the study. Within these eight, not all the mentors and lecturers who were part of the nGAP agreed to participate, therefore the themes emerging from the findings were limited to participating managers, lecturers and mentors within the eight case studies, and cannot be generalised to the universities that did not participate.

Although a complete perspective on the implementation of the nGAP could be gained by collecting data from all the universities, it is important to keep in mind that experiences and issues in one institution may differ greatly from those in another, therefore studying all of them at the same time would not have yielded the same results. This limitation provides an opportunity for further research to be conducted to verify whether the findings from this study would be generalisable to other universities, or to the nGAP managers, lecturers and mentors who did not participate in the study.

Lastly, the implementation of the nGAP takes place at three levels: the government, institutional and individual, which includes lecturers, managers and mentors. However, the study only focused on two levels: the individual and institutional. This was not done because the other level was not important, but because there has never been such an investigation at these two levels, and the accounts of participants at these levels are crucial for the success of the programme, not only for the universities but also for the government. Essentially, there is clearly no nGAP without the two levels under investigation, therefore developing solutions that will ensure the success of these aspects of the nGAP is a priority. However, further research could be conducted to investigate the extent to which the support from the DHET enables or constrains the implementation of the nGAP at institutional and individual levels.

9.5 Contribution to knowledge, theory, policy and practice

9.5.1 Methodological contribution

The main methodological contributions of this research has been the utilisation of a multiple case study approach, as well as the employment of a combination of interviews and document analysis as data collection strategies. The study was also the first to collect data by interviewing the three key groups of actors in the nGAP: eight lecturers, six mentors and five managers,

from eight South African universities. A further methodological contribution to data collection was the experience gained through the use of a case study strategy and interpretive approaches.

9.5.2 Conceptual and theoretical contribution

The study is the first of its kind to use theoretical concepts to demonstrate that the nGAP can and should be conceptualised as a research capacity development programme. Firstly, the main features of the nGAP focus on building and strengthening the research capacity of the novice academics, providing the targeted support that is necessary for them to improve their capabilities so that they are able to conduct research at more advanced stages (Cooke *et al.*, 2006). The nGAP makes the completion of a PhD a primary goal, allocating 80% of the lecturers' time to research and 20% to teaching activities, providing funding towards PhD registration and support, allocating further funding for research equipment, arranging support through mentoring, and supporting lecturers' international mobility.

Secondly, the literature indicates that research capacity development takes place at three levels, the individual, the institutional and government or policy levels. The implementation of the nGAP as a research capacity development programme also occurs at these three levels, with the GAP lecturers representing the individual participants. This investigation focused on only two levels, the individual and the institutional. However, because of the interconnectedness and interdependence of these three levels, the findings of the study have shown that the national/policy level cannot be completely ignored in the analysis of the implementation process.

Thus, a graphic representation was developed (see Figure 2.4) of the nGAP conceptualised as a research capacity development programme, with its implementation taking place at the three interconnected and interrelated levels (individual, institutional and government). Therefore, there cannot be the nGAP without the government, for policy provisions, funding, accountability, and reporting; or the universities, to provide support and suitable environment by instituting mechanisms and processes; or the lecturers, who are permanently employed, supported and trained through the programme.

On the other hand, when looking at the implementation processes of the nGAP, it can be argued that the 'conventional idea' of research capacity development taking place at three levels may need to be altered. For example, the nGAP processes drew support and resources from a range

of actors, many of whom contribute to the facilitation of the nGAP although they are not formally part of the defined hierarchical structures of the universities, such as colleagues, family and cultural groupings. The main issue should be less about identifying the categorised levels of the system and most importantly about the environment, sharing and interconnectedness of the system actors.

9.5.3 Theoretical contribution

This was an original study that utilised the capabilities approach to analyse and unpack the research topic. The framework provided the study with a unique opportunity to look deeper and more broadly at the concepts being investigated, as well as to make sense of the data collected. This approach challenged the researcher to look beyond the usual approaches and identify richer ways of investigating and interpreting the study's findings. The capability approach assisted the researcher in analysing the views and experiences of the participants (lecturers, managers and mentors) regarding the implementation of the nGAP by their respective universities.

The capabilities approach contributed to the study's argument that the reporting template should be reviewed, as it seems to be more focused on the numbers than on reflecting the impact of the programme and how it improves the lives of the participants in this study. In line with this argument, the capabilities approach helps the study to explain that the nGAP, as a transformation programme, focuses on changing the demographics of academic staff in the South African higher education system. One cannot speak about transformation without understanding how the well-being of participants is being impacted by this initiative.

Evidence emerging from my study shows that increasing the numbers of these young academics in the higher education system is important; however, it is not sufficient to increase the numbers but not address the practices within and outside higher education, since these continue to reproduce the inequalities in the lives of these young academics, especially the women. For instance, some of the female lecturers in the study indicated that they experienced discrimination in the form of racism, stigmatisation, isolation, negative attitudes from co-workers, language used to exclude them, sexist comments by colleagues, and the devaluation of female lecturers. These attitudes had a detrimental effect on their well-being and prompted some of them to consider quitting their positions and leaving their universities.

Applying the capability approach as a tool for analysis, it became clear that the participants' experiences had been largely ignored in the nGAP reporting processes. This study therefore contributed to theory by using the capability approach as an evaluative framework for understanding the well-being and functioning of nGAP lecturers, managers and mentors in various aspects of their participation. It was possible to understand and interpret what the participants could and could not do and be, and the freedom they had or did not have in order to succeed in their different roles.

The study therefore contributed to theory by using the capabilities approach to assess the nGAP as an enabler for lecturers to achieve their functionings. The programme enabled the lecturers to secure permanent positions in the higher education sector and pursue their aspirations to become academics. However, evidence in the study showed that once they were in the programme, the lecturers realised that they could not exercise their freedom and agency or make contributions that could alter the implementation of some of the programme's features to favour them. This seems to have negatively affected the well-being of some of them.

The study also used the capabilities approach to explore the opportunities and freedom the nGAP lecturers had to effectively participate and be successful as academics, and the primary conversion factors that enhanced or impaired their freedom to use these opportunities to achieve well-being and exercise agency. From this perspective, the capabilities approach frames justice in higher education, extending opportunities and resources to all nGAP lecturers but going beyond them to consider which conversion factors needed to be attended to so that all the lecturers (especially the women) can utilise the available opportunities. In fact, the programme enabled some of the participating nGAP lecturers to leave their unfulfilling jobs to pursue their dream careers. These lecturers also gained financial freedom as they now had full-time employment, which enabled them to exercise control over their lives. The nGAP, as an enabler of capabilities, has thus expanded the lecturers' academic and professional social networks and interactions within higher education, which, in turn, opened them up to other career possibilities, such as engaging in the international mobility programme.

In my study, the capabilities approach was also applied to show the critical role that the nGAP could play as an enabler of the dreams and aspirations of young and previously disadvantaged academics by disrupting the policies that continued to reproduce staff inequalities in higher education institutions. However, evidence also indicated that certain practices in the

programme have the potential to reproduce or perpetuate these inequalities. The capability approach requires that policy should focus primarily on expanding individuals' capabilities instead of being concerned with resources and utilities. From this perspective, understanding the sources and nature of capability deprivation and inequity is central to removing existing injustice in our society and re-establishing ethics at the centre of policy discussions. Although the nGAP opened more opportunities and provided a certain amount of freedom for these participants to achieve their functioning, its implementation at institutional levels seemed to be failing to address the practices and norms that constrained the utilisation of such opportunities.

In addition, the contribution of the study involved establishing that the current conceptualisation of mentoring, as one of the core components of the nGAP, is outdated and should be revised. The study developed the table below to present the issues characterising mentoring in the nGAP, the rationale behind them and the challenges and contradictions resulting from them. The conceptualisation of the nGAP mentoring has been what some researchers refer to as 'traditional' mentoring. As presented in the table below, this is concerned with the relationship between one mentor and one mentee, and is based on the view that the mentee is the only beneficiary, since the transmission of knowledge follows a linear pattern, with the mentor being more experienced, senior and powerful. The mentee is perceived as passively absorbing everything the mentor transmits, while the selection process ignores issues of gender, age, race and culture.

Table 9.1: Features, rationale, and contradictions in the nGAP mentoring

Features of the nGAP mentoring	Rationale/ Policy provisions	Contradictions
• nGAP mentoring appears to be hierarchical/ top-down mode • It is formal in approach-mentor allocation done by university coordinators • The mentoring relationships follows a dyadic structure-relationship between one mentor and one mentee • The mentor selection process follows a one-way approach/ format • There is a linear top-down transmission of knowledge that is seen to only benefit mentee • The mentor selection process ignores several factors such as context/ background, gender, race, age, culture, background etc.)- • Mentor motivation to participate in the programme is not established upfront • Mentors are not trained prior to engaging in their mentoring roles • Mentees are not viewed as agents of their own development • Mentoring activities excludes the research component • Mentoring in the nGAP is only seen as a benefit for the lecturer	• The rationale for the older mentor-younger mentee model observed in the nGAP is advocated by the DHET as an effective succession-planning tool for preparing young academics to take over posts vacated by senior academics who will be retiring • The DHET guidelines specifically indicates that the nGAP mentors should not engage in the PhD research as this the Supervisors jurisdiction. The rationale behind this is that the approach would prevent the tensions/ conflicts that may arise between individuals where the supervisor may perceive his/her ability to supervise the mentee to have been eroded by the presence of a mentor. • The DHET guidelines only speaks of one approach, which a mentee being allocated one mentor. There is an assumption that the mentors enter the programme for pure development of the mentee and not for personal reasons • The mentor is perceived as someone who knows. The rationale for this is that the mentoring relationship is about benefiting the mentee and not the mentor or the organisation at large • There is no mentorship training for both mentor and mentees. The rationale for this is that because of their experience and seniority in the faculty/ department, the mentor would automatically know how mentoring should be done	• there is limited or no mentee participation in the pairing process • forced mentorship relationships may cause mentees to notice that they are unable to make autonomous decisions • The approach does not consider the changing roles of mentors where a mentor could also provide research advise as well as other valuable support • There is no process of establishing whether the mentors are there for their own personal (intrinsic) benefit or motivated by extrinsic factors (generativity/ volunteerism). This could open opportunities for exploitation of mentees. • Research demonstrates that female mentees are most likely to experience greater social distance and general discomfort when the mentor is male • Mentees are perceived to be passive and just absorbing knowledge transmitted by the mentor-open to power challenges/ dynamics • The approach does not recognise that each lecturer has specific developmental needs • This approach overlooks the importance and contribution of mentoring to institutional development • The rationale for not providing training to mentors is flawed because not all mentors and mentees have undergone training before and therefore may not know how mentoring should occur or how they can benefit from it

It has been widely acknowledged by various researchers in the higher education space that academic work has evolved over the years. It has become even more multifaceted and early career academics joining the system should be provided with the necessary support in managing these complexities. The provision of mentoring in the early years of joining higher education as an academic is seen to be one of the relevant interventions.

Based on the issues presented in the table above, this study offers an important new lens through which to reconceptualise mentoring in the nGAP. In the above table, the nGAP mentoring is presented as an uneven relationship in which the mentees are the primary beneficiaries and the mentors are experts who provide direction and more support than they would gain from the relationship. There are, however, new views regarding this uneven model, suggesting that even though mentors are experienced senior academics, they can also receive developmental and career benefits from these relationships. Montgomery and Page (2018) are of the view that “there is an increasing appreciation for the roles of reciprocity and bilateral engagement in improved mentoring outcomes in the academy” (p. 1).

Basically, the argument regarding these partnerships is that they should be designed in such a way that they benefit the mentor as well as the mentee, with a view to ensuring that both parties have something to learn from and teach each other. Based on these arguments, the study proposes a revised interpretation of the mentoring concept currently applied in the nGAP, moving away from a traditional approach to a more blended approach.

The diagram below was developed to demonstrate how a blended mentoring approach could realise what the study termed ‘participatory knowledge sharing mentoring relationship’. The mentoring approach proposed below is more consistent with the principles of participatory knowledge sharing, removing the mentors from the role of experts who transmit knowledge to inexperienced novices to one that is characterised by a partnership.

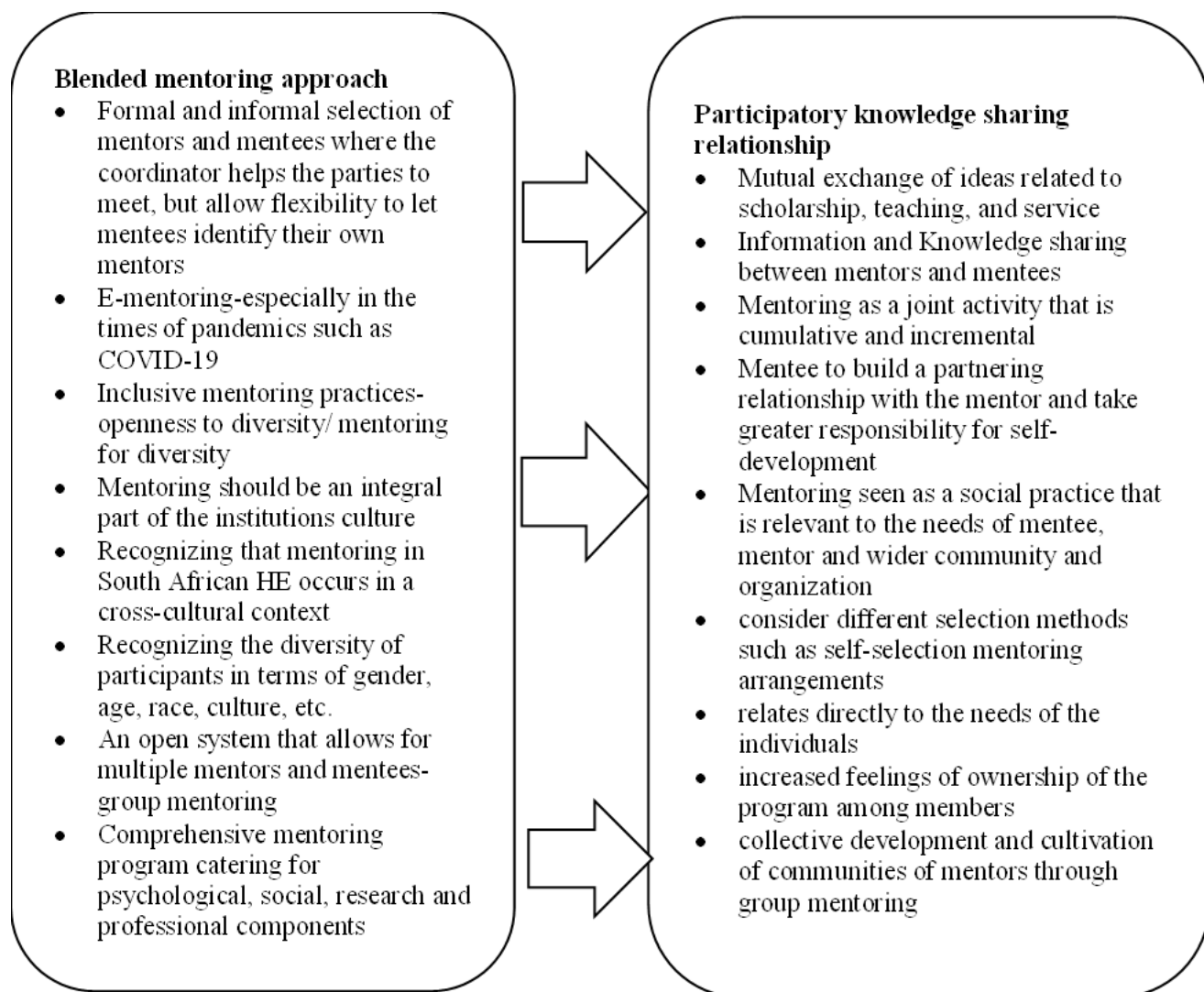


Figure 9.1: Blended, collaborative, participatory mentoring model for the nGAP

9.5.4 Contribution to policy and practice

The study produced overwhelming evidence that there was a need for a formal framework to guide mentoring in the nGAP, and that the lack of such a framework had, to a certain extent, constrained the mentoring practice for both the mentors and the mentees. The study also revealed that even though the nGAP mentoring guidelines advocated a formal, traditional approach, at most universities participating in the study, the mentoring has been uncoordinated and unguided. Literature demonstrated that mentoring practices needed to be formalised in order to provide equal access for all. This was particularly important for the young academics who were recruited through the nGAP because they were mostly new to the academic profession and were thus expected to adjust quickly to the academic environment, but lacked the necessary experience to develop strategies for dealing with teaching- and research-related activities.

The study found that there was limited information regarding formal mentoring initiatives, practices and processes at most of the participating universities, as well as in the higher education sector in general. Hence, the study's contribution to policy and practice is a mentoring framework that can guide the implementation of mentoring for the programme. The absence of a mentoring framework was found to be a major gap in the implementation of the mentoring component of the nGAP. Arguably, the proposal to develop a mentoring framework for the nGAP is likely to strengthen the debate around mentoring in the higher education sector as a whole.

The figure below was developed to illustrate the structure of a proposed framework for mentoring. The framework follows a blended mentoring structure in which the universities oversee the coordination process through the nGAP manager being the 'middlemen' between the participants (mentors and mentees) and the faculties or departments. The purpose of the proposed framework is to provide clarity on what mentoring for the nGAP should entail. This framework is merely a proposal, so it cannot be claimed that the framework will be successful - its efficacy can only be determined once it has been implemented and evaluated.

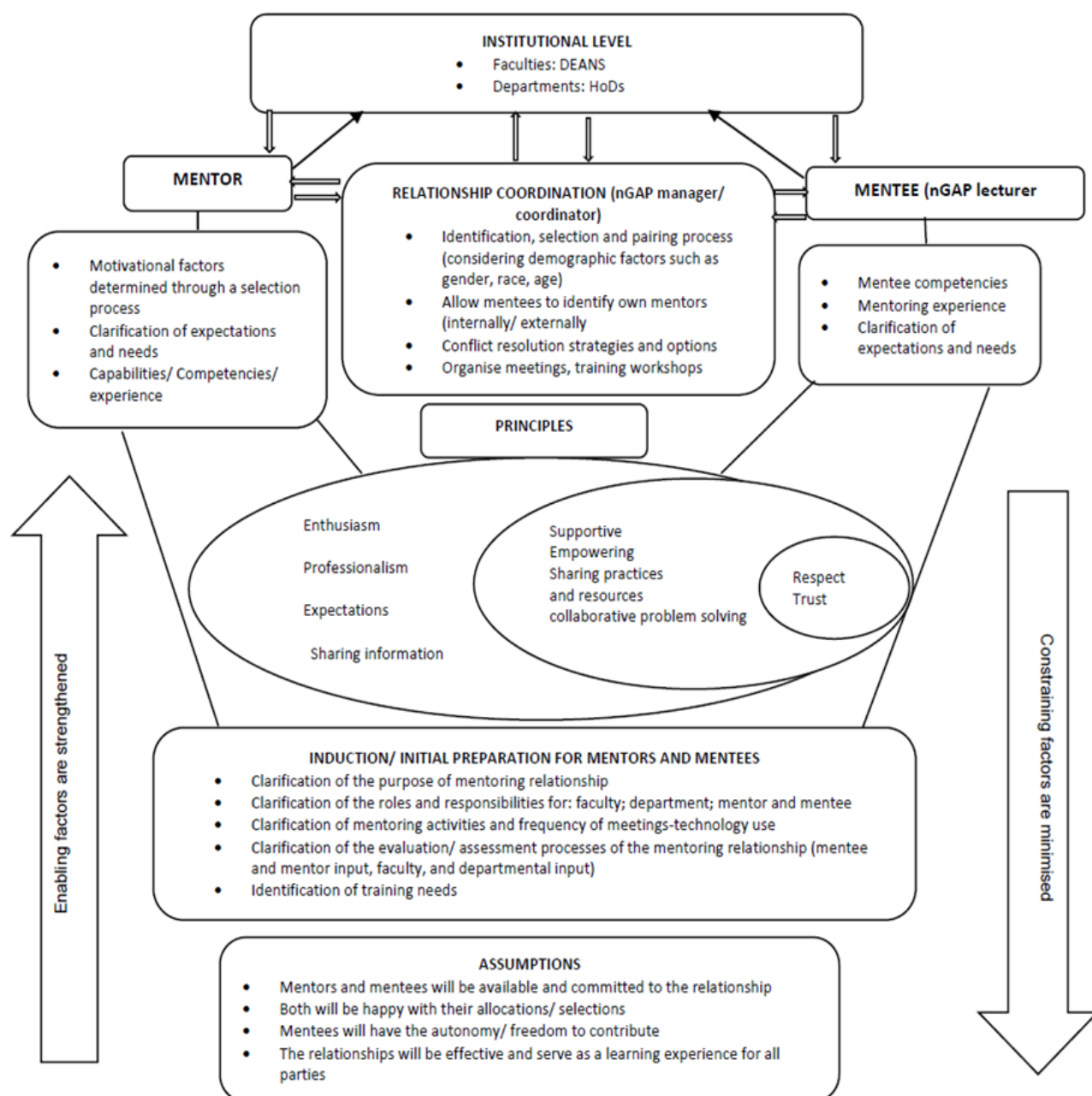


Figure 9.2: nGAP mentoring framework proposed by the study

9.5.5 Implications for policy and practice

The findings that emerged from this study indicated that there are several factors that constrain and enable the implementation of the nGAP in participating universities, thereby impacting both negatively and positively on the experiences of the lecturers, managers and mentors participating in the programme. These should be taken into account by both the government and the universities. In my opinion, if this study's recommendations were implemented, they would enhance the effectiveness of the nGAP programme in universities and improve the experiences of participants.

The managers indicated that since the start of the programme they had not had the opportunity to tell their stories through a formal reporting process. The study therefore recommends a review of the nGAP reporting template/ to include reporting by the managers. It is also recommended that the reporting process for the lecturers is separated from those of their mentors, supervisors and the university reporting template, to afford them the confidentiality and protection to report honestly about their experiences, without fearing victimisation from their seniors.

It is also recommended that a mentoring framework is developed to guide and regulate nGAP mentoring practices. Even though data indicates that the mentors in the study were able to ensure that mentoring for the nGAP occurred, they decried the lack of a policy or framework, indicating that they were left to figure things out on their own. Literature also indicated that mentoring in most South African universities is more of an experiment, with the universities lacking the necessary policies and guidelines. If the proposed model for a mentoring framework were to be implemented, it has the potential to improve the mentoring culture across the higher education sector and ensure that every young staff member entering the system gets an opportunity to benefit.

Yet another recommendation is that the structure of the nGAP be reviewed to make it more differentiated, flexible and individualised regarding the following: the criteria for lecturers participating in the programme, particularly the 70% requirement; the timing of the reduced workload; and the one-size-fits-all financial allocations and reporting. It is hoped that these changes will allow the nGAP to be more inclusive than is currently the case. There was a general view among the nGAP managers that the programme had become more exclusive, and appeared to be mainly for the benefit of certain inbred and privileged groups of young academics, resulting in many capable young people being excluded.

Furthermore, government should consider providing universities with dedicated funding so that nGAP managers can be appointed at all the universities. This would ensure that the capacity to coordinate and manage the nGAP at institutional level is enabled and that all universities are in a strong position to support the growing number of nGAP lecturers.

In addition, the government, together with the universities, should consider developing a system-wide national recruitment drive for mentors, focusing on retired professors and

academics returning from overseas, with a specific focus on women. The aim of such a recruitment drive would be to create a pool of mentors from which universities can recruit for the nGAP and for other research capacity development programmes funded by universities. As part of the proposed mentoring framework, it should be compulsory for the nGAP lecturers to be trained as mentors once they are in the final year of their training, so that they not only replace the retiring academics around teaching and research, but also replenish the much-needed mentoring and supervisory capacity. Mentorship and supervisory training could be added as one of the outputs to be achieved by the nGAP lecturers at the end of the six-year training. In proposing that academics returning from abroad should be considered for recruitment as mentors, it is hoped a conversation will be initiated around developing policies and procedures aimed at taking advantage of the knowledge and international experience of these academics, many of whom are of retirement age. If implemented, these proposals will ensure that all the universities in the country have equal prospects of accessing good quality mentors.

The salaries of the nGAP lecturer should be standardised across the system. This would afford all the universities equal opportunities to recruit and retain the best talent and avoid a situation where, due to their privileged position, well-resourced universities become the only true beneficiaries of the talent offered by the nGAP. Thus, the study recommends that the DHET and universities facilitate the development of mentoring CoPs and support their growth, through funding, resources and infrastructure.

9.6 Implications for future research

The implications for future research are divided into two categories, which are those for individual participants and those for the government and the higher education sector as a whole.

9.6.1 For the lecturers, managers and mentors

Further research in the following areas would yield valuable data:

- The effectiveness of nGAP mentoring relationships and their impact on the professional development of the lecturers;
- The impact of institutional culture and climate practices on the broader experience and to what extent these contribute towards lecturers' turnover decisions;
- The experiences of nGAP managers with regard to burnout resulting from role overload and its impact on their job satisfaction;

- The extent to which the perceived lack of mentor-mentee preparation and training is affecting the nGAP mentoring roles and relationships;
- The extent to which issues such as race, gender and cultural differences hamper nGAP mentors' and mentees' relationships.

9.6.2 For the government and the HE system

Investigation of the following topics would also prove useful:

- Whether the nGAP offers the lecturers participating in the programme a truly transformational experience, is it just another strategy focusing on increasing the numbers of Black candidates in academia while maintaining the status quo;
- To what extent the human resources practices employed by universities in the recruitment of lecturers promote 'institutional inbreeding', resulting in the exclusion of externally recruited/non-inbred candidates;
- How the managerialist approach adopted by government in the implementation of the nGAP affects institutional autonomy, ownership and the effective implementation of the programme and administration of other earmarked grants provided by government.

9.7 Concluding comment

It would be a considerable achievement if these findings could contribute towards a better understanding of the consequences of the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of the nGAP at institutional level. It is also my hope that the model for the mentoring framework that the study proposes could be considered and adopted by both the government and the higher education institutions, with a view to strengthening the nGAP mentorship and its implementation.

THE APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND INVITATION

Dear participant,

I am a PhD student at the University of The Witwatersrand (Johannesburg, South Africa) in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies division. My research topic is: Research capacity development in South African Higher Education: an analysis of the opportunities and challenges presented by the new Generation of Academics Programme. This study is based on a qualitative design and seeks to explore, through semi-structured interviews, the views and experiences of lecturers appointed under the new Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP), their mentors and the managers at eight South African universities. The study will also evaluate/ assess policies, strategies and programmes implemented by the university to support the implementation of the nGAP as well. It would be a great achievement for the study if its results could assist government and universities to gain a better conceptualisation and understanding of the subject of research capacity development for young academics and help improve the universities' understanding of the long-term objectives of the nGAP and strengthen its implementation.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study by availing yourself for a 30-45 minute interview. You have been selected to participate in your capacity as one of the first cohort of the lecturers/ mentor/ manager participating in the nGAP.

Kindly note that participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can choose to participate or not and there is no penalty for not participating. If you want to stop participating at any time, you are welcome to do so. Also, you do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to.

If you participate in this study, you will be interviewed by myself (the researcher) and your voice will be audio recorded (with your permission). However, the recordings and transcribed data will be kept confidential and anonymity is guaranteed throughout the study. Individual interviews will take place in 2018 and each will last about 30 minutes. The resulting report will

not link the data to individuals' names, but a secret code (a number or pseudo name) will be used. Your responses will not be made available to other staff members within the university. The research report will be submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand for Degree purposes and archiving. An electronic copy may be produced online for academic purposes and some papers may be written from the study and be published in some local or international educational journals. You will not be identified in any way in the published results of the study so your responses will be anonymous.

This study should not pose any risks, cause any discomfort, result in any side effects or have any direct benefits to you. If you feel that you have in any way been disadvantaged during the course of the study, or if you have any other questions about this research study, or concerns about privacy, please contact my Supervisor Professor Felix Maringe at this email address: Felix.Maringe@wits.ac.za. This study has been reviewed and approved by the university's Graduate Studies Committee in Education. You may also contact the office at Tel: +27 11 717 3021; Fax: +27 11 717 4037; E-mail: Hale.Modau@wits.ac.za.

Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated. The study will contribute to informing policy decisions and programmes implemented in support of the development of emerging academics/ researchers at both university and government levels. If you are willing and comfortable to participate, kindly complete the attached form by providing the following details: your name, gender, nationality, race, Faculty/ school, e-mail address and a telephone number and indicate your position/ role within, qualifications/ degree level as well as whether you are currently involved in research and or teaching.

Kindly e-mail the completed consent form to: amagabane@gmail.com. The contact details you have provided will be used to set up your interview date and time. Please keep this letter safe so that you have my contact details should you wish to contact me in future.

With kind regards

Angeline (Angie) Magabane

0733210584

APPENDIX B: DECLARATION OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION AS A LECTURER/ MENTOR/MANAGER

I, (full names and surname) _____ hereby confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet produced by the researcher:

- I agree to participate in Mmamajaga Angeline Magabane's study entitled: *Research capacity development in South African Higher Education: an analysis of the challenges and opportunities presented by the New Generation of Academics Programme*.
- I understand that I will complete a questionnaire, and that my responses will be electronically recorded and will be stored in a locked cabinet by the researcher.
- I hereby consent to use of my responses in the project.
- I further understand that my responses will be treated confidentially, I will not be identified in any way on the transcript of the interview or in any of the published results of the study and that I may withdraw from the project at any time by contacting the researchers.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty for not participating. I have not been coerced or pressured into signing this consent form.

I am a lecturer/ mentor/ manager-----

I am member in the Department/ Faculty/ School of -----
-----and my staff number is-----

My contact numbers are: ----- (home) ----- (cell)

Participant's Signature: -----Date: -----

Researcher's Signature----- Date-----

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT PHD RESEARCH

Dear.....

Request for permission to conduct PhD research

My name is Mmamajaga Angeline Magabane, I am a PhD candidate at the University of the Witwatersrand in the School of Education.

I am conducting research on Research Capacity Development in South African higher education, with a specific focus on the development of emerging academics/ researchers. My study intends to investigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the new Generation of Academics Programme implemented by the university.

My research is based on a qualitative design and seeks to explore, through interviews, the views and experiences of lecturers appointed under the nGAP, their mentors and managers on the implementation of the programme at the university. The study will also evaluate/ assess policies, strategies and programmes implemented by the university to support research capacity among emerging academics, the implementation of the nGAP programme as well as lecturers participating in the programme. It is hoped that the outcomes of the study would assist in improving the understanding and implementation of this programme at both universities and government.

I am inviting your university to participate in this research and be afforded an opportunity to partake in this interesting investigation of the issues that hamper and or enable the implementation of the nGAP programme in South African higher education institutions.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the university will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Their individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. I have attached the ethics clearance letter for this project. All research data will be destroyed between 4-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

MA MAGABANE

ADDRESS: 473 LUCKY BEAN CRESENT, MORELETA PARK, PRETORIA

CELL: 0733210584

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE NGAP LECTURERS

This document presents questions which will be used to gather information for this research. The schedule will initially be part of the documents that will be distributed electronically to all participants so that they are able to familiarise themselves with the study and the types of questions they will be expected to respond to during the scheduled interviews. The said interviews may take either a virtual (skype, telephone etc.) or face to face format depending participant availability.

You have been identified as an important respondent who could shed light on this investigation, in your capacity as a Lecturers participating in the New Generation of Academics Programme. Kindly familiarise yourself with the questions below and let me know within a period of two weeks if you are willing to be part of this study. A good participation will ensure that the findings and recommendations of the research are benefit the government as well as the universities in advancing the New Generations of Academics Programme.

Kindly note that this instrument has been evaluated and approved by the Wits Ethics Committee. This process was done to ensure that the script complies with the university's Ethics policy, which, among others, seeks to guarantee that the rights and interests of human participants in the research are protected and that there are no other ethical problems in the research as well.

I am grateful that you have taken your valuable time to consider my request to participate in this study. Thank you in advance for the contribution your participation would make towards improving research capacity development for young and emerging academics in South African higher education. Your early reply will also be highly appreciated as it would enhance my chances of completing the research on time and put me in a position to receive my degree soon.

You are welcome to email me at amagabane@gmail.com or contact me directly at 0733210584, should you have any clarity seeking questions regarding the study and your participation in it.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Kindly respond to all questions in the demographic questionnaire
- NB: All information gathered will be kept confidential.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Kindly note that these contact details required below will be used to set up your interview date and time (where necessary), and to summarise features of the sample without giving names. Thank you.

Name-----Surname-----
Staff Number -----Gender-----Age-----
Year enrolled into the programme-----
Position/ Occupation-----
Faculty/ Department/ School-----
Qualification obtained (level if still being pursued) -----
Name of university at which you are registered for your current qualification-----

Race-----Nationality-----
Home language-----
Email address-----
Telephone/cell number-----

SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- **What motivational factors influenced the lecturers to participate in the programme?**
 - What did you do before joining the nGAP?
 - Did you have any teaching and research experience prior to participating in the nGAP?
 - What motivated you to want to be part of the programme?
 - How did you learn about the nGAP programme or the availability of the post at your university?
 - How were you recruited into the program?

- **What mechanisms have universities employed to support the implementation of the nGAP, and to what extent do these constrain or enable its implementation?**
 - What are your views about the nGAP and how do you think the universities supported or failed to support the implementation of the nGAP?
- **What are the views and experiences of participants in relation to the implementation of the different features of the nGAP at their respective universities?**
 - What are your experiences in the programme?
 - What are your opinions about the structure and features of the programme and how these have been implemented?
 - Are there any opportunities and or challenges associated with being part of a programme such as this? Please elaborate.
- **What recommendations can be made based on the findings of the study?**
 - If this programme were to be reviewed, do have any specific areas you would like to see some changes or improvements in? Please elaborate using examples
 - Do you have any additional information or comment that you think might be useful for this study or could in future benefit the programme under investigation?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE nGAP MANAGERS

This document presents questions which will be used to gather information for this research. The schedule will initially be part of the documents that will be distributed electronically to all participants so that they are able to familiarise themselves with the study and the types of questions they will be expected to respond to during the scheduled interviews. The said interviews may take either a virtual (skype, telephone etc.) or face to face format depending participant location and availability.

You have been identified as an important respondent who could shed light on this investigation, in your capacity as a Manager of the New Generation of Academics Programme within the university. Kindly familiarise yourself with the questions below and let me know within a period of two weeks if you are willing to be part of this study. A good response and return will ensure that the findings and recommendations of the research are benefit the government as well as the universities in strengthening the New Generations of Academics Programme.

Kindly note that this instrument has been evaluated and approved by the Wits Ethics Committee. This process was done to ensure that the script complies with the university's Ethics policy, which, among others, seeks to guarantee that the rights and interests of human participants in the research are protected and that there are no other ethical problems in the research as well.

I am grateful that you have taken your valuable time to consider my request to participate in this study. Thank you in advance for the contribution your participation would make towards improving research capacity development for young and emerging academics in South African higher education. Your early response will also be highly appreciated as it would enhance my chances of completing the research on time and put me in a position to receive my degree soon.

You are welcome to email me at amagabane@gmail.com or contact me directly at 0733210584, should you have any clarity seeking questions during completion of the questionnaire.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Kindly note that these contact details required below will be used to set up your interview date and time (where necessary), and to summarize features of the sample without giving names. Thank you.

Name-----Surname-----
Staff Number -----Gender-----Age-----
Position/ Occupation-----
Faculty/ Department/ School/ Division-----
Race-----Nationality-----
Home language-----
Email address-----
Telephone/cell number-----

SECTION B

- What motivational factors influenced the lecturers to participate in the programme?
 - How did you become part of the programme?
 - What are your responsibilities as an nGAP manager?

- What mechanisms have universities employed to support the implementation of the nGAP, and to what extent do these constrain or enable its implementation?
 - What are your views about the nGAP and how do you think the universities supported or failed to support the implementation of the programme?
 - What is your opinion about the university's interpretation of the nGAP?
- What are the views and experiences of participants in relation to the implementation of the different features of the nGAP at their respective universities?
 - What are your opinions about the structure and features of the programme and how these have been implemented in your university?
- What recommendations can be made based on the findings of the study?
 - Do you have any additional information or comment that you think might be useful for this study or could in future benefit the programme under investigation?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: MENTORS

This document presents questions which will be used to gather information for this research. The schedule will initially be part of the documents that will be distributed electronically to all participants so that they are able to familiarise themselves with the study and the types of questions they will be expected to respond to during the scheduled interviews. The said interviews may take either a virtual (skype, telephone etc.) or face to face format depending on the participant's availability.

You have been identified as an important respondent who could shed light on this investigation, in your capacity as a Mentor participating in the New Generation of Academics Programme. Kindly familiarise yourself with the questions below and let me know within a period of two weeks if you are willing to be part of this study. A good response and return will ensure that the findings and recommendations of the research benefit the government as well as the universities in strengthening the New Generations of Academics Programme.

Kindly note that this instrument has been evaluated and approved by the Wits Ethics Committee. This process was done to ensure that the script complies with the university's Ethics policy, which, among others, seeks to guarantee that the rights and interests of human

participants in the research are protected and that there are no other ethical problems in the research as well.

I am grateful that you have taken your valuable time to consider my request to participate in this study. Thank you in advance for the contribution your participation would make towards improving research capacity development in South African higher education. Your early response will also be highly appreciated as it would enhance my chances of completing the research on time and put me in a position to receive my degree soon.

You are welcome to email me at amagabane@gmail.com or contact me directly at 0733210584, should you have any clarity seeking questions during completion of the questionnaire.

INSTRUCTIONS

- The interview schedule consists of 2 sections.
- NB: All information gathered will be kept confidential.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Kindly note that these contact details required below will be used to set up your interview date and time (where necessary), and to summarize features of the sample without giving names. Thank you.

Name-----Surname-----
Staff Number -----Gender-----Age-----
Position/ Occupation-----
Faculty/ Department/ School-----
Qualifications-----
Race-----Nationality-----
Home language-----
Email address-----
Telephone/cell number-----

SECTION B

- What motivational factors influenced the lecturers to participate in the programme?
 - How did you become part of the nGAP?
 - What motivated you to want to be part of the programme?
 - What is your own conceptualisation and understanding of mentoring in the nGAP?
- What mechanisms have universities employed to support the implementation of the nGAP, and to what extent do these constrain or enable its implementation?
 - Would you please reflect on the support provided or not provided to you in carrying out your mentoring responsibilities?
- What are the views and experiences of participants in relation to the implementation of the different features of the nGAP at their respective universities?
 - Please speak about the mentoring activities you have engaged in with your mentees as well as the kind of support you provided to them?
 - How would you describe your relationship with the candidates and what are your expectations of them?
 - Have you undergone any training or development as a mentor in the programme?
- What recommendations can be made based on the findings of the study?
 - Do you have any additional information or comment that you think might be useful for this study or could in future benefit the programme under investigation?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION AND FOR PARTICIPATING IN MY
STUDY**

APPENDIX E: ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER

Wits School of Education



27 St Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193 Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, South Africa. Tel: +27 11 717-3064 Fax: +27 11 717-3100 E-mail: enquiries@educ.wits.ac.za Website: www.wits.ac.za

02 November 2017

Student Number: 9600775V

Protocol Number: 2017ECE061D

Dear Angeline Magabane

Application for Ethics Clearance: Doctor of Philosophy

Thank you very much for your ethics application. The Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities, acting on behalf of the Senate, has considered your application for ethics clearance for your proposal entitled:

Research Capacity Development in South African Higher Education: an analysis of the challenges and opportunities presented by New Generations of Academics Programme

The committee recently met and I am pleased to inform you that **clearance was granted**.

Please use the above protocol number in all correspondence to the relevant research parties (schools, parents, learners etc.) and include it in your research report or project on the title page.

The Protocol Number above should be submitted to the Graduate Studies in Education Committee upon submission of your final research report.

All the best with your research project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Mabete".

Wits School of Education

011 717-3416

cc Supervisor - Prof Felix Maringe

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