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New Academics in the South African Research-oriented Academy: A Critical Review of Challenges and Support Structures

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Abstract

An explicit drive to increase research production at South African universities is apparent, but this drive also calls for the emergence of researchers who have traditionally been marginalised and underrepresented in the academy. Developing a new generation of productive researchers and intellectuals in South Africa, particularly those who are underrepresented in academia and who come from historically marginalised groups, is not only a pressing national concern, it is also an endeavour that is taken seriously by universities that value research production, transformation, and diversity. This paper is specifically concerned with the challenges faced by new academics who come from historically marginalised groups and groups which are underrepresented in academia, and thus particular attention is paid to black academics, academics from working-class backgrounds, and women in the academy. We specifically focus on concerns surrounding their success in the academy and in research production by addressing the transition from student to academic staff member, and the appropriation of the language of the academy. We argue that fundamental changes are necessary to address the specified challenges, and thus call for adequate support structures that promote intentional socialisation into the academy; supportive networking practices, and non-hierarchical mentoring models.

Keywords: university, new academics, research production, transformation

Introduction

In the global South, the university of the future needs to become more inclusive and critically consider issues concerning knowledge production (Morley 2012). An explicit drive to increase research production has been apparent, but this drive also calls for the emergence of researchers who have traditionally been marginalised and underrepresented in the academy. Indeed, South Africa has embarked on a journey to transform its universities into more research-intensive and demographically diverse institutions. These goals have been outlined in various government documents that have urged universities to produce high-calibre researchers. For example, the *National Plan for Higher Education* has argued that 'higher education must make a lasting contribution toward building the future generations of critical black intellectuals and researchers' (Department of Education 2001: 2). Additionally, the National Planning Commission's report-in-progress has called for cogent improvements with respect to race and gender representation among researchers in higher education (Carrim & Wangenge-Ouma 2012). This is warranted given that in South Africa academic staff members across higher education, particularly at research universities, continue to be predominantly white and women are under-represented in high-ranking positions (Department of Education 2008; Metcalfe & Cock 2010). The racial and gendered inequities in staff composition indicate that structural obstacles continue to exist for those who have traditionally been marginalised and underrepresented in higher education institutions (Department of Education 2008).

Recruiting cutting-edge researchers in general is particularly difficult given the paucity of postgraduate students (and particularly doctoral students) in the pipeline (Herman 2011). Most PhD programmes struggle to find suitable students (Herman 2009). This lack of suitable students amounts to a small pool of qualified potential cutting-edge researchers and intellectuals. Indeed, there is a dearth of highly educated academic staff members. In 2008, only 34% of permanently employed university staff members held a doctorate (Carrim & Wangenge-Ouma 2012). In 2007, the number of white doctoral degree graduates was more than double that of the combined figure for African, Coloured and Indian doctoral degree graduates (Department of Education 2008). The dearth of qualified black South Africans has meant that universities appoint non-

South African Africans to take-up academic posts (Department of Education 2008). Unfortunately, this move has not come without xenophobic sentiments and tensions between South Africans and non-South Africans within the academy (Department of Education 2008).

Developing a new generation of productive researchers and intellectuals in South Africa, particularly those who are underrepresented in academia and who come from historically marginalised groups, is not only a pressing national concern, it is also an endeavour that is taken seriously by universities that value research production, transformation, and diversity (see, for example, Rhodes University 2014). This undertaking benefits not only up-and-coming intellectuals who stand to gain from their employment at research oriented universities, but also benefits these universities. Diversity among academic staff members has positive implications for the development of a diverse university curriculum (Davis 2008: 278). In particular, it has been noted that black academics make use of more active pedagogical techniques and encourage students to interact with peers from different backgrounds (Knowles & Harleston 1997). A critical mass of Black intellectuals can contribute not only in terms of research production and academic 'publications but can also speak forcefully in the public arena about matters of national or public concern' (Bitzer 2008: 277). Supporting and nurturing new academics, particularly those from marginalised groups means that individuals from different 'settings and life experiences' have opportunities to make contributions to the academic project (Barton & Armstrong 2008: 5). When academics from different backgrounds and life experiences work together, issues can be examined from different perspectives, thus contributing to a more rigorous intellectual milieu (Barton & Armstrong 2008).

While governing documents and universities have engaged in the rhetoric of 'new researchers and intellectuals' in general (Department of Education 2001: 2), this paper is specifically concerned with new academics within the South African context who come from historically marginalised groups and groups that are underrepresented in academia. In particular, we focus on concerns surrounding their success in the academy and in research production. First, we outline the barriers and challenges that exist for new academics by focusing on the transition that must be made from student to academic staff. We also address how appropriating the language of the academy can be problematic for new academics. Secondly, we present a

cursory review of some of the challenges facing new academics that are underrepresented in academia and who come from historically marginalised groups. We particularly focus on black academics, academics from working-class backgrounds, and women in the academy. Lastly, we review some of the implicit and entrenched institutional practices that serve to undermine or disadvantage new academics, and call for adequate support structures that promote intentional socialisation into the academy; supportive networking practices, and non-hierarchical mentoring models.

Making the Transition: From Student to Academic

In understanding the challenges facing new academics who come from historically marginalized groups, it is imperative to discuss the transition that must be made when their roles shift from being postgraduate students to being full-time academic staff members[1]. We argue that this transition process is significant for promoting the success of new academics from historically marginalised groups and groups that are underrepresented in academia. The following discussion addresses some of the general difficulties related to making the transition from student to academic staff member, and then proceeds to discuss this transition within the specific context of South Africa. New academic staff members may have not been prepared during their postgraduate studies to enter into their new career. The postgraduate training received by students prepares them to conduct original research, but does not necessarily prepare students for a career that requires them to simultaneously undertake the three cornerstones of academia: research, teaching, and service (Reybold 2003; Speck2003; Gaff 2002; Golde & Dore 2001; Gaff & Pruitt-Logan 1998; Frongia 1995; Randall 1993; Huber 1992). In documenting the shortcomings of postgraduate training with respect to preparing future academics, Speck refers to a 'fallacy of adequate preparation' and notes that there is a false assumption that postgraduate programmes train future academics for professional life in

[1] While we acknowledge that historically, academic staff members in South Africa have held full-time posts while they undertake their postgraduate studies, this is now changing, with many universities seeking new staff members who have already earned their doctorates.

academia (2003: 42). It is difficult to conceive that the various responsibilities of an academic and what it means to be an academic can be articulated and clearly unpacked during the postgraduate training process. Given that this is the case, scholars such as Gaff, have called 'for a bridge between doctoral study and the work expected of new faculty' (2002: 66).

The transitional challenges faced may manifest themselves during the job search process, even before taking-up a position as a new academic. In particular, evidence suggests that postgraduate programmes fail to adequately professionalise students and do not prepare them to enter the academic job market (Nerad & Cerny 1999; NAGPS 2001). More specifically, new academics in South Africa find it difficult to make the transition from student to academic staff, struggle to launch their research careers, and experience difficulties establishing a publication record (Geber 2009). These barriers appear to be interrelated and can be viewed as stemming from a lack of support during the postgraduate years as well as during the early phase of an academic career. Similarly, Nkomo (2007) argues that there is insufficient preparation for those interested in pursuing academic positions and insinuates that this is not unrelated to the paucity of black intellectuals. It has also been suggested that the problem of underprepared postgraduate students is related to overburdened inexperienced supervisors (Mouton 2007). Mouton proposes a programme that has the potential to assist postgraduate students in transitioning into professional academics. He argues:

> We should seriously consider launching a national doctoral or post-graduate academy to provide prospective doctoral candidates with a better foundation in research methodology and thesis management and also provide high-quality seminars and workshops to build the capacity of our supervisors (2007: 1090).

Such an academy could serve to intentionally help new academics make the transition between postgraduate studies and a career in academia. Facilitating the transition between student and academic is a key factor that needs to be addressed in order to determinedly and intentionally produce a new generation of researchers that reflect individuals from various backgrounds.

The Language of the Academy

New academics who have traditionally been marginalised or underrepresented in the academy may also struggle to firmly entrench themselves in the language of the academy. The language of the academy, being considerably different from that of colloquial-speak, is used not merely to communicate, but also to wield power (Bourdieu & Passeron 2011). Indeed, university idiom exudes authority and is inscribed in the institution of the university. As noted by Bourdieu and Passeron:

> Magisterial language a status attribute which owes most of its effects to the institution, since it can never be dissociated from the relation of the academic authority in which it is manifested, is able to appear as an intrinsic quality of the person when it merely diverts an advantage of office onto the office-holder (2011:110).

As such, those who gain a firm command of the language of the academy are viewed as inherently gifted, and not necessarily as conforming to, and reproducing institutionally sanctioned language and culture. The language of the academy can be viewed as inextricably tied to the culture of the academy, and the authority it represents, thus compelling new academics to conform to the 'dominant model of the relation to language and culture' (Bourdieu & Passeron 2011:122). New academics are not only compelled to conform to, and affirm themselves pedagogically by appropriating, the language of the university, but they are also compelled to display their command of the language of the academy through their general comportment and in their research production endeavors. It thus follows that the new academics' command of the language of the academy, is as critical as the significance of their research. Those who struggle to gain a firm command of university-speak stand to lose institutionally sanctioned accolades.

While Bourdieu and Passeron argue that the language of the academy is no one's mother tongue, it is 'unequally removed from the languages actually spoken by the different classes' (2011:115). Language is seen to provide a system of categories, ranging from complex to less complex. The ability to decipher and manipulate complex language is contingent on 'the complexity of the language transmitted by the family'

(2011:73). In making the distinction between different forms of language, Bourdieu and Passeron (2011) note that bourgeois language tends to be characterised as embodying 'formalism intellectualism, and euphemistic moderation' whereas, working-class speak 'manifests itself in the tendency to…shun the bombast of fine words and the turgidity of grand emotions through banter, rudeness, and ribaldry' (2011: 116). Bourdieu and Passeron's critical insights have implications for a South African society which has historically conflated race and class. This also points to the arbitrary and advantaged position that the historically elite predominantly white community has had in terms of appropriating the language of the academy. The observation must also be made that while South African society is rapidly changing, the values, culture, and language of the academy remain virtually unaltered and continue to privilege those from the dominant group.

Marginalised and Underrepresented in Academia

In South Africa, as in many parts of the world, the quintessential academic has predominantly been, and continues to be middle-class, white, and male. Given South Africa's socio-political history, this has been the case despite the fact that only a small minority fit the bill. This is not to say that South Africa has not produced first-rate academics that do not meet the aforementioned description. However, it is befitting to acknowledge the barriers faced by those who have been traditionally underrepresented and marginalised in the academy. With this in mind, we outline some of the barriers faced by black academics and academics that come from a working class background. Additionally, we discuss some of the barriers that women in the academy continue to face. Our aim here is not to provide an exhaustive account of the literature on black academics, working-class academics, and women in the academy, nor to portray race, class, and gender as existing independently from each other. We also do not claim that race, class, and gender are the only relevant categories that exist when addressing issues of marginalisation in the academy, however these are issues that continue to be prevalent in the discourse on university transformation. Thus, we discuss the marginalisation and underrepresentation of black, working-class, and women academics in South Africa by looking at structural and

institutional factors. Our focus on race, class, and gender is informed by the nation's socio-historical past. We also acknowledge that individuals are not unidimensional and can identify in a myriad of socially relevant ways that evoke the intersection of race, class, and gender.

Black Academics[2]

The not so distant apartheid past and the resulting inequalities that were generated and perpetuated in South Africa underscore the relevance of acknowledging the struggles, difficulties, and barriers faced by new black academics. The alienation of black academics poses a major problem in South Africa (Thaver 2003). White, Riordan, Özkanli, and Neale have noted that race and gender manifest themselves in university management structures, with one of their participants noting that the university is characterised 'predominantly [by] a white male culture with an overwhelming white male professoriate' (2010: 653). This poses a major problem for those who do not conform to the overriding culture. As Thaver has noted,

> if an institution's culture reflects the hegemony of a single group, it signals a message that only persons from the hegemonic group can be academics, sending out a negative message to those outside of the specific group' (2003: 146).

It is therefore not surprising that black academics identify alienating cultures as one of the main reasons black individuals leave academia (Metcalfe & Cock 2010). Black academics' departure from the university raises concerns with respect to the lack of role models for black students (Davis 2008: 279). A need exists to fundamentally transform the system, and support and promote academics situated outside of the hegemonic group. In particular,

[2] We use an inclusive definition of black that includes Indians, Coloureds, and Africans. While we acknowledge that race is a social construct and that individuals do not necessarily fit into these categories, and can resist them, they have also been entrenched in South African society and point to social inequalities and disparities.

black female academics experience isolation and a need for training and mentorship in relation to conducting research and producing publications (Schulze 2005; Maürtin-Cairncross 2005).

The recent *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in the Public Higher Education Institutions* (also known as the Soudien Report), found that racism and sexism are pervasive in public institutions of higher education (Department of Education 2008). Among a plethora of problems, the report noted that universities are experiencing difficulties with respect to retaining black and female staff members (both academic and non-academic). These difficulties include problems of harassment of black staff members by white students in some institutions (Department of Education 2008). Similar findings have been previously documented by Schulze (2005).

The aforementioned discussion has focused on the South African context, however, it is noteworthy that the marginalisation of black academics and academics of colour has been well researched across different contexts (see, for example, Delgado-Romero, Nichols Manlove, Manlove & Hernandez 2007; Abercrumbie 2002; Alfred 2001; Turner & Myers 2000; Johnsrud & Sadao 1998; Keith & Moore 1995, Sorcinelli 1994; McKay 1983). Academics of colour experience discrimination and stereotypes within higher education institutions that have traditionally been centres of white hegemony (Allison 2008; Hendrix 1997; Weitz & Gordon 1993). However, Delgado-Romero *et al.* (2007) suggest that discrimination against academics and aspiring academics of colour is not often examined systematically, and is instead discussed anecdotally, thus creating the perception that discrimination on the basis of race and colour is not problematic within the academy. It is thus important to address the racial background of new academics vis-a-vis the institutional practices of the university, particularly those practices related to research and research productivity.

Working-class Academics

Within the context of South Africa, race and class have historically been

conflated, due to the institutionalised discrimination that was faced by black communities during apartheid. Thus, while a black middle-class has emerged and a black political power block exists, the majority of people living in abject poverty in South Africa continue to be black. This is exacerbated by the country's growing inequality (Bhorat, van der Westhuizen & Jacobs 2009). The widening gap between rich and poor must be taken into consideration, and universities must be cognisant of the struggles of new academics from working class backgrounds, who have traditionally not enjoyed the same benefits as their middle-class (or wealthy) counterparts. Moreover, the assumption cannot be made that all academics have had similar home and schooling experiences.

Academics who come from working-class or low-income backgrounds have expressed the difficulties they face in the academy (see, for example, Brook & Mitchell 2010; Ryan & Sackrey 1995; Langston 1993; Tokarczyk & Fay 1993; Rendón 1992). They deal with feelings of loss, longing, guilt, courage, and perseverance (see for example, Dews & Law 1995). Brook and Mitchell have noted that, 'over and over, in sometimes subtle, sometimes conspicuous ways, working-class sensibilities are assumed to be antithetical to intellectual life' (2010: 369). These assumptions are not only present in the academy, but can also be taken up by kin of academics from working class backgrounds (see, for example, Rendón 1992; Borkowski 2004), thus discouraging promising potential intellectuals from entering the academy. Attempting to reconcile the world of academia with working-class culture can be a difficult feat. It is no wonder that some intellectuals from working class backgrounds disconnect from their working class roots (see, for example, Dews & Law 1995; Brodkey 1994; Rodriguez 1982). The problems and difficulties faced by working class academics, at least in part, can be attributed to a 'professoriate [that] does not expect to find colleagues who were themselves first-generation students from working-class backgrounds among its ranks' (Brook & Mitchell 2010: 370). Furthermore, the argument has been made that the university can be a confusing space for individuals who have grown up in working class communities where 'straight talking is valued [as] the exigencies of daily life leave little space for either flattery or conceit' (Reay 2004: 36). This again highlights that the language of the academy can be used to marginalise new academics from working class backgrounds.

Women in the Academy

On the surface it appears that women in academia have made significant strides in South Africa. Between 1992 and 2001 the proportion of women increased from 30% to approximately 40% (Boshoff 2005). More recent figures indicate that women make up approximately 43% of academic staff (Department of Education 2008). However, they continue to be concentrated at lower levels, with few of them holding upper management or professor positions (Department of Education 1997; Koen 2003; Department of Education 2008). Women's concentration in lower level positions can at least in part be attributed to universities failing to consider women's role in the family and having few or no systems in place to cope with specific circumstances of women's career trajectories (cf. Department of Education 2008). In addition, women academics carry heavier administrative and teaching workloads, which tend to be undervalued and less prestigious than engaging in research activities (Perumal 2003; Garnett & Mahomed 2012).

Unfortunately, there is ample evidence that gender discrimination, sexism, and patriarchy have, and continue to be prevalent in institutions of higher education (see, for example, Bagilhole 1993; Carr, Szalacha, Barnett, Caswell & Inui 2003; Menges and Exum 1983; Shollen, Bland, Finstad & Taylor 2009; Stout, Staiger & Jennings 2007; Toutkoushian & Conley 2005; West 2007). However, it is also noteworthy that in South Africa women in the academy have reported experiencing some favourable conditions, such as flexible working hours and less visible blatant discrimination (Petersen & Gravett 2000). Nonetheless, their reports of subtle discrimination, male-dominated networks that exclude women, and unfair promotion practices, among other complaints, appear to overshadow favourable reports (Petersen & Gravett 2000). It should be noted that black women find themselves in particularly precarious positions (Department of Education 2008). For instance, the Soudien Report documents the response of an interviewed staff member, who notes that, 'Structural sexism also exists. If you are black and a woman it is doubly painful ... it is equally marginalising and stifling' (Department of Education 2008: 45). Black women in the academy face racism, sexism, confront stereotypes, and are expected to succeed in an environment that is perceived and experienced as hostile (for an-indepth discussion of the challenges faced, see, Gregory 2001; Patitu & Hinton 2003; Thomas & Hollenshead 2001; Mabokela &

Magubane 2004). Given South Africa's recent grim racial past and entrenched patriarchal practices and sentiments, it is necessary to critically question and challenge sexist and racist practices that are increasingly becoming more inconspicuous.

Developing Adequate Support Structures for New Academics

Our focus now turns to a discussion of the resources, information, and support that may facilitate success for new academics within the research orientated academy. Providing adequate support structures for new academics in general, is a strategy that could help promote the success of new academics from historically marginalised groups and groups that are underrepresented in academia. In focusing on support structures, we also examine the significance of presumed norms, values, rules, and ways of operating; socialisation into the academy; networking; and mentoring.

According to Barkhuizen (2010), new academics need to be inducted into academic life; they need to be provided with 'maps'. These maps refer to a set of guidelines which can be issued, explained and practiced during a university induction course. Furthermore, these guidelines should be clearly defined and elaborated for new academics. This would allow for a smoother transition between the postgraduate student role and the academic role that academics are required to assume. It is however noteworthy that these 'maps' would provide little use if they are generic formulations that do not take into consideration the specific university and the specific discipline of the new academic staff member.

The academy, similar to virtually any other institution, is bound by prescribed norms, rules, values, and traditions and new academics may not necessarily be familiar with the tacit ways in which universities operate. Shulman and Silver (2003) discuss the significance of informal norms that are rarely articulated within academia. Caplan suggests that the 'real rules' of the academic world may not be recorded in official university documents (1995: 92). Moreover, it is not uncommon for these real rules to be assumed and taken for granted, and thus they may go unspoken. For instance, it has been noted that teaching, research, and service (indicators of performance within academia) are not clearly articulated, openly discussed, or adequately evaluated (see, for example, Jackson 2004; Mullen & Forbes 2000; Tierney

1997). Programmes that intentionally prepare new academics for a career in the ivory tower can discuss and elaborate upon these unspoken rules and the *modus operandi* of universities. In this way, the academy can be demystified.

The significance of the socialisation process for new academics should not be overlooked or underestimated, it has been noted that socialisation into the profession assists individuals in successfully transitioning into a career in academia (see, for example, Price & Cotten 2006; Jackson 2004; Tierney 1997; Keith & Moore 1995; Tierney & Rhoads 1994). Socialisation into the academy must take into consideration disciplinary contexts (Austin 1990; Tierney 1990; Clark 1987). According to Tierney and Rhoads (1994), socialisation occurs both during postgraduate studies and in the profession (with more critical socialisation taking place after assuming an academic position); however, they argue that socialisation occurs in an isolated, indirect, and ambiguous manner. Many institutions of higher education do not specifically outline how academics will engage in their wide-ranging duties, thus rendering the socialisation process even more crucial (Austin 2002). With this in mind, a need exists for well-structured programmes that intentionally aim to socialise new academics, and thus assist them in entering and successfully navigating the academy.

Within the South African context a limited number of such programmes have been implemented. For example, the Research Success and Structured Support programme was instituted at the University of the Witwatersrand to support new academics. The programme assisted eight new academics in attaining higher degrees and producing publications, and consisted of courses, workshops and coaching (Geber 2009). Given the following (aggregate) tangible outputs, the programme achieved a fair amount of success particularly in terms of research production, this included ten publications, four papers under review, one M.Sc. completed, three promotions, five conference presentations, two NRF (National Research Foundation) grants, and one international grant. This programme demonstrates that these types of endeavours 'can have a dramatic effect in getting young researchers in a position where they are able to perform well and view themselves as successful and independent researchers' (Geber 2009: 688). Additionally, other similar programmes such as the Emerging Research Programme and the New Academic Practitioners Programme, both based at the University of Cape Town also serve to assist new academics

with their research, writing, and publication goals (Mohamed 2007). Thus, evidence exists that the implementation of programmes that intentionally assist new academics in becoming research active and successfully navigating the academy can be fruitful.

Networks and connections can be powerful factors with respect to gaining entry into or succeeding in academia. In his work on apprenticeship in the postgraduate student context in South Africa, Hugo notes that:

> Successful intellectuals are engaged with life, implicated into vital networks and lineages, and work within a community of teachers and students, peers, subordinates, superiors, colleagues, friends and partners, full of emotional energy and cultural capital (2009: 719).

In other words, networks can be viewed as resources for new academics within South Africa, since they can potentially facilitate successful engagement with the intellectual community. Thus, cultural and academic capital should not be underestimated. It must be acknowledged that one way in which new academics are inducted into academia and become established intellectuals, is via accessing the connections, contacts, and resources that are available to them; and it is not uncommon for mentors, supervisors, and senior professors to serve as gateways to these types of academic networks. If we are serious about supporting new academics from marginalised and underrepresented backgrounds these types of collaborations and networks must cut across race, class, and gender boundaries.

Mentorship is perhaps one of the most researched areas of study in the literature on preparing new academics (see, for example, Zellers, Howard & Barcic 2008; Geber 2006; Bell 1999; Caplan 1995; Keith & More 1995; Smith & Davidson 1992; Sands, Parson, & Duane 1991; Blackburn, Chapman & Cameron 1981; Reskin 1979). The benefits of mentoring new academics have been well documented (see, for example, Savage, Karp & Logue 2004; Gaia, Corts, Tatum & Allen 2003; Gaff & Pruitt-Logan 1998). However, some scholars (see, for example, van Louw & Waghid 2008; McGuire & Reger 2003, Johnson & Nelson 1999) have also warned about some of the pitfalls of traditional mentoring paradigms (i.e., hierarchical relationships, unequal power dynamics, and exploitation). Therefore, mentoring matches should take into consideration common

interests, compatible personalities, mutual respect, and a willingness by parties to enter into these relationships (Wilson, Pereira & Valentine 2002). Nonetheless, mentorship partnerships that are free from rigid hierarchical relationships and exploitation have the potential to make a significant positive impact on new academics. For example, mentorship between novice and seasoned academics facilitates cultural knowledge and role expectations; contributes to professional visibility within the academic community (Alfred 2001); increases confidence and activity; eases the transition into the chosen discipline (Price & Cotton 2006); decreases social isolation; and increases job satisfaction, morale and retention (Wilson, Pereira & Valentine 2002).

The significance of developing carefully structured mentoring programmes that can potentially maximise the benefits for new academics cannot be underestimated. Price and Cotten (2006) point to the importance of optimal matches between mentor and mentee. They go as far as to suggest that a single senior faculty member with robust mentoring skills can work with a group of new academics. This is model can potentially be applied at research universities in South Africa, given the shortage of senior academics (cf. Mabokela 2000). Moreover, some scholars (see, for example, Price & Cotton 2006; McGuire & Reger 2003) suggest that new academics can also mentor each other, since it is sometimes the case that new academics receive more mentoring from their peers than they do from senior academics. This peer approach to mentoring may be suitable for research universities in the South African context. It offers an alternative to the traditional expert-novice mentoring paradigm, and as such is consistent with fundamentally transforming universities to more egalitarian universities that are no longer restricted by entrenched hierarchies that have previously served to stifle growth and development.

Concluding Remarks

In order to transform research oriented universities in South Africa and provide opportunities and spaces for researchers who have been historically underrepresented in academia to succeed, fundamental system changes must be considered. These changes should include acknowledging the implicit and entrenched institutional practices that continue to undermine or

disadvantage new academics, particularly those who come from marginalised or underrepresented backgrounds. However, it is not sufficient to acknowledge these noxious practices. It is also imperative for universities to work towards creating new cultures and practices that intentionally assist new academics. More so, adequate support structures that promote intentional socialisation into the academy; supportive networking practices, and non-hierarchical mentoring models, need to be instituted with the aim of benefitting new academics, and not solely as a mere means or institutional exercise.

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