Inclusion of students as key stakeholders and agents in the induction of new university teachers: Disrupting the induction status quo

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Abstract

Ample research exists on the induction of new academics (NAs) or new university teachers (NUTs), but scholars are silent on students' inclusion in such inductions. It is on this basis that this paper prompted the views of NAs on the inclusion of students in the induction of new academics. As academic development practitioners, who are part of the *New Academics' Transitioning into Higher Education Project* (NATHEP) from 2019 and 2022, we submit and argue that the inclusion of students as partners in the induction of NAs empowers students to take ownership of their learning as students and affords them an opportunity to amplify their voices and contribute meaningfully to higher education spaces. This paper, underpinned by the Theory of Human Care and the Ethics of Care Theory, adopted a qualitative research approach in which both exploratory and explanatory research designs were triangulated. Utilising thematic data analysis, the findings of this paper were drawn from the induction questionnaires distributed and collected from NAs during induction. This paper found that the inclusion of students during induction provides NAs with an opportunity to interact with students and understand students' challenges and expectations regarding critical teaching and learning issues. This paper has implications for both AD practitioners and higher education institutions on how the inclusion of students should be understood concerning professional development initiatives such as the induction of NAs.

Keywords: key stakeholders/agents, new academics, students' inclusion, students' needs, transitioning

Introduction and contextualisation

Many notable scholars have been advocating for students to be part of the learning and teaching process in higher education spaces (Bovill, 2014; Matthews, 2016; Cameron & Woods, 2016; Behari-Leak, 2017; Cook-Sather, et al., 2018; De Bie, et al., 2019; Sophia & Stein, 2020); however, very limited literature exists on how students may be part of the induction process of new academics in higher education. Garcia, et al. (2018) note that there have been some efforts made toward including students' voices in higher education over the years in terms of decision-making,

policy implementation, and curriculum design. However, students remain excluded during the induction process on the assumption that they cannot contribute anything since induction is HR-academic based. Recently, there have been calls for a stronger focus on understanding the key role of students' agency to ensure a better understanding of learning in higher education (Boughey & McKenna, 2021: 55). Universities, through their internal structures, cultures, practices, and external relations with wider society, continue to be powerful mechanisms of social exclusion and injustices (Rhodes University, 2020).

As one of the major professional development initiatives undertaken by new academics in many universities throughout South Africa, the new staff induction programme is crucial in assisting new academics (NAs) with settling in well in their new higher education environments. Such an induction, we argue herein, can be an inclusive professional development initiative that students are part of. It is worth noting that in the context of this study there are two types of NAs inductions i.e., Human Resource-led (focused induction), which focuses mainly on human resource matters, and academic induction process which focuses on learning and teaching-related matters and is, therefore, the focus in this paper. One of the major reasons for having such induction processes is that most NAs employed in universities mostly hold master's and Ph.D. qualifications and emanate from industries or own practices with little experience in terms of teaching and learning in higher education (McArthur, 2008). Since the trend has not changed over the years, it is, therefore, important to facilitate a smooth transition from practice to university spaces whereby recruited academics are inducted into the structure and culture of the university they have joined.

The knowledge that NAs acquire through the induction programme is to be utilised when engaging students in their classroom. It is, however, unfortunate that in most universities, students are excluded from this knowledge-building engagement or induction process even though it is meant to benefit them.

The Needs-Based Induction (NBI) Programme as a practical ground for this paper

As academic development (AD) practitioners attached to one of the rural-based universities, we are part of the *New Academics' Transitioning into Higher Education Project* (NATHEP). The strategic aim of the NATHEP project, as contained in the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG), now called the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP), proposal of 2018 is to offer training for academic developers on inducting NAs and New Generation of Academics (nGAP) into their roles as teachers in higher education (HE). Moreover, the project is specifically aimed at strengthening staff developers' agency and ability to conceptualise, convene, implement, and evaluate professional development programmes for the induction of new academics in universities. Through NATHEP and in alignment with our institutional context, we conceptualise and design our induction programme called 'the Needs-Based Induction (NBI) programme'.

The conceptualised NBI programme of induction has four (4) key features that are critical in ensuring that it is transformative, agile, and adaptable to the context of our university. The four

key features of our NBI programme are: Multi-Focal Theoretical Framework, Needs analysis questionnaire, Students Inclusion, and NBI programme as a process and not as an event. The notion of understanding induction as a process and not an event entails that every time NAs join our institution, provision should be made to ensure that they are inducted on teaching and learning-related matters before they embark on teaching and engaging students. Student inclusion is, therefore, central to our NBI programme of induction as a transformative element and disruptive feature.

Students' partnership as the adopted pedagogical approach for this study

Students as Partners (SaP) is a pedagogical approach that has been embraced recently by many higher education institutions primarily in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia (Cook-Sather, et al, 2017). SaP pertains students and faculty/academic staff working in collaboration, as partners, to improve teaching and learning experiences (Mercer-Mapstone, et al., 2017). The SaP pedagogical approach challenges and scrutinises several foundational features of the current higher education system, which include non-democratic, hierarchical structures; predetermined learning outcomes; and the view of the student as a client (Cook-Sather, et al, 2017) describe SaP as 'a relationship in which students, academics, professional services staff, senior managers, student unions are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together'.

Bovill and Felten (2016) propose that the partnership between students and the university should be based on three principles: respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility in learning and teaching, thus extending to decision-making. SaP destabilises several aspects of the traditional dynamic between faculty and students which tends to be based on inequality and has given an almost unlimited decision-making authority on curricular development to university management rather than students. In the context of this study, SaP is adopted to include students as partners in the induction of NAs in the university. We believe this pedagogical approach will enable students to be recognised as stakeholders and partake in the decision-making process that affects the university structure.

Student components in our induction

Behari-Leak (2017) argues for the transformation of teaching and learning spaces to ensure inclusive participation for all, including students in higher education. It is on this basis that our induction programme includes undergraduate and postgraduate students, including students living with disabilities. The inclusion of student components is based on our beliefs that anything meant to benefit students cannot exclude them during its conceptualisation and implementation stages. Central to this argument is that the induction of NAs is meant to capacitate them to do well in executing their core duties of teaching students. We further argue that anything planned for students would only be successful if such students are involved in the planning and conceptualsation; therefore, it is one of our NBI programme strategies of placing students at the centre of the induction. The inclusion of students involves debriefing sessions with selected

students two weeks before the induction and seeking questions they would like to ask their lecturers. From the listed questions, the most appealing questions are selected and included in our needs analysis questionnaire (NAQ) form designed for our induction programme. During the induction session, such students are involved in the round table discussions and make presentations on challenges they face as students and their expectations of NAs. We believe that learning and teaching activities that the NAs will be involved in with students are largely influenced by how much students have participated in the induction as one of the purposeful activities noted by Coates (2005). It is worth noting that further study on this aspect would be ideal to ascertain if this pedagogical approach yields anticipated results and enhances educational best practice.

Students' inclusion in addressing epistemic injustice

Epistemic injustice is broad and in the context of this paper is presented as a way in which students are discriminated against in their capacity as knowers due to their social backgrounds. This could also be attributed to varying stereotypes widely held that students from high school lack knowledge of higher education spaces and therefore cannot add any value. This includes, amongst other things, the thinking that students cannot contribute meaningfully to discussions and engagements to knowledge core-creation spaces on matters relating to the induction of NAs.

Fricker (2007) notes that marginalisation tends to occur mainly because the community (of NAs) lacks resources to conceptualise, evaluate, or understand the experiences that members of those groups have of themselves and their world. Furthermore, such marginalisation, which is moral-political, entails subordination and exclusion from some activities that would be valuable for participants, in this case, students. Fricker (2007: 153) adds that when there is unequal hermeneutical participation concerning significant area(s) of social experience, members of the disadvantaged group are hermeneutically marginalised.

It is worth noting that the University of Venda, in advancing epistemic justice, stipulates in its strategic plan, that it 'strives to ensure a co-creation of knowledge that shifts students and community groups from being knowledge-consumers to knowledge-producers and become partners in problem-solving'' (University of Venda: Strategic Plan, 2021-2025:11). We argue that knowledge co-creation should ensure that students are not understood and treated as knowledge-consumers or customers in higher education, but that their roles be of key stakeholders and agents of teaching and learning. That should be seen in line with Mbembe's (2015) argument for the creation of conditions to ensure that students have a voice; they should also feel that they are part of universities and live freely without begging or apologising to anyone as they belong within the institution. It is on this basis that we argue for the inclusion of students as partners (key stakeholders) in the induction of NAs.

Sophia and Stein (2020) reason that it would be worthwhile to ask students about their experience on a variety of topics such as the rationale for them to sign up for a specific course. In disrupting existing induction cultural beliefs in higher education, we, therefore, needed to

rethink our approach to induction and ensure that knowledge shared during the induction does not only come from AD Practitioners, but also from the new NAs and students. It is for this reason that we create a collaborative knowledge-building platform where students share their experience and expectations with NAs about teaching, learning, curriculum, assessment and overall relationships with a diverse population of students, including those who are differently abled.

Student inclusion for enhancement of educational practice in higher education

As aforementioned and argued, the inclusion of students in the induction of NAs creates a platform for students to contribute to engagements to enhance their learning. In this quest, we developed the NBI induction programme to silence the injustices of alienating students from programmes meant to benefit them. Again, engaging and including students in induction is motivated by what Cameron and Woods (2016: 178) identify as concerns normally shared by early career academics or emerging teachers, which is about whether students like them or are impressed by them. By being part of the inclusive induction, our approach is on ensuring that new academics can benefit from engagements and interaction meant to create an awareness of students' needs and how academics can meet them through 'a student-centered approach to learning and teaching' (Cameron & Woods, 2016: 178).

Another consideration is the recent call for amplifying students' voices as expressed during #FeesMustFall movement or protests experienced around South African universities where students called for their voices to be heard in teaching and learning matters. Dickerson, et al. (2016) note the importance of staff-student collaboration in enhancing educational practice in higher education and how such collaboration can bring about varying practices that can benefit both the student and staff.

Creating collaborative knowledge-building platforms for induction of NAs

Collaborative knowledge building requires activities that are structured to encourage sharing of knowledge, expertise, and the development of one another's ideas (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2008). As noted in one of the sections above, for us, it is about creating a platform for students to lead an engagement about contextual issues that influence teaching and learning in our institution. It is also about academics getting to understand the context they are entering, the nature of students they are going to engage with, and the enablement and constraints that influence teaching and learning in the context they are entering. Further, our argument for collaborative engagement between students and academics is drawn from Abbot and Shirley (2020) and Cook-Sather, et al. (2017) who argue for envisioning and creating a university for all and for the selected few.

For students, being part of the induction makes them feel valued and appreciated and most importantly, that they are partners in teaching and learning spaces and not just mere consumers. Though Nordensvärd (2011: 159) argues that the consumer metaphor is "the most unproblematic", we argue that it places students as people who consume educational services

for their benefit while they contribute. Our argument is sustained by Maringe (2011:144) who argues that in higher education, a consumer is entirely 'disempowered, poorly protected and subject to subtle machinations of powerful forces that seek to maintain the status quo through a covert process of guarded entry by the ability to pay that guarantees grades by riches process'.

Drawing from McMillan and Cheney (1996), Maringe (2011) argues that when students are viewed and understood as consumers, they are, in essence, being isolated and distanced from their key roles of being co-producers of knowledge and understood as just passive consumers ready to consume anything offered to them.

In support of Matthews (2016), our zeal to engage students in the induction process is motivated by the fact that such exercise is more of an interactive process between students and academics/staff by recognising that students are partners on matters that entail teaching and learning. Moreover, we value such engagement as one of the critical cultural aspects that should underpin not only our NBI programme but institutional values. For AD practitioners, engagement, and inclusion of students in the induction for NAs is part of what Matthews (2016: 3) highlights as 'quality enhancement efforts to enhance the educational enterprise'. This is so because their interaction with NAs go a long way in highlighting their expectations as students, their past and current experiences of teaching and learning.

Student inclusion as engagement and partnership - disrupting induction status quo

Although there have been several arguments advanced for the inclusion of students as partners and collaborators in teaching and learning activities, the inclusion of students in the induction of NAs has not been attempted in many higher education institutions across the globe. In our quest to disrupt cultural tendencies that have traditionally been a status quo, and notions that seek to refer to students as either customers, products, or consumers in higher education, we include students as key stakeholders. This is to empower and amplify their voices and place them at the centre of all professional development initiatives critical for learning and epistemological success in higher education. Our view is that students are important key stakeholders who contribute positively to how NAs are to be inducted. Klemenčič (2017), Healey, et al. (2014) and Boughey and McKenna (2021) argue for student agency in higher education for academics to understand learning better. Bernstein (2021) sees student involvement as finding ways in which leaders, educators, and any other adults in an institution of learning ensure that students are fully engaged in governance as well as decision-making processes.

This approach enhances student agency and a feeling of being part of their learning, as opposed to students as customers. On the other hand, even though we strongly view the notion of students as customers as problematic, if we look at the fact that customers need to be satisfied with their purchases, then their input should always be prioritized. This also has emancipatory powers in that, it provides students with opportunities to have a say in what they feel, and think is worth purchasing. This means that if students are happy, their happiness will flow to others who are not yet part of the university, for recruitment purposes. From a business point of view, it would ensure the viability and sustainability or longevity of such an institution. Even though we

do not subscribe to the notion of students as customers, we argue that if universities understand and treat students as customers, it is important to ensure that students are fully involved in any professional or academic development initiatives such as the induction of new academics. Moreover, when students are placed at the centre of a variety of professional development initiatives in higher education, that positions such institutions as responsive to the pedagogy of care and social justice agenda.

Waghid (2021: 4) argues that any university that does not disrupt its institutional culture of compliance continues to treat its students only as recipients of information. Waghid (2021: 2) also notes that if we need to decolonise the mind of students, there is a need for us to ensure that they are indeed liberated from all forms of human exclusion. It is against this backdrop that we see the need to include students in the induction process. It is believed that when students are involved, their attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion grow, with positive implications on their motivation and academic progress (Bernstein, 2021). The importance of student engagement is that 'it builds close and caring relationships with their teachers and makes them have a sense of belonging in a society, especially in institutions of learning' (Bernstein, 2021: 113).

Drawing from Boughey and McKenna (2021), the inclusion of students in the induction of NAs ensures that NAs can understand that learning is a socially embedded and cultural phenomenon with a better perspective on how an institutional identity is conceptualised and how much is experienced by students. Boughey and McKenna (2021: 72) further argue that if institutions fail to acknowledge and understand that both teaching and learning are socially, culturally, and politically situated, this will result in students feeling alienated from the very institutions they are enrolled in the study.

When students become partners on matters about learning, they tend to develop a greater sense of community and belonging, especially in communities within higher education institutions (Healey, et al., 2014; Curran & Millard, 2016). Unfortunately, as Boughey and McKenna (2021: 74) highlight, students in higher education are often understood and perceived as clients who, by paying tuition fees, are customers, which severely limits the understanding of students as critical citizens and fledging scholars. It is on this basis that the inclusion of students in our induction process ensures that we empower them and amplify their voices in understanding that they are also human beings who have experiences concerning their institution and are capable of sharing these and their expectations with the NAs. Our arguments regarding the inclusion of students in induction resonate well with the comments captured in the next section as shared by NAs when asked about their views on having students as part of their induction process.

Human Care and Ethics of Care theories as the theoretical framework for this study

Our paper is underpinned by the Theory of Human Care (Watson, 2007) and the Ethics of Care Theory (Noddings, 2002). The theoretical concepts of the Theory of Human Care emerge from Watson's personal and professional beliefs on what it means to be human and to care (Watson, 2007). To corroborate this, we also adopt Nodding's (2002) ethics of care. Both these theories

are about being sensitive to self and others by willingness to explore own feelings (Watson, 2007; Noddings, 2002). This requires recognising that students are humanly capable of contributing to the advancement of their learning through meaningful engagement. This is in line with Watson's (2007) Theory of Human Care, which is about engaging in a creative, individualised, problem-solving caring process; care is central to what the NAs should embrace while engaging with students on learning and teaching-related matters. This then relates to ethics of care or caring, which entails being in a state of relation and encompasses receptivity, relatedness, and engrossment as key characteristics thereof (Noddings, 1984: 2).

The inclusion of students as partners in the induction of NAs may provide opportunities for NAs to understand students' needs (expectations, beliefs, and views) concerning learning and teaching, and how they should foster a sense and culture of inclusivity in what they plan to do in their respective classes. This is mainly because care is relational, interpersonal, interactive, and social as well as transpersonal (Watson, 2007). Moreover, there is a need for NAs to advance loving-kindness, equanimity, and level-headedness (Watson, 2008: 34) and know that students in their classes are not decontextualised individuals but holistic personalities who need care to do well in their studies. It is on this basis that we argue for the inclusion of students as partners in the induction of NAs as we care about them; this is moral practice that we strive for in higher education spaces. Again, the inclusion of students resonates well with our quest to respond to some of their needs, as highlighted in their expectations.

Research Methods and Procedure

This paper adopted a qualitative research approach in which both exploratory and explanatory research designs were triangulated. Exploratory design entails 'gaining insight into a situation, phenomenon or individual'. The purpose of exploratory research is for the researcher to be acquainted with the situation to formulate a problem (De Vos, et al., 2005: 109). Additionally, the objective of explanatory research is to explain, since this study 'builds on exploratory research but goes on to identify reasons why something occurs' (De Vos, et al., 2005:109). Drawing from Babbie (2007) who notes that social research is aimed at explaining issues, this paper explores, explains, and argues for the inclusion of students in NA's induction process.

Primary data drawn from an opened-ended questionnaire was utilised to evaluate the induction programme in our university between 2019 and 2022 and reflect to improve on our practices as AD practitioners. From the opened-ended questionnaire designed, there was one question wherein we asked university academics about their views regarding students' inclusion in the induction of NAs, which read:

What are your views about the inclusion of students in the induction of new academics?

This study emanates from this question's responses, and we believe that future studies can be grounded on the findings of the current study. A total of fifty evaluation questionnaires were completed by NAs after each induction session, and very few responses were provided. We only

concentrated on the thirty (30) detailed responses to source rich data. Based on the reflective question included in the questionnaire, thematic content analysis was adopted for data analyses to categorise data into emerging themes. The findings are supported by verbatim quotes from NAs. Each verbatim response was given an anonymous tag name 'NA', for example, NA1-NA28.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, we provide NAs' views on the inclusion of students in the induction process. The findings of the current study are categorised into the following themes: providing opportunities for NAs to understand students' challenges; understanding student experience of being taught; understanding students' expectations; amplifying students' voices and placing them as key stakeholders in teaching and learning related matters; and NAs' differing views on student inclusion in their induction process. These themes are outlined in the findings below.

Providing opportunities for NAs to better understand students' challenges

One of the critical aspects of the inclusion of students has been to afford and amplify their voices on issues that are central to their success. This is central to ethics of care in that it is about trying to understand the challenges student face for NAs to assist them adequately. NAs indicated that students in the induction process provided them with an opportunity to understand what and how students feel about their engagement with them and students' experiences on teaching and learning matters currently and in the past. This enables NAs to reflect on their practices as university teachers. Again, it provides NAs with the means to create an inclusive learning environment that supports and enhances epistemological access and success as well as overall student learning. NA1 and NA2 said:

> The inclusion of students in the follow-up session was very good because it brought to the fore what and how the students feel about our engagement with them. It also assisted in better understanding of the dynamics of challenges they face. I suggest that this should be done continuously if the much-desired improvement is to be achieved. (NA1)

> The engagement of both students and lecturers to elaborate their experiences and hearing both sides of the story make matters and deliberation better. (NA2)

The above-captured responses of NAs show that the inclusion of students in the induction academics has the potential of yielding positive outcomes. Hmelo-Silver and Barrows (2008) argue for the inclusion of students in collaborative engagements. Such collaborative engagements are engagement and knowledge building in which activities are structured to encourage sharing of knowledge, expertise, and the development of ideas. This is in alignment with what NA2 regards as better deliberation. In the same vein, NA1 supports the inclusion of students in the induction for academics to learn from how students feel about their engagement. The fact that NA1 suggests continuous inclusion of students in the induction of academics

exhibits his/her presumption that it can yield positive results, as suggested by NA2. Further, the views of NA1 and NA2 echo to our views as AD practitioners, as the inclusion of students is about creating a platform for students to lead an engagement about contextual issues that influence teaching and learning in our institution. This enables academics to understand the context they are entering, the nature of the students they are to engage with and the enablement and constraints that influence teaching and learning in their context. To understand students' challenges, NA4 and NA12 add that challenges uncovered by students during the induction process were an eye-opener.

> Challenges elaborated by students and hearing their side of the story was an eye opener. (NA4)

> The inclusion of students in the induction was…a much-needed eye opener. (NA12)

Boughey and McKenna (2021) argue for student agency in higher education, to enable academics to understand learning better. They further argue that academics should engage with students so that they can comprehend challenges endured by students (Boughey & McKenna, 2021). As AD practitioners, we support the arguments by Boughey and McKenna (2021: 72) who reason that if institutions fail to acknowledge and understand that both teaching and learning are socially, culturally, and politically situated, and this may result in students feeling alienated from the very institutions they are enrolled in to study. Throughout this paper, we have argued that having students participating in the induction provided NAs with an opportunity to engage with students on issues that affect them. To the NAs, having students as part of the induction is an eye-opener that makes it easier for them to understand the type of students they will be engaging with. It also enables them to undertake their teaching roles moving together with such students as they would have understood their expectations and challenges. In support, some of the NAs had this to say,

> It gives us proper perspective. (NA5)

> It was good that they have a slot. (NA14)

> It is very good to hear from them instead of assuming and having debates from both sides of the story. (NA22)

> It was on point because the only way to move forward is to move together. (NA2)

Understanding students' experience in teaching and learning
NAs often join higher education institutions with varying experiences. Some noted with concern that during the induction, students were not given enough time to share and present their

experiences even though they shared a few things that relate to academics. Some students' experiences included how they were treated by lecturers, as noted by NA3. NA6 adds the following in support of NA3:

> Real experiences and issues come from students. However, there is a need to view things from both sides. (NA6)

NA3 also noted that students were not given enough time to present their work or experiences, 'but touched some of the things that concern lecturers'.

Understanding students' perspectives on how they experienced teaching in the past may help NAs to engage and reflect deeply on ways through which they can improve their teaching practices as new university teachers. This is because the NAs come from different backgrounds that might have influenced the way they understand teaching and learning in HEIs. We argue that having a diverse population of NAs in the induction necessitates the need for students to share with them how they experience teaching and learning as a way of enabling the NAs to understand students' contexts.

Understanding students' expectations

Students' inclusion in the induction process is invaluable as it assists NAs to understand the expectations that students bring within universities since students are diverse. NA23 notes that it is through inclusion that NAs can understand students' expectations and areas where academics can improve their teaching practices.

> It was useful as it indicates the expectations students have for us and where we as academics can improve in our teaching practices and how we can understand and relate well with them. (NA23)

> It is a good idea because we can understand their expectations. (NA6)

Center on the Developing Child (2016) notes that as academics, we seldom investigate the expectations and needs of students, that is, cultural, emotional, academic, and personal. All these factors influence teaching and learning as well as engagements between students and academics and are worth investigating. This statement is echoed by NA6 who agrees that including students in the induction process enables academics to understand students' expectations. NA8 and NA9 also agree by stating:

> The students' presence was good as they shed light on student expectations. (NA8)

The engagement of both students and lecturers elaborating on their experiences. Hearing both sides of the story make matters and deliberation better; presentations by guest speakers were also very informative and helpful. (NA9)

NA 26 echoed the sentiments of NA 23 and noted thus:

Yes, it is useful. I believe that the inclusion of students not only helps students to gain knowledge of their new academics, but new academics can gain more knowledge on students' expectations, experience, and behaviour. (NA26)

Amplifying students' voices and placing them as key stakeholders in teaching and learning-related matters. (NA23)

The #FeesMustFall movement by students has changed the way we view students and the importance of understanding that they are key stakeholders with agential powers to express views concerning teaching, learning and curriculum-related matters. We argue that students' voices need to be amplified and platforms should be created during any professional development initiative such as induction where they can contribute meaningfully to learning and teaching matters. Some NAs highlighted the need to have students' voices heard. NA5 positioned himself as a reflective practitioner who believes that it is important to incorporate students' voices. Similarly, both NA5 and NA3 said:

The student's voice is always necessary. (NA5)

The need to understand a student in different ways. (NA3)

The NAs' views align with those of Mbembe (2015), who advises on creation of conditions that will ensure that students have a voice and feel that they are part of universities. In support, Waghid (2021: 2) notes that if we need to decolonize the mind of students, there is a need for us to ensure that they are indeed liberated from all forms of human exclusion. This includes listening to students' issues and addressing them accordingly. Moreover, in their study, Ravhuhali, et al. (2021) argue that listening to students' voices provides an opportunity for students to critique aspects of their lecturers' teaching, which provides room for reflective practices, sharing practices and improve on teaching and learning.

In addition, Barnes, et al. (2010:12) write, "only the user of a service can truly give an insight into its ongoing impact on their experiences". Therefore, engaging students and giving them a platform to have their voices heard enables to reflect on their experience regarding the university's policies, agency, culture, and teaching practices of the lecturers. This feedback is important for devising policies that align with stakeholders' expectations and context as well as

conducting future research. Consequently, we are arguing that engaging students' voices can be a powerful inclusive exercise key to social justice imperatives.

NAs Induction as a strategic tool to engage students in teaching and learning matters

Drawing from the participants' views, as AD practitioners, we concur and argue that students are stakeholders and NAs are engaged in induction to improve their teaching practices, agency, and culture, so that they can serve our stakeholders, who are students. NA7 advises that induction is all about students. NA8 and NA9 also support the inclusion of students as a helpful mechanism in shedding light on students' expectations. Ravhuhali, et al. (2021) argue that academic excellence is rooted in the integration of students and unmuting their voices in matters regarding teaching and learning. NA7, NA15, and NA16 highlight that new academics are appointed to teach or educate students, so students need to be involved in the induction. This is what they had to say:

> I think students are central and part of teaching and learning. (NA24)

> Yes, I think students need to be included in the induction of new academics especially now that we must focus on student-centeredness learning which should be aligned with the strategic plan of the university. (NA27)

> It's important to include them because this induction is all about them. (NA7)

> Yes, we are here to educate students and for education to be successful, our students must participate in the development of their program and lecturers. (NA15)

> Yes, I think it is very important as the student are expected to be on board with these new online methods of teaching and learning to ensure their well-being and success in their academic journey. Students are end-users who need to be capacitated, so that they can apply the knowledge and skill in their studies to make their lives at university much easier. (NA16)

NA19 echoed a similar sentiment and noted that the inclusion of students in the induction of new academics is important as it can provide such students with the opportunity to be part of the whole learning experience. NA20 indicated that although such inclusion may mean not all the students can be part thereof, it could be a helpful and important approach. NA18 noted the importance of including students in the induction of NAs as it would enable them to understand matters about the curriculum. This view is also shared by NA14 who notes, 'students should be involved in all sessions'. Other NAs added:

Having a class/student representative could be helpful, but it's a delicate process since not all students can be involved. But it could be an important approach. (NA20)

Yes, so they (students) can feel as part of the learning experience. (NA19)

Yes, their representation can be included to highlight the needs and expectations of students to staff. This can also be done in two stages, where in the first stage they are excluded and then included in the second phase. (NA17)

Yes, it is important. The involvement of students will enable them to understand certain curriculum matters. (NA18)

NA 22 highlighted that there is no academia without students, therefore, anything that could be planned for students may not succeed:

Totally, at the end of the day, academia is not academia without students. Plans made for students cannot succeed without students. They are the heart of what we do. (NA22)

NA30 alluded to NA22 and noted that including students in induction provides them with an opportunity to grow, develop and improve their practices as they embark on a journey of teaching and learning.

Yes, it gives one a chance for growth because they can indicate what needs to be done in terms of new changes, development and how can one improve on the journey of teaching and learning. (NA30)

Others echoed this sentiment:

Truly useful as students are the best people to evaluate the way we deliver our lectures and can provide us with ideas on how to improve teaching and learning. (NA25)

Yes, as academics, we can understand our students' needs better. (NA28)

Ravhuhali, et al. (2022) argue for the creation of communities of practices in which various stakeholders, including academic development practitioners, ensure that students are comfortable in their institutions of learning. For AD practitioners, the inclusion of students in induction is part of humanizing pedagogy (Freire, 1970) which provides opportunities and enables student agency, which is about understanding that they are not in universities to acquire knowledge but to stake ownership thereof as well as being empowered through and by it. This

is in line with understanding induction as a space or platform to create learning communities in which everyone acquires knowledge (Wong, 2004 cited in Ndebele, 2017).

NAs' differing views on student inclusion in their induction process

It is worth noting that not all NAs shared the same view on students' inclusion in their induction process. One such view was expressed by NA10 who indicated that the inclusion of students in an induction 'is not useful because the induction is about knowing the staff, being able to interact with other staff members and understanding the university culture'. This view was echoed by NA21 who notes, 'I think it will be proper to exclude students and focus only on new academics for now and have another training for lecturers and their students later'. The same sentiment is shared by NA29 as follows:

> I found it useful, but we must bear in mind that one student cannot be a true reflection of 500 students in my class. (NA29)

As AD practitioners, we do not agree with the view of NA10 because limiting students from being part of the NA induction gatekeeps important underlying issues that require critical and urgent attendance, such as ineffective teaching practices, policies, and disability matters. This is supported by NA11 and NA22:

> The discussion about decolonisation and challenges that students living with disabilities are facing and the solution thereafter that were discussed. (NA11)

> Yes, students are part of teaching and learning and including them would help them to familiarise themselves with learning platforms. (NA22)

It is important to highlight that NA11 recognises the need to include students in discussions to uncover hidden discourses from students. This can ultimately lead to decolonisation as an unfolding process. In support of this, Waghid (2021: 2) reasons that if we need to decolonise the minds of students, there is a need for us to ensure they are liberated from all forms of human exclusion. This was alluded to by Mathebula (2019) who notes that poor, black students from disadvantaged schools and communities are vulnerable to being victims of epistemic injustice. One such epistemic injustice is the persistent isolation of students and understanding them as customers or consumers ready to buy goods and consume ready-made knowledge and skills in higher education. Involving students in the induction of new academics, is, therefore our approach to avoid students' exclusion. As noted by Boughey and McKenna (2021), persistent exclusion of students was and still is perpetuated by the culture within various institutions. This, according to Boughey and McKenna (2021) is because all the power and decision-making is vested in one person who might be a professor in the position of HoD or (Executive) Dean. Due

to the power wielded by such an individual, the views of others such as students and even other academics are not considered valuable. Since the professor holds absolute power to decide, junior staff and students may not be afforded spaces and opportunities to amplify their voices when debates are taking place and decisions are taken (Boughey & McKenna, 2021).

Implications of the study

The South African higher education space has been dominated by many injustices such as the deafening silencing of students' voices in many areas of teaching and learning. In this study, we argue for and emphasize the inclusion of students' voices, participation, and agency during professional development initiatives as part of disrupting the status quo in the induction of NAs or university teachers. It is for this reason that we believe that induction cannot solely be meant for NAs. Students should also be provided with opportunities to engage with and participate actively as key stakeholders capable of co-creating knowledge through knowledge-sharing and engagements during the induction process. This implies that students can no longer be alienated from professional development initiatives meant to enhance their epistemological access and success.

Thus, student inclusion in the induction of new academics is a way of advancing and enhancing epistemic justice, collaborative knowledge building, knowledge-sharing, and knowledge co-creation as well as ensuring inclusive participation for all, particularly students. Further, the inclusion of students as key agents in the induction provides an opportunity for NAs to better understand students' challenges and for students to further share their expectations from NAs. This provides a platform for engagement between students and NAs, hence bridging the gap that exists between students and academics on critical matters that involve learning and teaching practices. This would also go a step further in disrupting the long-existing status quo of students' exclusion on matters that are central to their learning in higher education whereby they are constantly referred to as customers, consumers, and products.

For far too long, institutions of higher learning have always held a belief that students are unfinished products entering higher education spaces. Therefore, such institutions will produce products in line with their mission and vision statements. This mindset is engraved and supported by the neo-liberal mindset that sees a student as a customer or a product. If indeed we hold a view of students as customers (which of course is not our view at all), then why not involve such customers in decisions that affect what they would need for their livelihood? This would imply that on teaching and learning-related matters, students should not be excluded from the induction of new academics if we are to uphold a view that nothing related to teaching and learning should be done without students. It is, therefore, of importance that universities in South Africa reflect deeply on their induction practices for professional development that will silence the injustices of alienating students from programmes meant to benefit them. This could contribute to social and epistemic justice without waiting for a socially just higher education.

It is befitting to indicate that the findings reflected in our paper may not necessarily be generalised given that they represent only the views of the NAs from one institution of higher

learning. It is, therefore, important to indicate that more studies should be conducted to ascertain how students can be an integral part of the induction of NAs. One such study should involve students as participants and respondents whereby they share their views on ways through which their participation might benefit the induction of NAs. Moreover, it is critical that efforts be made to at least include students whose modules will be taught by the NAs who are part of the induction programme. This will provide platforms and opportunities through which both the NAs and their respective students have a robust engagement on a variety of teaching and learning matters during the induction process. Although we might not include all students during the induction process due to logistical challenges, we reason that the representation thereof will provide opportunities for robust engagement as well and ensure that students are positioned at the center of their learning and are partners and key agents in higher education institutions.

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