



**NATHEP**

# PART THREE

**Conclusion:**  
**Final Reflections, Future  
Directions and Broader  
Implications**

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### Cross-Case Synthesis: Insights from 10 University Contexts

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#### Introduction

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This chapter focuses on the identification and analysis of common themes, discourses, and learnings that emerged from the case studies. It delves into the design, delivery and changes in the induction programmes across the participating universities. The identification of thematic threads was informed by data presented as part of the narratives, discourses and evidence offered and described in the case studies. As much as the case studies share similar principles in terms of expatiating how the induction programmes were framed (consciously or subconsciously) before the authors joined the national collaborative New Academics Transitioning into Higher Education Project (NATHEP), each case study is presented in a unique format, drawing on the context of each institution and the learnings from NATHEP. The specific and unique nature of each case study called for an analysis that goes beyond the structural changes to appreciate various dynamics and elements that inform how the induction programmes were conceptualised, the kinds of changes that were introduced and the impact of NATHEP on the participants. The changes and analysis of the induction programmes are embedded in Acher's (1995) morphogenetic model of change. Due attention is paid to why certain elements were included or excluded in the narratives and what is excavated from the case studies. Institutional histories (multi-campus elements, institutional types, etc.), strategic foci (missions and visions) and policy imperatives form part of the elements that contribute to the types of changes that were made to the programmes.

The chapter builds from previous chapters that explicate the rationale of the project and the conceptualisation of academic induction programmes in higher education. In line with key elements of social realism, the chapter delves into enabling and constraining factors and how the factors informed the changes. NATHEP's critical curriculum and pedagogical and methodological framework, referred to in the previous and succeeding chapters as the CRiTicAL Framework, serves as a golden thread that runs through all the case studies. Moreover, each case study elicits and expands on elements of the framework to inform and justify the reimagined induction programmes and the repertoire of pedagogical approaches embedded in the delivery of the programme. Due to various circumstances, institutional and contextual factors, some case narratives are incomplete, but there is sufficient data to contribute to the analysis of the processes embarked on by the participants at various periods and intervals of the project.

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For ease of navigating the chapter and as a way of providing an outline, I start off by presenting the lens and tools of analysis that I refer to as methodological considerations. The common threads across the case narratives that clarify the conditions before, during and after NATHEP called for an explication of the change process before delving into the pre-, during and post-NATHEP programmes. Contextual and institutional backgrounds are elaborated on as a way of setting the scene for the contents and nature of analysis. The latter sections of the chapter are summative in nature and cover aspects that impacted on the programmes and the participants who were charged with the responsibility of reimagining the induction programmes.

### Methodological considerations

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Narratives from the case studies dictated that I use categorisation and formation of connections as analytical strategies (Maxwell, 2012). The process involved a certain level of coding where units of data from the case narratives were labelled and put in discrete categories. The examination of the categories led to comparisons where similarities and common themes were identified. It is imperative to mention that this process was not just a similarity-based categorisation, but the process also involved the identification of aspects of the narratives that are closely related, thus forming connections (Bazeley, 2013). In identifying similarities, it became easier to recognise contrasts in practices and that added to the themes and explication of processes and in essence confirming the naming of the categories. The thematic analysis resulted in the identification and examination of common patterns from the summaries of all the case studies. In forming connections, I relied heavily on Labov's structural analysis (Bazeley, 2013, p.208). As much as I had been privy to the developments of practices in the participating institutions as a SC (SC) member, Labov's model and the accompanying elements added a layer of criticality to the process. This was done to minimise potential bias from the perspective of being an insider in being a mentor and a SC member.

The process of traversing the various conceptual and theoretical frameworks (NATHEP's CRITicAL Framework and critical realism) referred to in the case studies, provided me with multiple lenses that also served as additional analytical tools and approaches. The narratives fitted snugly to Labov's six elements of structural analysis indicated below:

- **Abstract** – a summary of the sequence of events in the narrative;
  - **Orientation** – sets up the time, place, situation, participants, and initial behaviour;
  - **Complicating actions** – reports a sequence of events, each given in response of a potential question, "And what happened [then]?";
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- **Evaluation** – consequences for the needs and desires of the narrator;
- **Resolution** – what finally happened;
- **Coda** – a final return to the present in a way that precludes the question, “And what happened then?”

(Bazeley, 2013, p.208).

The above elements, in most cases, were similar to how the narratives took shape. Participants, as evident in the case studies, gave historical overviews of their institutions; previous conceptualisations of their programmes; developments prior to joining NATHEP; the NATHEP era and influences thereof; the process of revising programmes and what informed the revisions; and finally talking to the nature of the revised programmes and the impact on the designers of the induction programmes (NATHEP participants), the academics who are participants on the induction programmes, and the envisaged impact on students. This process returns to NATHEP framing and purpose and demonstrates the ethos of the cascading model. In the end, the culmination of the stated outcomes is evident in all the sections of the book.

### **The change process**

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The theory of change is used as a container for the chapter and identifies various transition points that are evident and discussed in the case studies. The preceding chapters explained the framing of the collaborative project where the case studies were incubated. The explication is underpinned by critical realism (Bhaskar, 1955; Archer, 2000, 2003). NATHEP in its conceptualisation paid particular attention to the professional development of participants, all being academic developers (ADs) who are the authors of the case studies. The professional capacitation of ADs was mainly focused on the analysis and (re)design of induction programmes that aimed to enhance academics as university teachers and ultimately improve the academic experiences of students. One of the main focal points for each institution was to evaluate the previous induction programme as part of the narrative and describe what existed before NATHEP. The subsequent steps involved the identification of the enabling and constraining factors and ultimately designing programmes that are theorised and enhance the pedagogical approaches of both the academic developers and the newly appointed academics. This approach talks to the cascading model that is referred to in the preceding section and the introductory chapters of the book. As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the changes were not only applied to induction programmes, but the participants were also positively impacted by the multi-year programme.

The various transition points of the induction programmes are indicative of the ever-changing nature of the higher education landscape (Dacin, Goodstein & Scott,

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2002; Doring, 2002) as well as the static elements thereof. Some of the changes effected in the programmes over time were informed by systemic factors such as mergers, some emanated from organisational redesign processes, and some were due to the evolution of professional developmental practices. In addition, NATHEP served as the catalyst in all the case studies. Of utmost importance is the layered role of academic developers in their quest to establish a legitimate, collaborative foundation for enhanced pedagogical practices (Debowski, 2014). Keeping with the cascading model advocated by NATHEP, the desired educational experiences of students would give credence to or legitimise the adopted pedagogical practices. The succeeding sections delve into the histories of the institutions, the nature of the programmes, and the changes, discourses and lessons learned over the duration of the project.

### **Contextual matters and institutional backgrounds**

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It is to be noted that the collaborative project covered various institutional types. When describing their institutions participants saw it fit to include in the background sections the typologies of their institutions as that speaks directly to the South African higher education landscape. Participating institutions ranged from traditional universities to universities of technology (UoTs) comprehensive and merged institutions. Of the four comprehensive universities two were products of a merger and the other two were not. One of the comprehensive institutions that was not part of a merger exited the project due to circumstances covered in one of the preceding chapters, while another merged and then demerged.

The contextual realities of the different institutions are embedded in the cultures and histories of the institutions and the design and delivery of the induction programmes. The delivery of the programmes encompasses pedagogical approaches and the selection of presenters or facilitators. One case refers to “outsourcing” that emanated from historical, structural and cultural complexities. In some instances, the physical location contributed to a high rate of staff turnover, leaving young and inexperienced staff taking up academic posts. This detail about the high rate of staff turnover is highlighted because it provides another layer of analysis between the developmental needs of new staff and the design and delivery of some of the programmes. This thematic strand is linked to one of Labov’s elements of structural analysis, which covers the place, situation, participants and initial behaviour (Bazeley, 2013). Furthermore, some of the contextual issues form connections with constraining and enabling factors.

Narratives around the histories of the institutions brought to the fore factors such as rurality and socio-economic backgrounds of students. In most institutions the demographics of students mirror those of the country. These factors were common

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in most of the case studies. Moreover, factors such as rurality and multi-campus design added to the complexities of delivering induction programmes. These complexities were picked up from the data collected for needs analysis conducted by most institutions. Although the data were collected for the development of the new programme, in certain instances the final contents of what was presented were the same as what was presented before. This is a connection formed from what is discussed in the succeeding sections of this chapter around the gaps identified by participants in their original programmes. In explicating the gaps, reference to the constraining cultural and structural factors in most cases are connected to the histories of the institutions. Of importance, the agentic role of academic developers is not only presented as a thematic strand, but also served as a tool that informed the transformation processes on the programmes and participants. It is to be noted that not changing the contents of certain themes and/or focus areas does not reflect a lack of change as most institutions adapted their pedagogical approaches applied by academic developers. Details of the adaptations will be covered in the succeeding sections.

### **Design of the induction programme before NATHEP**

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Academic induction programmes are part of professional development of academic staff aimed at enhancing teaching and learning expertise, among others, of new and/or early career academics (Behari-Leak et al., 2020; van Vuuren, Herman & Adendorff, 2022). As much as “new” academics in some institutions included experienced academics who are new to the institution, in most cases new academics are early career academics, hence the need for holistic programmes. Van Vuuren et al. (2022) accentuate elements of belonging, experience, doing and becoming as factors that should be included in induction programmes. That therefore means due care and attention should be given to the design and delivery of the programmes. It is imperative to discuss the various permutations of the programmes in conjunction with the pre-NATHEP curricula.

Structural conditions such as policy frameworks resulted in induction programmes being shared by human resources (HR) departments and learning and teaching or AD centres. This dual location impacted on the length and nature of the programmes. Pre-NATHEP programmes varied from a couple of days to six-month programmes. Whether the collaboration between HR and AD centres was cordial or not, the duration, specifically the shorter ones resulted in extremely full programmes where a lot of information was conveyed to academics. The nature of some of these sessions could be described as “general orientation” to the institution with teaching and learning information and processes also being allocated a slot. Presentations were mainly about university policies and marketing of services offered by various divisions.

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The broad institutional onboarding nature of the contents of the programme left limited space for rigorous academic engagements. One example elucidated in one case described the content as being “dominated by graphic display of figures and numbers”. This speaks to the “information overload” referred to in most cases. Descriptions such as showcasing of services available within the institutions and going through aspects of the strategic plans are indicative of the general orientation and/or onboarding elements that were reported in pre-NATHEP programmes. The “information overload” was also highlighted by attendees when providing feedback to the coordinators of the programmes. Furthermore, the information sharing in some cases did not take into consideration cultural and structural factors, thus impeding the development of culturally relevant curricula. In addition, there was limited to no philosophical grounding. In cases where careful consideration to relevant theories was given, gaps about the application of those theories and the necessary linkages with contextual matters were identified. NATHEP’s CRITicAL Framework did not come by chance but emanated from those gaps.

A few cases highlighted processes that are linked to change management and the developmental needs of new academics. These cases are mainly those that had some philosophical foundations and plans for strengthening the curriculum and the delivery approaches. Pedagogical approaches espoused pre-NATHEP ranged from lecture mode (mainly with PowerPoint slides) due to limited time for the various topics, to collaborative learning and facilitation. There was little engagement from the part of inductees as the approaches resulted in them being passive recipients of information. This is contrary to the design elements espoused by van Vuuren et al. (2022), that include among others, establishing communities of practice, being and becoming reflective practitioners, raising contextual awareness and designing teaching, learning and assessment opportunities.

It is clear from the foregoing that participating institutions had some common gaps such as not taking into consideration contextual matters, untheorised programmes and unresponsive programmes. Pre-NATHEP programmes were further constrained by factors such as rurality in terms of sharing or extending resources. Participation of academics was also made difficult by packed timetables and unpredictable schedules.

The split in the use of on- and off-campus venues is an interesting element that emerged from the narratives. This thread is not necessarily only linked to the single or multicampus phenomenon. A few cases (three out of 10) mentioned the use of off-campus venues for more focused time or to minimise disruptions, and in other cases the point is implied. In one case the choice of venue (location or campus) was determined by where most of the university community was located. In one multicampus case, circumstances called for delivery at different campuses, meaning that programmes were facilitated on each campus or on some of the

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campuses. In certain instances, faculties would request their own sessions due to specific needs of their staff and as a response to feedback. This factor is specifically mentioned because it formed part of the changes that were implemented.

### **Turning the tide during and post-NATHEP**

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As much as in some cases revisions evolved or occurred over time, NATHEP presented opportunities for self-introspection as well as exposure to relevant curriculum development and design for induction programmes. The above explication of the pre-NATHEP nature of induction programmes was gleaned from the evaluative narratives presented in the case studies. Of utmost importance is the alignment of the cross-case analysis methodology with how the case studies are presented. The presentation of the case studies is in line with Labov's six elements of structural analysis that is explicated in the preceding sections. All case studies view NATHEP as an enabling factor in their agentic roles of reimagining their induction programmes. Other enabling factors that emerged from the narratives are policy frameworks such as the induction charter that served as building blocks for the drafting of comprehensive induction policies. The University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG), which continues to provide funding to universities for professional development programmes, and NATHEP are credited for offering enabling conditions for the design and enhancement of induction programmes.

Academic developers took bold steps in bringing about change in the (re) conceptualisation and delivery of the programmes. Even in one case where "outside presenters" were used, AD staff took responsibility for the delivery of the programme. The bold steps taken to disrupt the old order brought clear differentiation between general orientation and academic induction. Intentional professional development of academics for enhanced practice instead of presenting sessions for compliance purposes took centre stage. Contextualisation of content and delivery therefore became a common thread even in those cases where institutional participation on the project (NATHEP) had to be halted due to staff turnover.

A common view that ceases to perceive induction as a once-off event but as "continuous work in progress" emerged from the case studies. Some cases refer to an emergence of a new culture of induction. Induction is not just referred to as part of the continuous professional development of staff, ADs advocate for a balance between disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge. The change process instilled intentionality about the identification of constraining and enabling structural and cultural conditions. The intentionality is the agency that enabled ADs to be analytical about their programmes, (re)conceptualise their programmes and "design strategies to accomplish them" (Quinn, 2012, p.39). The reconceptualisation of the curricula is informed by various theoretical frameworks. The project presented a fertile ground for learning from peers as well as the theoretical grounding of the

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project. Reflexivity as a critical element of forward action (Behari–Leak et al., 2020) is a thematic thread that is evident in all the case studies. Critical consciousness as the underlying feature of the reconceptualised programmes resulted in transformed praxis. A shift from information dumping to the application of critical pedagogies such as the pedagogy of engagement is another common thread. The case studies refer to blended and interactive learning and teaching strategies. Knowledge generation is at the centre of the transformed practices. Co-creation of knowledge by ADs and academics happens through, among others, pedagogies of knowledge production such as knowledge cafes. Various permutations of pedagogies of discomfort, of being and of becoming are applied in the revamped programmes. This speaks to the espoused cultivation of professional learning that is advocated by van Vuuren et al. (2022) confirming the expressed transformed, reshaped and established new culture.

Although not comprehensively elaborated on in most case studies, the pedagogy of transformation and decolonisation is applied in a few of the cases. In one case study this pedagogy is presented as a form of acknowledging the African culture as part of the lived experiences of academics (Ganas et al., 2021). Learnings from the NATHEP engagements were infused in the delivery of this programme. The extract below attests to adoption of the “centring of African culture”:

*“Keeping with the African theme, we revisited the programme’s session about “Our institutional culture and ways of being and doing” to position the participants within the context of an African university and how it relates to personal and professional identities. Opening the session with a video clip of Thabo Mbeki’s speech titled “I am an African,” participants are asked to engage with the idea of being African by responding to the prompt”*

NMU

The reconceptualisation of the programmes redefined the nature and purpose of induction for new academics. Participants also realised the importance of taking into consideration student voices. The voices and identities of ADs are evident in the reconceptualised programmes. The stories, analogies, poems and metaphors serve as expressions of ownership of the different journeys embarked on by the participants. The new programmes paid particular attention to the structure, duration and content of the programme. In some cases, the renewal process assisted by NATHEP resulted in the adoption of a variation of blended and synchronous and asynchronous online programmes.

Data gathering through the administration of questionnaires about career trajectories to ascertain teaching and research needs of new academics resulted in the design of responsive programmes that are linked to a “career-long learning approach to teaching development” as articulated in the national framework for

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enhancing academics as university teachers (DHET, 2018). Narratives refer to either needs-based or responsive programmes. Reflexivity is also transferred to the new academics as they are required to keep portfolios of learning, not only as evidence of their learning but also as records of their professional development.

As indicated earlier, induction is reaffirmed as a continuous professional development process that is not just confined or squashed into a couple of days. Even in cases where the initial programme is two or three days long, there are follow-on sessions that are intended for continuity and linked to the process of becoming. Programmes in some institutions carry on for as long as six months and in one the continuation is offered in the form of a short learning programme. In other cases, there is deliberate articulation to other available professional development programmes. A few institutions give inductees who complete the programmes certificates of attendance.

As indicated above, the mode of delivery prior to COVID-19 was mainly face to face with one institution that attempted online asynchronous sessions after the initial face-to-face sessions. Challenges presented by the advent of COVID-19 and approaches/activities adopted to mitigate them are discussed in the next section.

Elements of the CRITicAL Framework assisted with the theorisation of the programmes. To supplement and bring practicality to Bhaskar's (1975) critical realism and Archer's (2000, 2003) social realism, participants relied heavily on the CRITicAL Framework. This is evident in the following excerpts from the case studies:

*Moreover, to be fit for purpose, we constantly have to review, reimagine, reconceptualise and refocus. Such abilities are very beneficial for the development of both new staff and ADs as critical and reflective practitioners*

TUT

*Through responses provided by the survey, a customised induction that is more appropriate, relevant and responsive is created. Effective T&L usually takes pace when participants are actively involved.*

UL

*The artefact representation also brings out the academics' authenticity...*

NMU

## **Navigating through the deep waters of COVID-19**

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The advent of COVID-19 in South Africa in March 2020 disrupted the traditional face-to-face and blended ways of teaching and learning. Academics were forced to suddenly shift to fully digital learning (Lundberg & Stigmar, 2022) or what was popularly referred to at the time as emergency online teaching and learning. In the beginning the continuation of academic induction programmes had to be

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halted. This was also a time when ADs were inundated with requests to support academics to transition from face-to-face to emergency online teaching and learning. ADs themselves had to grapple with challenges of having been used to professional development programmes and activities, including induction programmes that were beginning to apply interactive pedagogies such as the pedagogy of engagement. There was no other alternative but to be agile and embrace online facilitation to academics who were already struggling to adjust. These conditions resulted in delayed implementation of induction programmes. Inequalities in terms of resources and inadequate infrastructure became more visible. Limitations on resources and in certain cases expertise contributed to the delays. Some institutions took the challenges presented by COVID-19 in their stride. Below are the two cases in point:

*During our response to COVID-19, we had to adapt our blended approach to a fully online offering, and although it was quite intimidating it got our creative juices flowing. We learnt the technical nuances of online teaching, persevered, and were finally able to progress from a face-to-face to an online delivery in 2021.*

TUT

*Though blended learning has been part of ... the teaching and learning strategy, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the urgency to develop online teaching and online research capabilities among academics.*

MUT

## **The impact and influence of NATHEP on the participants**

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One of the benefits of the collaborative project of NATHEP is cross-institutional learning. During the sessions and even in the final case studies, participants identified and applied elements of, and approaches used by other institutions to bolster their own programmes. Most participants/institutions found the pre-induction questionnaire used by one institution pre-NATHEP to be an invaluable instrument for collecting data for designing relevant curricula. One institution consequently labelled their programme as “need-based” induction. Another institution viewed the induction charter as presented by another institution as an element they could use in developing a concept document that would complement their induction policy.

The examples highlighted above demonstrate the value of sharing among professionals and building communities of practice. What emerged from the case studies was that learnings were accumulative or developed through years of engagement with one another and SC members who also acted as mentors. NATHEP workshops also became testing grounds for new ideas and approaches.

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It is evident in the case studies that participants were empowered by NATHEP engagements. The extracts below serve as evidence of such development and empowerment.

*Through the NATHEP project, we are able to identify our positions and reignited our agency in organising the induction in consultation with, but not led by, the HR department....by exercising our agency through the influence of NATHEP, the induction programme is now conducted as early as February or March and most importantly anytime during the year as and when a NA joins the university.*

UNIVEN

*...(NATHEP) has contributed to transforming, reshaping and establishing a new culture of academic induction, which has undergone three phases at MUT.*

MUT

*The transformation was realised through a reflective journey that started by engaging with NATHEP. Engaging with the CRITicAL Framework we were able to shift the programme from merely raising awareness to enabling the participants to approach learning and teaching more purposely.*

SMU

## **Conclusion**

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It flows from the foregoing that the NATHEP achieved the goals contributing to professional development of academic developers with a focus on induction practices of new academics. A series of learning and engagement opportunities were created for the development and enhancement of theorised interactive induction programmes. As Quinn posits (2012, p.40), for AD practitioners to become a group of powerful corporate agents there needs to be availability of systemic enabling structures. NATHEP served as one such structure. As indicated in this chapter, NATHEP not only capacitated academic developers but also provided opportunities and apt approaches and frameworks for the (re)design and implementation of induction programmes. AD practitioners were provided with tools of analysis and ways of being and doing, as illustrated in the case studies. The journeys travelled by the participants and SC members led to improved programmes. Participants articulated the histories, the contexts and the cultures of their institutions. In doing so, constraining and enabling factors were brought to the fore. Accordingly, narratives of how they overcame and the types of changes that were affected were explained, as was how their agency was exercised.

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The chapter not only expatiates on pre-, during- and after-NATHEP practices, but also highlights the common themes of theorised practices, revised curricula, articulation of the stages and ways of developments and the application of relevant pedagogical frameworks.

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