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EMERGING RESEARCHERS IN EMERGING UNIVERSITIES: LIVED EXPERIENCES (UNDERSTANDING CHALLENGES FACED)

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents challenges faced by emerging researchers in rural universities, by exploring their lived experiences throughout the journey of becoming a researcher. The paper argues that research creates new knowledge, benefits the education institutions, and impacts national development and transformation. Higher Education institutions globally, and in South Africa in particular, are striving to increase their research output by presenting research as requisite for academic promotion. Research, as a component in academia, is so valued that the cliché ‘publish or perish’ aptly defines the academic’s career prospects. In a bid to achieve research excellence and boost research output, South African universities, especially the emerging rural universities, went on a massive recruitment drive for Research Fellows, PhD holders and professors, to cultivate research culture and to enhance research output for their institutions. The challenge is that, as soon as a new academic is appointed, they are expected to contribute to the institution’s publication profile. This paper employed Constructivist theory and the qualitative approach within a case study design. Purposive sampling techniques were used to identify three emerging rural institutions and fifteen emerging researchers. Collection of data was done through in-depth one-on-one interviews. Thematic frames were used to present and analyse data. The findings revealed that, among the myriad challenges were heavy workloads and lack of research technical skills. The paper recommends that emerging rural universities’ management conduct workshops in capacity development, research paper writing among others, to empower the emerging researchers.

Keywords: Capacity building, Challenges, Emerging Researcher, Higher Education Institutions, Infrastructure, Transformation.