

ABERDEEN 2040

**TRANSITIONING POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS: *ENHANCED
STUDENT SUPPORT THROUGH SOCIOCULTURAL COACHING***

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Story begins.....do postgraduate students need support??

Any student engagement calls for academic and social adjustments; and integration

School → University → Within University...on to PG *(Baik et al, 2015; Jevons et al 2018)*

Are PGT students different?.....Assumptions *(O'Donnell V, 2009)*

Mature; Experience with studying....done it all; Real world experience so will cope

Transitioning to postgraduate studies can be daunting *(McMillan 2014; Bunney et al 2017)*

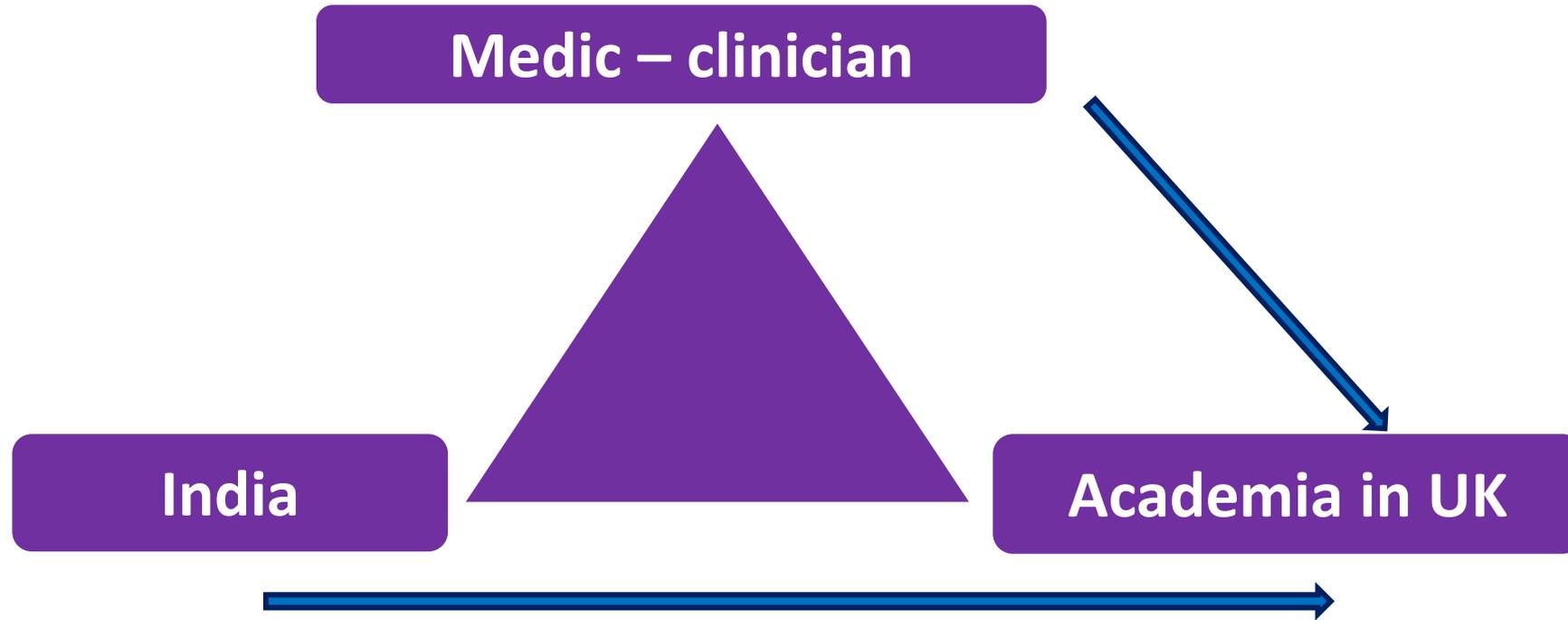
- **Gaps in studying**
- **Out of their comfort zone, different discipline and/or education system**

(Bennett and Turner 2012)



Living example

Theory: Autoethnography



Self-reflection and experiences

Auto-ethnography: reflection

- Rote learning vs critical thinking
- Challenging your teachers
- Interactive seminars/oral presentations



Teaching in a HEI:

- Diverse disciplines *(Pharmacy in Bangladesh → PH consultant; Engineering → work with NGO → PH)*
- Diverse social and cultural backgrounds *(relationships)*
- Different education systems *(Only exams; no essay writing; IT skills)*

SUCCESS PLUS for PGT students

- How can we support them beyond academic skills??
- Using the pathways we have travelled..... *(Bamber et al 2017; Gbadamosi 2018)*

Pathways travelled...e.g.

*Medicine in Nigeria – trained as PH consultant
Sociology in UK – PH academic in UK
Law in UK – PH and HSR academic in UK
Psychology in Malta – PhD in UoA - City council
Retired Prof in PH – leads programmes in WHO*



Socio-cultural Coaching for Careers and Employability to Support Success

**Socio-cultural Coaching for Careers and
Employability to Support Success:
Pathways for Life Underpinning Success**

What we did...

SIGN UP at the beginning of the start of Masters 2018 (2 programmes in IAHS)

- **Stage 1: Questionnaire – demographics, UG degree, work experience, PG expectations, career aspirations, graduate attributes**
- **Stage 2: Matched with appropriate mentors/coaches with diverse career pathways; provided basic guidelines**
- **Stage 3: Evaluation after a year (end of 2019)**



Aim:

To assess the feasibility and acceptability of the SUCCESS PLUS programme

Objectives:

- To assess the student satisfaction on the support received through the programme
- To assess mentor experiences and views of the programme
- To assess if the programme improved learning support and experience for students

Evaluation - methodology

- Qualitative study (CERB ethics approval) – 2 programmes in SMMSN
- Students – Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) 4 FGDs with 12 students
- Mentors – Individual Telephone Interviews - 17 mentor interviews

.....followed the components of the qualitative methodology

Main findings.....there is a need

- There was a gap or need for this kind of programme for postgraduate taught students, because there was no support schemes within the SMMSN
- Short transition period of one year in MSc programmes; international students adjusting to the UK education system and those returning to study after a gap
- Opportunity to have conversations with mentors who have had similar career paths, and to share experiences, plus the breaking down of barriers
- In particular, the value of this in relation to understanding hierarchy and alleviating sensitivities, especially around shyness among some cultures and being used to rote learning

Relevant themes and quotes....personal/flexible

- Shared experiences: Mentee-“**somebody has gone through this path before** and you don’t have to make the similar mistakes, you can work on their experiences and all of that.”
- Mentor- “Because I liked the idea of supporting international students while they are here, and **having been an international student myself**”
- More than education on offer: Mentee – “I also talked about slightly **more personal things**, not like personal, personal, **like work/life balance** and things like that and how she dealt with her relationship as well as her career at the same time, that sort of helped me”
- Support and time received: Mentee - For me I think **we never had like a timetable** to meet but honestly I would say he's been very forthcoming, I know he can be very busy and all of that, but even when he’s busy with fixed appointments elsewhere in town and all of that, so for me, **I can reach him any time.**

Relevant themes and quotes.... ALSO development

- **Pastoral care:** *Mentee –“So for me, **I discussed everything, including family.** I discuss everything and anything with him.”*
- **Sounding board:** *Mentee - “I've never ever done anything relating to public health before and I don't actually know what opportunities are out there for me after. My main focus was like getting a job after, so I felt like **someone who is affiliated with a public health team might be able to help me** in that aspect.”*
- **Professional development:** *Mentee –“because with him with these course internships and he told me to go about it, **I sent him my CV, critiqued the thing very seriously, sent it back to me** and we sincerely applied together.”*

Areas for improvement

- **Better Tailoring:** *Mentee – “I feel the future mentors should be well tailored to the needs of the student. **Some students just want to go to a PhD, even after working for years so you tailor them with someone who is in line of academia, not someone who is in the field.**”*
- **Managing expectations:** *Mentor – “I wonder if there’s some way of asking them a bit more **about their expectations of what they want to get out of it** so we’re not necessarily just matching on background, it might be situations...working parents and their challenges.”*
- **Training:** *Mentor – “I think it would have been useful to **have a meeting of all the people who are going to be mentors,** so we could have discussed what it was about and how are we going to approach it and what we thought mentoring was.”*

Our vision is to improve the scheme, based on the evaluation, and explore expanding this scheme to other postgraduate programmes

Our Core Team

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- Dr Lynsey Christie
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- Dr Emmanuel Okpo
- Dr Janet Kyle
- Dr Heather Morgan



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