Does supportive learning environment foster resilience?? SUCCESS PLUS

Dr Amudha Poobalan (Dr Leone Craig, Dr Lynsey Christie, Dr Heather Morgan)

29th April 2021

Do we assume PG students can cope with transition?

- **Transitioning to and through higher education is challenging: academic and social adjustment; and integration**

- **Several strategies to facilitate the successful transition to university** *(Baik et al, 2015);* **substantially less research relating to transitions within higher education** *(Jevons et al 2018)*

- **Postgraduate transition: Assumption that students transitioning into PG studies do not need intensive support** *(O,Donnell 2009)*

- **Assumptions: Mature; Experience with studying….done it all; Real world experience so will cope**

Support at PG level not always provided

- **Transitioning from UG to PG studies can be daunting** *(McMillan 2014; Bunney et al 2017)*

- **64% of students find transitioning into PG studies difficult** *(West 2012)*

- **Challenges for the PGT student community:**
    - time away from studies,
    - stepping up to learning at a Masters level (Masterfulness),
    - different discipline and/or education system,
    - moving away from homes or their comfort zones,
    - gaining financial independence,
    - making socio-cultural adjustments,
    - and, in the last year coping with the COVID pandemic and all its consequences *(Latham & Green, 1997; Bennett & Turner, 2012; Pidgeon & Pickett, 2017*

- **Universities failed to provide adequate support services for PG students** *(Kinesh and Crane 2016)* **…most pronounced around the taught postgraduate (PGT) population** *(MacPherson et al 2017)*

Living example

Theory: Autoethnography
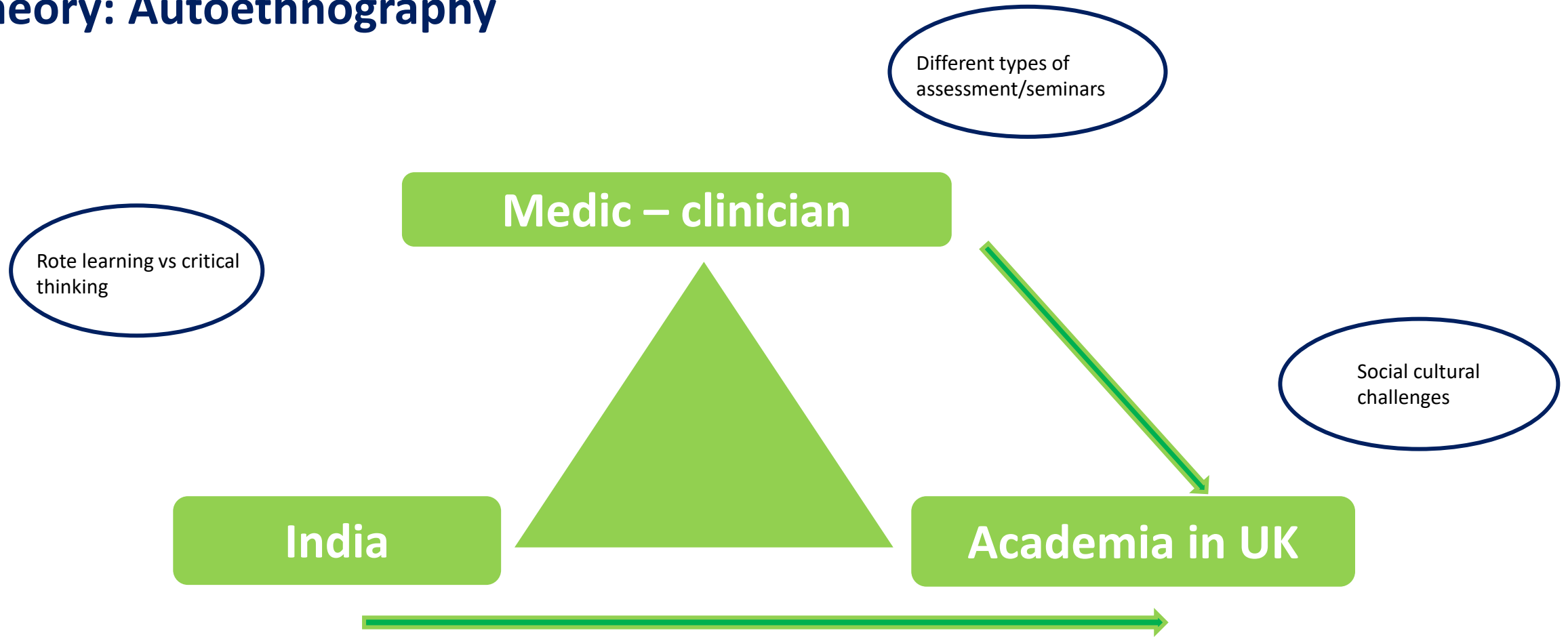
Does supportive learning environment foster resilience??

- **Supporting students to cope with these challenges builds resilience** *(Rocío Gómez-Molinero, 2018)*

- **Creating safe and supportive learning environments and developing a sense of belonging have been shown to improve resilience** *(Lee et al., 2013; Pidgeon et al., 2014).*

- **A sense of satisfaction of belonging within an educational environment is significantly associated with students' engagement, academic success and improves their social and emotional wellbeing** *(Osterman, 2000; Rahat & Ilhan, 2016)*

- **Engagement with academics is important for student support, satisfaction, achievement and the resolve to continue studies** *(Krause, 2005; Walsh et al., 2009).*

SUCCESS PLUS: What is it?

Pathways for
Life
Underpinning
S U C C E S S uccess

Socio-cUltural Coaching for Careers and Employability to Support Success

Socio-c**U**ltural **C**oaching for **C**areers and Employability to **S**upport Success:
Pathways for **L**ife **U**nderpinning **S**uccess

- 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

The process

SIGN UP at the beginning of the start of Masters (3 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

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

- **<u>Pastoral care:</u>** *Mentee –"So for me,* **I discussed everything, including family.** *I discuss everything and anything with him."*

- **<u>Sounding board:</u>** *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."*

- **<u>Professional development:</u>** *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."*

A bit of context

Life at university is exciting but can also be challenging.

Especially with the current restrictions on in-person interactions.

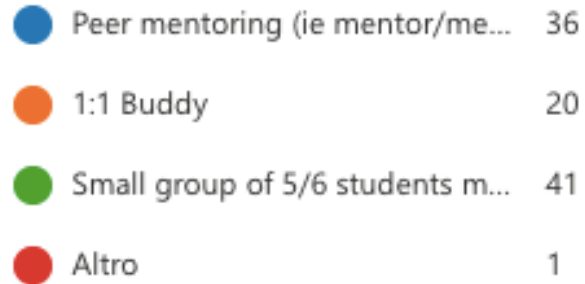Now more than ever, students need an even more supportive culture and *resilient* community to rely on.

Primary Research Key Findings

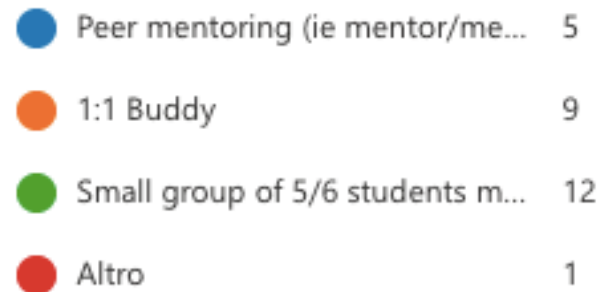Students think peer support would help them to better navigate life at University.

17. What kinds of peer support would help you to navigate better your life at university?

Altri dettagli

- Peer mentoring (ie mentor/me... 36
- 1:1 Buddy 20
- Small group of 5/6 students m... 41
- Altro 1

18. What kinds of peer support would help you to navigate better your life at university?

Altri dettagli

- Peer mentoring (ie mentor/me... 5
- 1:1 Buddy 9
- Small group of 5/6 students m... 12
- Altro 1

1495
UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN

What is Resilience?

"Resilience is accepting your new reality, [...] accept that and try to put together something that's good."

- Elizabeth Edwards

What is the PG PSS?

An initiative designed to provide upcoming and current postgraduate students with the opportunity to learn and benefit from the experiences of other postgraduate students like themselves.

It aims at:

- Providing a more consolidated network of support tailored to PG students.

- Creating a place where students can easily engage with each other.

How does the PG PSS work?

- All PGT and PGR students will automatically be added to a Team on MS Teams for all PGT and PGR students respectively.

- If students are looking for more in-depth/tailored peer support, they can sign up for either a small group of students or a 1:1 matching.

- All students will receive an induction training and will have the possibility to develop their their skills through workshops.

- All students will receive a digital badge of participation that they can use on their CV or LinkedIn profile.

1 4 9 5

UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN

525 years

How can the PG PSS help?
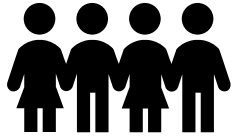
Students are stronger together: having a peer that they can rely on will help them to better navigate life at university.

And so is staff when they know that they can point students in one direction, which will facilitate coordination among schools and improve consistency among platforms.

Students feel isolated: having a peer means knowing that they are not alone in the online environment.

6. Any questions?

Thank you for your attention!

CURRENT STUDENT COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Campus Screens · **eNewsletter** · **Print** · **MyTimetable** · **Noticeboards** · **Website** · **MyAberdeen** · **Social Media** · **Student Hub**

- Planned and coordinated pre arrival and transition comms (email/social/web)

- Tailored student e-newsletters

- Social media page and groups

- Student pressure points and communication improvement

Content Submission

Orientation and onboarding

- Central Orientation (blended)

- School Orientation Pages

- Re-orientation (returning students)

- Video

- Peer and Pastoral Support Day

Engagement opportunities

Student content creators wanted for
VLOGGING, BLOGGING & PODCASTING

Be Well
PUTTING YOUR WELLBEING FIRST

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SOCIALISE · HEALTHY EATING · MANAGE STRESS · EXERCISE · HOBBIES · MENTAL HEALTH

Your Health and Wellbeing is important, to you and to us!

Language Groups

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

Check the website for times & languages available

Your experience
Your choice
Your centre

Now available

If you have previously studied a language or are studying a language and want to practice it in an informal environment – **this is for you!**

www.abdn.ac.uk/international-centre
#ICABDN
www.facebook.com/groups/abdnintlcentre/

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

FEEDBACK
You shape UoA

Create a better experience for **everyone.**

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN   S4S

STUDENTS 4 STUDENTS
MENTORS
WANTED
TO HELP OTHER STUDENTS
SIGN UP
TO BOOST YOUR CV AND DEVELOP VALUABLE SKILLS

- studentlife@abdn.ac.uk
- wellbeing@abdn.ac.uk