Introducing Student Peer Mentoring in Pakistani Universities; Hierarchy and a different culture of learning?

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Context of Research – Pakistan

Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan (Statistics Division, Government of Pakistan, 2010)

Region	Universities	Public	Private
AJ Kashmir	3	1	2
Balochistan	7	5	2
Islamabad		14	3
Northern Areas	1	1	
NWFP	22	13	9
Punjab	36 (24 in Lahore)	20 (10)	16 (14)
Sindh	38	13	25
Total	124	67	57

Rationale

- Developing country

- Current situation – strategic importance politically and geographically

- Students - agents of change; will be opinion leaders of the country in near future

- HE institutions in Pakistan lack funds for co-curricular activities - no funds for counselling services

- Lacks evidence - little or no **structured** peer mentoring or counselling in universities for student support

Hypotheses

1. If structured support is provided to students in universities, they are more likely to offer help to their peers.

2. Mentoring by a senior student is helpful to new/junior students.

3. Peer mentoring improves key skills of mentors and mentees and has an impact on their learning and on the culture of learning.

Introducing a mentoring system

- Gain support from University

- Prepare mentoring handbook, training manuals and logbooks

- Select Mentoring Coordinator

- Select and train Mentors (workshops)

- Select mentees (with coordinator)

- Monitor process (coordinator)

- Evaluation and feedback

The participants – peer mentoring project

			Department	Degree Programme	Mentoring Coordinator	No. of Mentors	No. of Mentees (1st year)
The researcher (Project Coordinator)	Local Coordinator	U1: University 1 (public)	Education & Research (Group A)	MA Sec. Education	1	10 (final year)	20
				MA Education Research & Assessment	1	10 (final year)	20
			Biochemistry & Biotechnology (Group B)	BSc Biochemistry	1	15 (2nd year)	26 (section A)
						13 (3rd year)	19 (section B)
				BSc Biotechnology	1	12 (3rd year)	20
		U2: University 2 (private)	All departments	All subject disciplines (mainly from Business & IT)	1	20	40
				Total students:		80	145

Social/Psychological/other issues which students think are of greatest concern to students in Pakistani Universities
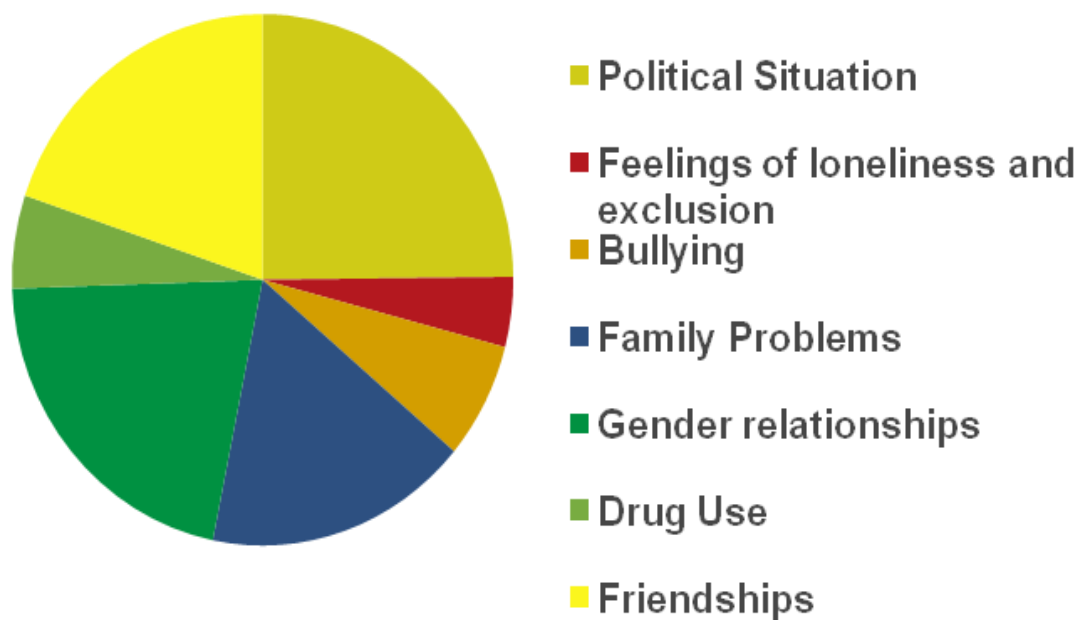
Findings so far

1. The concept of senior students mentoring juniors in a structured form is NEW in the existing learning culture of the universities in Lahore.

2. The new/junior students feel more comfortable discussing personal and academic issues with the senior peers rather than with the academic faculty.

3. Senior students developed key skills such as goal setting, decision making, problem solving

4. Mentors and mentees reported greater involvement in learning and improved understanding

Conclusions

1. Mentoring gives students in Pakistan (as in Europe) a stronger sense of ownership of their learning

2. Extending mentoring improves students' engagement with learning communities

3. Involvement in community volunteering develops a stronger sense of democratic citizenship and collective social responsibility

4. Community volunteering and mentoring develops tolerance and mutual understanding and leads to greater social cohesion and will assist Pakistan to a democratic and more open society

Recommendations

- European and international organisations such as UNESCO should support the development of mentoring schemes in Pakistan's Universities

- Further research should be supported to evaluate the effectiveness of mentoring in education systems in developing countries where no student counselling exists

- Agencies should prioritise intervention in education systems to encourage and develop international standards and global recognition for students qualifying at Universities in developing countries
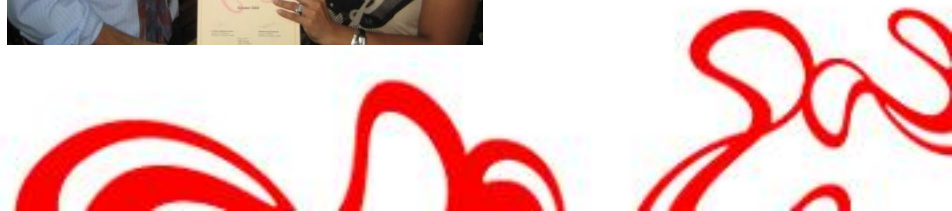
Research Fieldwork

Research fieldwork ....

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