Reviewer's report

Title: International students' experience of a western medical school: A mixed methods study exploring the early years in the context of cultural and social adjustment compared to students from the host country

Version: 2 Date: 10 February 2015

Reviewer: Titi Savitri Savitri Prihatiningsih

Reviewer's report:

• Major Compulsory Revisions

Reviewer's comments:

1. The background is too long. The following paragraphs could be omitted: paragraph 2 (lines 66-74), paragraph 3 (lines 75-82), paragraph 4 (lines 83-91), paragraph 5 (lines 92-102), paragraph 6 (lines 105-115), paragraph 7 (lines 116-124), paragraph 9 (lines 136-143)

2. Description on the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and how long this College has recruited international students, where they come from, what kind of induction programme is provided for them need to be added before line 144

3. The study questions are not well defined in paragraph 10 (lines 144-154) and paragraph 11 (155-161).

4. Lines 144-154 could be rewritten as follows:

Previous research in this College found that medical students have similar integration issues to those of other international students [xx]. Preliminary focused grouped studies revealed a number of concerns raised by the students from different cultural backgrounds. These included: alcohol consumption, challenges interacting with the opposite sex, independence, the ‘real’ Ireland as opposed to the perceived, traditional practices, perceptions of failing or poor academic attainment and challenges with English as a second language. Preclinical and clinical experiences are likely to cause different adaptation and integration challenges. This study explores the experiences of international students during their early years in the context of cultural and social adjustments.

Paragraph 11 (155-161) could be omitted, because the purpose of the study is already mentioned in the corrected lines 144-154 above (please refer to the sentence in bold).

5. Lines 164-174 could be rewritten as follows:

Methods

Mixed methods exploratory sequential study designed is applied in two phases. In the first phase, the research subject was first year medical students from diverse background and peer interviews were conducted by the second year
medical students. The selection of research subjects was done by xxx. The interviewee and interviewers were matched for their gender and cultural background. In second phase, an online survey was conducted twelve months after the initial interviews voluntarily targe using ‘Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire’ - comprising of xx items on social adjustment and ‘Social Integration Questionnaire’ – consists of 15 items divided into four constructs, namely perception of faculty, study support, students’ satisfaction with social life and financial support. The number of respondents are. The data collection was conducted from xx to xx for the first phase and from xx to xx for the second phase.

6. Lines 176 to 254 which describe the process of research should be rewritten as there are some repetitions (such as line 183 and 184; line 170 and 197) and the way it is written is not coherent. This has made the reader found difficulties in understanding the research process.

7. There are inconsistencies of statements, such as line 206 mentions ‘The material from the focus group work was not used as part of the results discussed in this paper’; but in line 222, it is said ‘Based on thematic analysis from the peer interviews and focus group discussion, 35 additional questions were included....

8. Line 228-234 are confusing as the heading is Phase 1 qualitative findings (line 221), but these lines explain about the questionnaire and the surveys.

9. Lines 239-242 that describe the qualitative analysis are not clear. In line 239 it is mentioned that the individual interviews were transcribed.... and line 241 mentions ‘a number of inductive codes were added to the previous themes obtained from the document analysis and interviews (note: which interviews?)

10. Number of interviewers, interviewees and respondents should be included in the ‘Results’.

11. Lines 446-462 – description of the results of Mokken procedures should be inserted in the ‘Results’.

12. Lines 519-525 could be omitted as this is repetitive description about the research.

13. Lines 597-599 which describe about induction programme could be included in the Background

14. Conclusion should be taken based on finding which are derived from students’ perception and opinion.

15. It might be better if further statistical analysis is done to check the significant differences among different nationalities/groups.

• Minor Essential Revisions

Reviewer’s comments:
1. Grammatical mistake in lines 559-560
2. A number of repetition of information is found throughout the article.

- Discretionary Revisions

Reviewer's comments:

1. The title is too long. It can be shortened as follows:
   International students' experience of a western medical school: An exploratory study in the context of cultural and social adjustment

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests