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INDEPENDENT COLLEGE DUBLIN

BA (HONS) INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

THESIS

How can mentoring support benefit academic progression of international third level students in a private college in Ireland?

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the main question: how can Mentoring support benefit the academic progression of international students of third level in a private college in Dublin Ireland. This is an important question given the increasing diversity in third level institutions and the variety of academic and non-academic challenges faced by international students, such as language barriers, cultural adjustment and different grading systems. Considering the pressure over colleges to improve student experience and retention, understanding the Mentoring role in this context is essential.

To answer this question, it was utilized mix methods. A survey was conducted to 30 international students to gather quantitative information, about challenges and perceptions of Mentoring. Additionally, semi structured interviews were conducted with two representatives' college staff to explore the college perceptions of Mentoring and student supports. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic coding to guarantee a comprehensive understanding.

The survey results revealed that 93.3% of international students believe Mentoring would benefit them academically. Moreover, interviews with college staff confirmed its potential to improve student engagement, academic confidence and long-term career readiness.

The findings favor the conclusion that formal mentoring programs can improve academic progression, student confidence, and career readiness. The research recommends implementing a Mentoring program into the college to better support international students.

This research adheres to the literature about mentoring as a significant success factor in tertiary education and emphasizes the need for more personalized and structured support systems.

List of Acronyms

SRQ: Sub-research question

List of Tables

1. Table of stakeholders
2. Table of thematic coding analysis

List of Diagrams

Diagram 1: Do you think having an additional guidance from a mentor in your college could improve your academic progression?

Diagram 2: What kind of mentoring support do you think would benefit you the most?

Diagram 3: Have you faced any academic challenges since you are studying in college in Ireland?

Diagram 4: If your answer was yes, what kind of challenges have you faced? Select all that apply

Diagram 5: By having a mentor available to you, would this help you prepare for your career?

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CHAPTER 1

1.2 Introduction

The topic of mentoring in third level education is of particular interest due to its deep and varied impact on student success, especially for international students who experience unfamiliar academic and cultural environments. As a Latin American international student, I have experienced the challenges that appear when studying abroad: adapting to a new academic requirement, facing language barriers, and social isolation.

This context added with the observed struggles of my classmates inspired me to analyze how a Mentoring program in private Irish colleges can support their academic progression. The increasing variety of student population in a globalized education bold the need for a support system more structured and personalized like Mentoring.

1.2 Rationale for the study.

This research tries to explore how Mentoring support can benefit the academic progression of international third-level students in a private college in Ireland. The justification is based on the breach saw in the current student supports services. Even the services exist, used to disperse, sometimes impersonal or inaccessible. International students faced academic and non-academic challenges, such as language Barriers, time management, cultural adjustments among others.

1.3 Statement of the research objectives.

Main question:

How can Mentoring support benefit the academic progression of international students of third level at a private college in Ireland.

Objective: To explore how mentoring can support the academic progression of international third-level students at a private college in Ireland, by determining the main challenges these students face and reviewing the potential role of mentoring as an ideal support to overcome those challenges and achieve their academics goals.

Theme 1: Mentoring.

Objective: To know Mentoring definition and benefits in the academic progression of international students of third level.

SRQ 1. Could Mentoring improve the academic performance of international students in the college?

Theme 2: Academic performance.

Objective: To investigate how college support services are aligned to improve academic skills and performance of International third level students and how do it by Mentoring supporting.

SRQ 2. How can the college support the academic progression of international students?

Theme 3: Challenges faced by international students

Objective: To identify the different challenges international students of third level face living in another country, speaking other languages and adapting to a new culture.

SRQ 3. What are the most common challenges faced by international students in college?

Theme 4: College support services

Objective: To determine the benefits of current college support services and how they can improve academic progression of international students in college.

SQR 4. What college support services help international students in their academic progress?

Theme 5: Long-term benefits of Mentoring

Objective: To determine the benefits of current college support services and how they can improve academic progression of international students in college.

SQR 5. How does mentoring can influence the career readiness of international students?

1.4 Information gathering & data collection

The present research was done by using mixed-methods approach:

Quantitative Method:

A structured survey was sent to 30 international students currently enrolled at a private college in Dublin, Ireland. It was conformed for both closed and open-ended questions focused on challenges, perceptions of mentoring, and support needs.

Qualitative Method:

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with college staff (Head of Student Experience and Learner Support Officer) related with students, investigating institutional perspectives on mentoring, academic progression and student challenges.

The data were analyzed through descriptive statistics for quantitative answers and thematic coding for qualitative interviews.

1.5 Expected outcomes of the study

It was expected that research showed:

- A clear awareness of students about the challenges that they faced at the college.
- There was a gap in the acknowledgment of college support services due to language and cultural barriers.
- Solid student support for a formal Mentoring program to improve academic performance, confidence and adaptation.
- Institutional awareness of Mentoring benefits, even if it wasn't implemented in the college.

1.6 Chapter by chapter overview

Chapter 1 – Introduction:

Describes the background, research justification, objectives, and methods. It shows the main research question and details why the topic is relevant.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review:

Analyzes key themes such as mentoring, academic progression, the challenges international students face, the role of college support services, and the long-term benefits of mentoring.

Chapter 3 – Methodology:

Defines the philosophical and methodological approach of the research, presents the data collection methods (surveys and interviews), sample chosen, ethical considerations, and data analysis techniques.

Chapter 4 – Results and Findings:

Presents the outcomes of the survey and interviews, presented by key themes. It highlights students' support needs, the gap in mentoring services, and perceptions of mentoring's effectiveness.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion:

Summarizes findings, revises the research question, and analyzes its answer. It evaluates critically implications and provides recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Nowadays in a globalized world, travel, work, study or living abroad are possible realities. This has turned the world's cities into multicultural spaces, where the opportunities for professional and employment growth are within reach. Colleges are one of the largest venues for this, providing international students with the space to achieve their academic goals. However,

language barriers, adaptation, new learning systems and culture are obstacles to overcome day by day. Colleges are aware of these challenges and accompany them along the way with informal or formal support. By its nature, Mentoring emerges as an ideal strategy to help students in their journey. But how can mentoring support academic progression of international students of third level? To find the answer, firstly it's necessary to know information in the previous literature about themes such as Mentoring, Academic progression, Challenges faced by international students, College support services and long-term benefits of mentoring, which are relevant to answer and support the present research.

2.2 Mentoring

"*Mentoring has been a prevalent area of research in business, education, and psychology for the past several decades*" (Crisp & Cruz, 2009, as cited in Jain, R., Chaudhary, B. and Jain, N. 2016). Some research has shown the benefits of Mentoring applying to work and bringing significant benefits for students at any level. "*Research indicate that mentoring is important not only for business people but equally for students*" (Crisp, 2009; Lockwood, 2006; Gilbert, 1985; Dreher & Cox, 1996; Nora & Crisp, 2007).

Applied to third level international students' context, Mentoring plays an important role. But what is Mentoring? "*Mentoring is broadly defined as a supportive, developmental relationship where a more experienced individual (mentor) provides guidance, advice, and encouragement to a less experienced individual (mentee*)" (Crisp and Cruz, 2009). What means mentors are guides whom bring valuable knowledge *as they "develop learners attributes such as creativity, veracity,*

innovativeness, critical thinking, problem solving" (Maila & Awino, P.241 cited by Akama, F. and Keenan, J. (2023).

"*Mentoring for students may be used as a strategy in college to make them feel associated and involved on campus, leading to improvements in their careers as well as academic results*" *(Pascarella, Duby & Terenzini, 1983 as cited Jain, R., Chaudhary, B. and Jain, N. (2016). "Effective mentoring relationships have been linked to improved student satisfaction, higher academic performance, and increased retention rates (Johnson, 2007).* In the context of international students, mentoring can serve as both an academic and psychosocial resource, aiding integration and boosting academic confidence (Leach, 2016).

There are numerous definitions of Mentoring in the context of higher education, especially because it has many applications and benefits for students of all kinds and applied to this research to international students. Most of them define the concept of Mentoring as a relationship between mentor and mentee, and although perspectives vary, they agree with its benefits in terms of skill development and improved academic performance of students. Authors such as Johnson, W.B. (2007) attributes benefit to it in personal development, Psychosocial areas or as a booster of academic confidence as stated by Leach, 2016. For mentoring to be effective, it is important that teachers provide appropriate support to facilitate students' academic achievement. All these findings show how mentoring improves students' academic performance, supporting them in parallel with the development of skills, their personal growth and opening up career opportunities in the future.

2.3 Academic progression

The experience with academic performance starts in childhood when kids start the school. Applied to the third level of education, academic performance is related with the student's ability to achieve their degree as well as how college measure their efficiency. *"Academic progression refers to the advancement of students through their educational journey, marked by successful completion of courses, meeting academic requirements, and achieving personal educational goals" (Yorke, 2001)*. Colleges usually consider attendance, Exams, Assignments, progression, graduation as indicators of academic performance. However, there are factors that impact international students' efficiency and their progress: study habits, working timetables, new culture adaptation, difficulties with the local language, stress, motivation, guidance etc. *"International students, in particular, may face difficulties that impact their academic progression, such as adjusting to new pedagogical styles, understanding academic integrity rules, and managing language barriers" (Andrade, 2006).* Adding also *"Students spending less time studying and more time working are two trends that all colleges and universities will have to confront." (Nonis, S.A. and Hudson, G.I. 2006). According to Minnesota (2007) cited by Ali, S., Haider, Z., Munir, F., Khan, H. and Ahmed, A. (2013) "the higher education performance is depending upon the academic performance of graduate students". "Faculty-student mentoring relationships, on the other hand, have been linked to increased retention rates, higher GPA scores, and greater involvement in research activities" (Jacobi, 1991; Johnson, 2007).*

Academic progression is a journey where students encounter challenges and refine skills to achieve their best academic performance as explained (Yorke, 2001) and (Andrade, 2006). Most of the cited authors agreed that this progression also presents difficulties for students, such as

knowing new pedagogy, understand academic integrity rules, manage time between studies and working hours among others. To overcome these challenges, it's necessary to rely on support, usually from the college such as Mentoring. This establishes a faculty-student relationship that facilitates students' journey, as Jacobi, (1991); Johnson, (2007) said.

Even there are so many ways to support academic progression of students, many research conclude Mentoring is more complete, especially when it's delivered formally by the college. Recognizing that those difficulties not only impact immediate academic outcomes but also has future implications in their personal development and career opportunities, a better support from colleges should be considered.

Based on this, we can say that the role of the college is crucial. Providing tools to overcome language barriers and opening spaces to explain pedagogy and requirements are just some of the many things that higher education institutions do. Include a Mentoring program can give a structured guide how do this effectively and support international students in their academic progression and future profession.

2.4 Challenges faced by international students.

We will start defining international students as those who leave their home country to relocate to another with the purpose of having their studies. People who decide to travel miles away to a new country with different food, customs and language motivated by achieving academic and career goals. "*The first challenge faced by international students is understanding and adapting to our education system." (Badke, W. 2021). "Academically, they may face difficulties*

understanding lectures, participating in discussions, and adapting to different teaching styles" (Andrade, 2006). Othman, R., Laswad, F. and Mat-Roni, S. (2021) state that "Regardless of the discipline of choice, the most common barriers encountered by these students are poor English language skills, cultural differences (Andrade; Macgregor & Folinazzo) and a lack of proper understanding and information needed to adjust to a foreign academic and social environment." (Kukatlapalli; Zhou et al). But are not the only ones, *"International students often encounter a range of academic and non-academic challenges. These include homesickness, financial stress, discrimination, and limited social networks" (Smith and Khawaja, 2011).* "*Mentoring programs have been shown to reduce feelings of isolation and help students adapt more quickly" (Budge, 2006*).

There are many challenges international students must overcome. Firstly, adapting to the educational system will require an effort to understand new rules and processes, precisely because are in other language and based on a new pedagogy and culture as Badke, W. (2021) mentioned and Othman, R., Laswad, F. and Mat-Roni, S. (2021) said from other authors(Andrade, Macgregor & Folinazzo, Kukatlapalli; Zhou et al). In addition, they also deal with the cultural shock, isolation, which are stressful and most of the time not easy to handle as is said by Smith and Khawaja, (2011). No one is more important than another. All are essential parts of the process and overcoming them brings the academic success students seek. Each of the challenges detailed provides a better picture of the international student experience and explains why it also leads to the development of soft skills such as communication, time management, and problem-solving. This works with the right support. That's why colleges have formal or informal programs that support international students throughout the entire process

until graduation. This is why Mentoring programs are so widely used in higher education, as they play a key role in comprehensively supporting international students and success.

2.5 College support services

Most colleges offer a variety of support services to help students succeed, such as academic writing centers, counselling, and career guidance*. Colleges, the authors assert, "now bear responsibility for providing students with the support the need to achieve their goals" (Coley et al., 2016*). *"Colleges need to prioritize and implement policies, initiatives, curriculum delivery, and support programs that ensure high rates of student success." (Arnold, W.W., 2018).* Academic support services can help students successfully navigate and excel in higher education. For example, *"research has shown that supplemental instruction programs, one type of academic support service, can increase academic performance and retention by helping students develop academic skills, yielding increased retention and increasing the probability of timely graduation" (Bowles et al., 2008; Ogden et al., 2003; Skoglund et al., 2018). "However, international students are often either unaware of these services or hesitant to use them due to cultural differences or lack of confidence" (Sherry, Thomas and Chui, 2010). "While these services are vital, they are often impersonal and reactive. In contrast, mentoring provides a more proactive and personalized form of support". (Collings, Swanson and Watkins, 2014) "Although general support services exist, they often lack the personalized, ongoing interaction that mentoring can provide" (Colvin and Ashman, 2010).*

Higher education institutions play an essential role in international students' academic journey. They have shifted from prioritizing access to emphasizing initiatives for student success according to Coley, C., Coley, T., and Lynch-Holmes (2016). The authors above, Bowles et al., (2008); Ogden et al., (2003) and Skoglund et al., (2018) agreed that these supports increase academic performance, develop students' academic skills and increased retention and probability of timely graduation. Many of these services are focused on developing academic skills and help students to navigate the process to succeed in their courses. The inconvenience is that many students aren't aware of these initiatives or consider them impersonal or inadequate to overcome their challenges as mentioned by Sherry, Thomas and Chui, (2010) and Collings, Swanson and Watkins, (2014). College support services face the challenge of improving communication with international students, considering multicultural differences and including support in non-academic areas such as stress management and well-being. Mentoring provides the right support to help international students in their academic progress, offers a personalized attention and well-prepared approach to guiding students on their path to completion of courses which makes it the ideal support.

2.6 Long term benefits of Mentoring.

Some college supports bring short-term benefits, especially what are related to the knowledge of requirements, processes and subjects. However, others bring lifelong benefits, such as developing skills that complement the knowledge acquired in college. *"The emphasis by employers is on jobs that require higher levels of social skills, analytic abilities (including critical thinking), and proficiency with technology" (Pew Research Center, 2016 cited by Arnold, W.W.,*

2018). "Mentoring can have long-lasting impacts on students' academic and professional lives. Studies show that mentored students tend to perform better academically, develop stronger networks, and demonstrate higher levels of self-efficacy" (Kram, 1985; Leach, 2016. "Enhanced intercultural competencies and communication skills" (Smith and Khawaja, 2011). Furthermore, mentoring relationships can foster intercultural competence, leadership skills, and resilience—all of which are valuable beyond the college years (Heirdsfield et al., 2008). Other benefits are: *"Stronger professional networks and career opportunities post-graduation" (Montgomery, 2010).*

For international students in particular, mentoring can bring significant benefits. The improvements in academic performance, skills development, and self-confidence, can be the starting point for a successful professional future as mentioned by Smith and Khawaja (2011) and Heirdsfield et al. (2008). Additionally, according to Kram (1985) and Leach (2016), they can establish strong professional networks which open opportunities in their future career. What's remarkable is how skill development can enhance the profile of a postgraduate mentored student. Today, experience and knowledge are essential; having skills such as leadership, resilience, time management, and problem-solving can make the difference among graduates. The entire academic journey of international students supported by Mentoring provides them with a comprehensive education, advances in personal development which not only helps to overcome their academic challenges but become the kind of person who will be able to walk in this changing world and opens a wider range of opportunities in a competitive job market.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Paradigm / Philosophy employed

This research is framed within a constructivist ontological position, which postulates that reality is not objective or singular, but is instead constructed through human interaction and experience. Constructivism adheres to the ontological view that reality is socially constructive and subjective and with the epistemological view that understanding emerges from the lived experiences and interpretations of individuals as mentioned by Crewell, (2014).

Since the research focuses on international students' experiences and perceptions of Mentoring in a private college in Dublin, Ireland, that we call ICD. This perspective allows for a deeper understanding of how Mentoring is personally and academically valuable for them to conquer their goals.

While the study is not based on specific ideological framework, such a conflict theory or feminist theory, it is based on the appreciation that students' experiences are modeled by their social environments.

The selected approach agreed with the use of mixed methods: a quantitative survey for international students and qualitative interviews with the college staff (the head of student experience and learner support officer). This allows the research to explore both measurable patterns and deep personal insights into academic progression and support services like Mentoring.

3.2 Justification for the adoption of the method

The survey was designed to obtain international students' general opinions about their college experience: their academic progress, the challenges they face, and their awareness of or interest in mentoring programs. It consisted primarily of closed-ended questions using Likert scales, along with some open-ended questions to allow for personal comments.

The questions focused on: perception of Mentoring as a potential support, previous experience with Mentoring, what academic and non-academic challenges face, how they'd like academic support by the college. This method was selected for its efficiency in collecting measurable data from a larger sample.

Additionally, two semi structured interviews were conducted. One of them was with the head of student experience and the second with the learner support officer. Questions were open-ended and designed to know institutional perspectives, especially on what they were their functions, awareness about challenges faced by international students, current college supports, attitudes towards to have a formal Mentoring support, perceptions about long term benefits of Mentoring for academic progression. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in exploring responses while maintaining comparability across interviews.

3.3 An outline of sampling technique and sample size

A convenience sampling technique was employed on the research. This is a type a of non-probability sampling which involves being extracted from that part of the population, which is close to hand, it is readily available and convenient. For the present investigation,

international students were from a private college in Dublin and the institutional staff were chosen from the same private college in Dublin, Ireland.

- Survey: The questionnaire was sent to international students currently enrolled at a private college in Dublin, Ireland. A total of 30 students answered the questionnaire, representing a variety of nationalities (Brazilian, Mexican, Indian, Salvadorean, Chilean, Bolivian, Costa Rican) and academic courses.

- Interviews: They were conducted with two staff members responsible of student services at the college, considering that they were involve in direct roles in supporting students and institutional planning.

Interviewees were anonymised and given participant codes to guarantee confidentiality and facilitate analysis:

Table 1. Table of stakeholders

CODE	POSITION	SETTINGS	EXPERIENCE
HSE	**The head of student experience**	Third level private college in Dublin	5 years
LSO	**The learner support officer**	Third level private college in Dublin	2 years

3.4 Explanation of what analysis method employed

Quantitative Data Analysis

Survey answers were analysed using descriptive statistics, basing on frequency, average, and percentage distributions to find trends in international student experiences and attitudes toward mentoring. Since is necessarily know how aware students are about Mentoring as a tool

to improve their academic performance, it's also important recognize their perspectives, how they would like to receive it, by whom and what are their experiences and expectations about it and if it is a widespread perception among most students so that the college implements it.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Interviews data were interpreted based on perceptions of interviewees about the themes of the research: Mentoring, Academic progression, Challenges faced by international students, college support services and long-term benefits of Mentoring. The data obtain with the Interviews were analysed using thematic coding, which help us to organise and understand better the findings and give a structured way to understand the information. It will do it according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process:

1. Familiarisation with the data.
2. Generation of initial codes.
3. Searching for themes.
4. Reviewing themes.
5. Defining and naming themes.
6. Producing the report.

In addition, all findings obtained by both methods were analysed by triangulation to compare methods and sources and provide a better comprehensive understanding.

Table 2. Thematic coding analysis

SUBTHEME QUESTION	QUOTE	THEMATIC CODING
Mentoring: Could Mentoring improve academic performance of international students in the college?	"It's an important role who enhance academic progression of international students and help them with challenges are facing. We do have it but it's not categorized"	College role. Importance of Mentoring. Academic progression. Awareness of importance of support services. Not categorized support services.
Academic progression: How can the college support academic progression of international students?	"We have different tutorials, workshops, offer internships and graduate programs from companies and even is not a proper Mentoring all of them are part of the information students need."	Tutorials and workshops as indirect mentoring. Career development initiatives
Challenges faced by international students: What are the most common challenges faced by international students in the college?	"System grading in Ireland, English is not their first language. Different way Lecturers deliver classes. Non-academically: homesick, struggles with accommodation, cost of life."	Language barriers. Grading system. Cultural adaptation. Different method teaching. Homesickness, accommodation. Cost of living
College support services: What college support services help international students in their academic progress?	"The learner support officer and the learner support coordinator. Both are helping students providing them with the right information that they need. Delivering the workshops that college has, such as QQI sessions for the exam, college policies, referencing workshops and wellbeing workshops as yoga or mental health."	Current support services. Workshops. Information accessibility.
Long-term benefits of Mentoring: How does mentoring can influence the career readiness of international students?	"Students will be more approachable to share the challenges they face, and they will go directly to a personalised support."	Approachability with the support staff. Students' willingness for sharing concerns.

3.5 Ethical Section

Ethical integrity was maintained throughout the study by complying with institutional research ethics protocols.

Informed consent and confidentiality.

All the contributors received a plain language statement explaining the research aim and procedures. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Their contribution was voluntarily, and it was detailed through the research with pseudonymous and participant codes to keep them anonymous.

Validity and reliability.

Validity was supported by reviewing the survey with a pilot testing, where was checked its clarity and relevance. Reliability was improved by using standardized procedures to collect the data.

Reflexibility and avoidance of bias.

To recognize and reduce bias from the researcher was used reflexive practices. The strategies used:

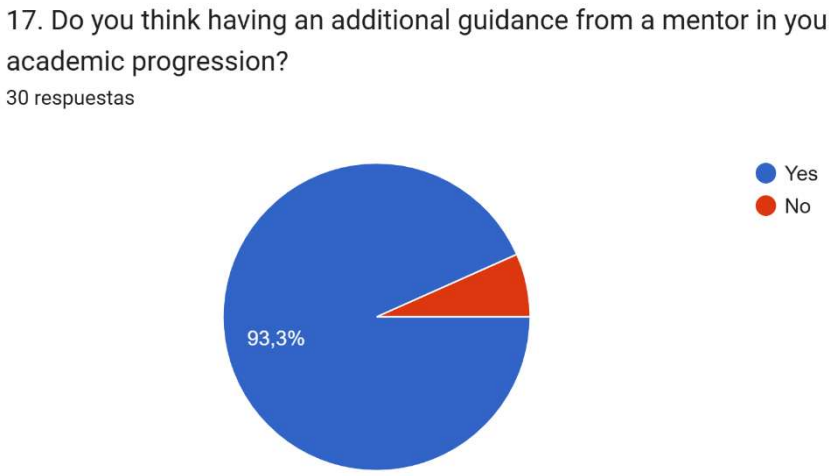
- *Member validation*. The summarise of interviews were sent to the interviewees to validate the information.
- *Audit register*. Documentation of coding decision and analytics memos were kept.
- *Subjectivity.* It was recognized valuable for interpretation of results of the research instead to see it as a weakness.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Mentoring

Could Mentoring improve the academic performance of international students in college?

Diagram 1.



In the survey was reviewed the awareness, concept and way Mentoring must be delivered. However, the focus is to know if this tool would be able to help international students to improve their academic progression. In the question 17 of the survey, as showed in the graphic, 93.3% of them answered that they consider would be helpful, since their college doesn't have a formal program. The college they belong doesn't have a formal program but have some supports.

What do you think as the potential role of mentoring in helping international students succeed in their academic progression?

"I think it is so important because there are situations where new students just arrive here for the first time, just right before the course start. They don't have six months or one year, two years, like students have been studying English. The students who have previous experience here, are more settle down in all the situation that happen here in Ireland. However, I know is difficult about the academy stuff, but in that side, they have an advantage. Mentoring student who just arrive the stress reduce a little bit because they have some guidance about what happens."

In the counterpart, the interview question to LSO: What do you think as the potential role of mentoring in helping international students succeed in their academic progression? It was answered with "Mentoring student who just arrive the stress reduce a little bit because they have some guidance about what happens." This indicates, Mentoring can help as a guidance to navigate college experience and positively impact their performance at the college.

In the secondary research was found that "Effective mentoring relationships have been linked to improved student satisfaction, higher academic performance, and increased retention rates (Johnson, 2007). The findings of the primary research denote that students and college are aware of the challenges that the academic experience involves, and Mentoring is essential to improve performance and walk the academic path satisfactorily. Secondary research also confirmed that Mentoring, when it is delivered effectively improved performance, but also student satisfaction. For any higher education institution, public or private, be prepared to guide their students is imperative, specially when there are many areas to manage, academically and non-academically. Mentoring is a comprehensive tool that assertively guides and supports students to improve their performance and develop long-term personal skills.

4.2 Academic progression

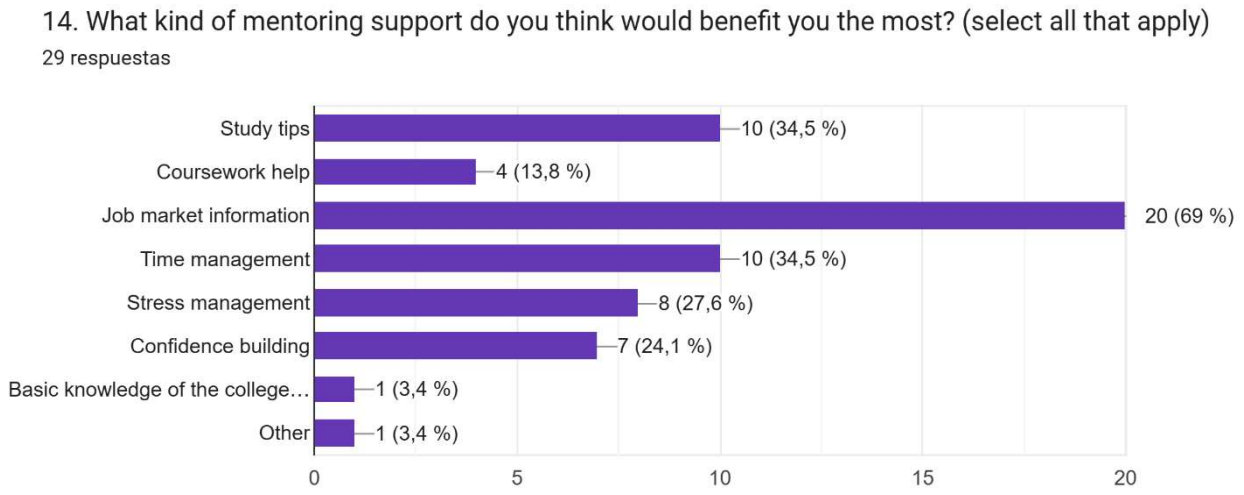
SRQ: How can the college support the academic progression of international students?

How College currently supports academic progression of international students?

"We have different tutorials and different groups depending on the module where they are. We offer as well, once per week after classes the writing academic workshop, offered by one of the lecturers. We have during the semester different workshops as how to know the policies, how to write an exam, in the part of career advice we have LinkedIn. Bring some companies to help students and even if is not a proper Mentoring is part of that. Students get the information that they need it in different parts of the program."

According with the findings in the interview, LSO commented that they have different tools to help students. Although they do not have a formal Mentoring program, give support by many activities to solve doubts and improve students' abilities.

Diagram 2.



In the survey, international students answered that the most important supports that required are: Job Market information with 69%, followed by Study tips and time management with 34.5% each and stress management in the fourth position with 27.6%.

In the literature review was found "Academic progression refers to the advancement of students through their educational journey, marked by successful completion of courses, meeting academic requirements, and achieving personal educational goals" (Yorke, 2001). Explain that the academic progression is a process and is accomplished by succeed in different areas.

In the context of international students, a successful academic progression is a goal itself. However, this can be affected by several factors, initially academic as overcome language barriers, understand grading system and pedagogy. Others non-academic like time and stress management. The findings in primary and secondary research confirm that there are many areas to succeed academically. Most of them are expected to be delivered by the college. Mentoring let colleges give supports in a structured and more personalised way, improving their academic progression and boosting their confidence and motivation.

4.3 Challenges faced by international students

What are the most common challenges faced by international students in college?

Diagram 3

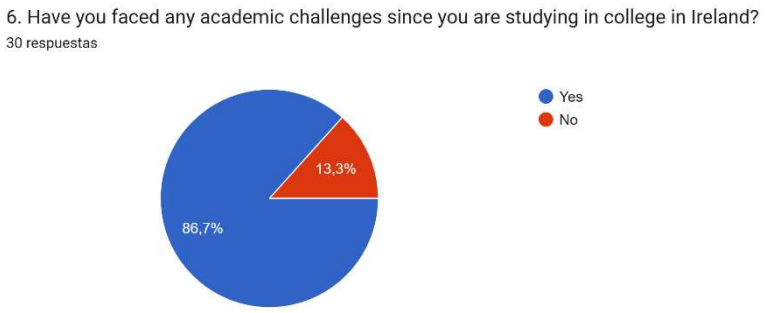
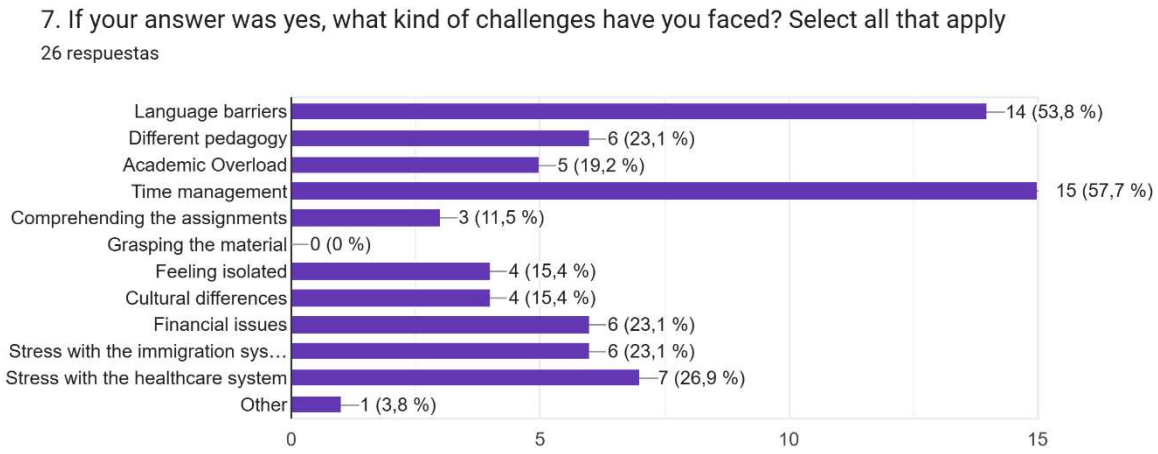


Diagram 4



The survey shows that 86.7% of international students deal with academic challenges during their studies. Just 13.3% don't. The most representative challenges were Time management with 57.7 %, followed by language barriers with53.8% and Different pedagogy with 23.1%.

8) From your experience, what are the main academic and non-academic challenges international students face?

Academic challenges are, firstly the type of grading here in Ireland, which is different than other countries. English is not the first language of most of international students. The way that the classes are delivered are different from their countries. Lecturers just speak without interaction and others ask questions to the students. In non-academic challenges, they have homesick, struggles with accommodation, cost of life.

In the interview LSO was emphatic about the academic difficulties faced by international students, detailing Understanding of grading system, Language barriers, new pedagogy, but also adding homesickness, accommodation issues and high cost of life.

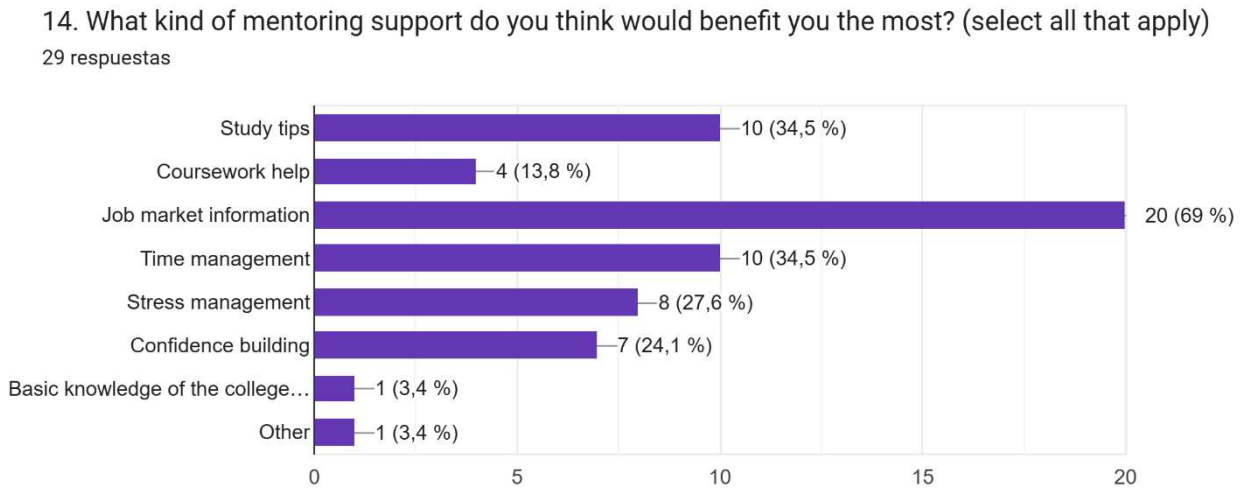
In the secondary research was found: “International students often encounter a range of academic and non-academic challenges. These include homesickness, financial stress, discrimination, and limited social networks” (Smith and Khawaja, 2011). Authors also known how challenging is to study abroad, emphasizing on those like homesickness, financial stress and limited social networks who tends to affect academic performance.

Both researches agreed about academic challenges, which are commonly solved by the college support services. However not all colleges supporting non-academic challenges, which impact in their academic progression. Having better communication and accessibility with students makes it easier to identify those problems and help them accurately just as Mentoring does when it is part of student support.

4.4 College support services

What college support services help international students in their academic progress?

Diagram 4.



According to the survey, international students benefit the most with Job market information which has 69% of the results, followed by Study tips and time management with 34.5%. Additionally, stress management got 27.6% and confidence building 24.1%.

11) **What support services does the college currently have to help international students navigate college life?**

"The learner support officer and the learner support coordinator. Both are helping students providing them with the right information that they need. Delivering the workshops that college has, such as QQI sessions for the exam, college policies, referencing workshops and wellbeing workshops as yoga or mental health."

In the interview, LSO responded that there are two instances where international students can go to solve doubts: Learner support officer and learner support coordinator. They are on charge to give the support into the college and prepared many activities in order to support academic progression of international students.

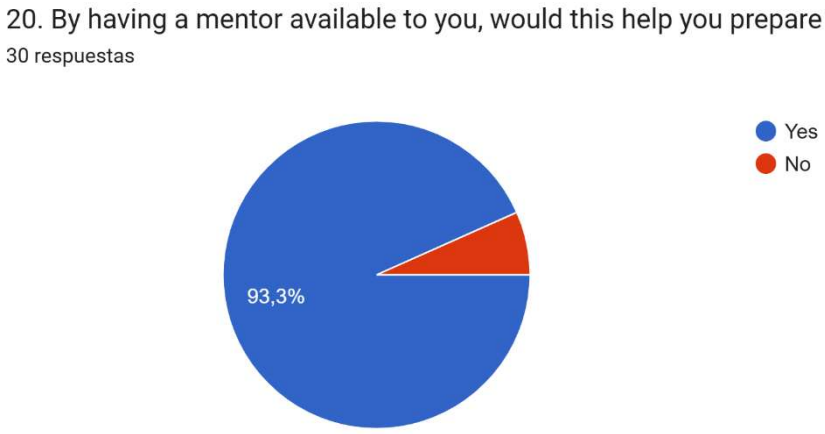
“Most higher education institutions offer a variety of support services aimed at helping students succeed, such as academic writing centres, counselling, and career guidance. However, international students are often either unaware of these services or hesitant to use them due to cultural differences or lack of confidence.” (Sherry, Thomas and Chui, 2010). In the literature review we find that colleges have different support. But also realized that most of the times these are not use them by students for lack of confidence or cultural differences.

In the primary research we notice a demand of supports by students and how colleges make efforts for have available for them. The secondary research brought an important point, when students are not able to use them, because their cultural differences or lack of confidence don’t allow them. This set a challenge for colleges to improve the communication and their approach. A mentoring program can manage all those details, because is focused on support students successfully and is able to overcome any language or cultural barrier to ensure international students are being supported where they need the most.

4.5 Long-term benefits of Mentoring

How does mentoring can influence the career readiness of international students?

Diagram 5



In the survey, 93.3% of international students recognized they can be prepared to their career readiness by having a mentor.

14) In your opinion, what long term benefits could mentor program offer to international students?

Growth the network, because in a position of Mentor you will be able to be in contact with many students and share with them.

In the interview, LSO responded that one of the most important long-term benefits is related with mentor's role, where they can growth their network.

"Furthermore, mentoring relationships can foster intercultural competence, leadership skills, and resilience—all of which are valuable beyond the college years. (Heirdsfield et al., 2008)" In the literature review, mentoring has significant role as skill developer of intercultural competence, leadership and resilience. Nowadays, all of them are essential academically, professionally and personally.

Commonly Mentoring support is thinking to accompany students' journey and succeed academically. However, their action goes farther, developing valuable abilities which help international students to success in all areas. When colleges consider improving supports, They must do so based on providing a differentiated value that impacts students' lives and transform them into critical thinkers capable of contributing to and changing the world.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

How can mentoring support benefit the academic progression of international third-level students in a private college in Ireland?

Based on the findings from primary and secondary research, it can be concluded that Mentoring can be used as an essential tool for supporting and significantly impacting the academic progress of international students. Furthermore, given its nature, it can provide structured guidance tailored to their real needs, considering cultural differences, language barriers and the various types of academic and non-academic challenges they face.

The survey results revealed that 93.3% of international students believe Mentoring would benefit them academically. Moreover, interviews with college staff confirmed its potential to improve student engagement, academic confidence and long-term career readiness.

The themes analyzed: Academic Progression, challenges faced by international students, college support services and long-term benefits of Mentoring, reinforced the conclusion that while college support systems are in place, they often lack personalization and accessibility. Mentoring is a bridge that helps foster strong connections between the college and students,

address emotional and academic challenges and provide suitable role models to successfully guide and train future professionals.

Recommendations

Recommendations	
Area	**Recommendation**
Formal Mentoring Plan	Create a formal Mentoring program that can be implemented for all courses in the college.
Student Orientation	Introduce Mentoring at the beginning of courses to facilitate students' integration.
Create a formal Mentoring program that can be implemented for all courses in the college.	Consider graduates to be trained as mentors who can effectively guide students.
Academic Support Integration	Keep academic workshops (e.g., writing, exam prep) as part of The Mentoring program.
Communication	Improve communication about the existing support services for all students.
Feedback Loop	Establish a mechanism to have regular feedback from mentees and mentors to improve program quality.
Career Readiness	Incorporate career counselling and skills development into Mentoring sessions.
Non-Academic Support	Addressing emotional well-being, cultural adjustment, and stress management through The Mentoring program.

Suggestions for Further Research

- In the future, it can be conducted research could compare the effectiveness of mentoring in public and private colleges.
- Once The Mentoring Program is launched, conduct a study to measure the academic and professional results of the mentored students.
- Get feedback from mentors' experience to obtain up to date information on students needs.

Limitations

- Small sample size for the survey. The survey was answered by 30 students from the same private college in Dublin, Ireland, which may affect can be applied in general.
- Institutional scope. The interviews were only conducted with two members of the college staff. More institutional opinions could provide a wider perspective.
- Time limitation. The research was developed in a short time, without an opportunity to improve the findings.
- Lack of existing Mentoring program in the college. Since no mentoring program exists, research couldn't explore the real impact this tool had had.

This research is particularly valuable for educational policymakers, private college administrators, students supports areas, as it provides clear evidence that Mentoring is not only a support complement, but a necessary tool to improve the academic success, experience, wellbeing and future employability of international students.

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