

The field-of-practice experiences of South African and Namibian medical practitioners who qualified outside and returned to practice in their own countries

Mabuza LH,¹ Nashed KK,¹ Masiteng T,¹ Adeniji AA,² Cook R,³ Manning DM,⁴ Christians F⁵

¹Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University

²Stellenbosch University

³University of the Witwatersrand

⁴University of Pretoria

⁵University of Namibia

Background

The field-of-practice experiences of medical practitioners who obtained their qualifications outside their countries of citizenship constitute vital information among their counterparts who obtained theirs within those countries. The experiences of these foreign-trained medical practitioners on their return to practice within their countries of origin have not been explored. This study intended to bridge this knowledge gap.

Aim

To explore their experiences of the medical practitioners who trained outside their countries with respect to the relevance of their training, their reception by fellow medical practitioners, their interaction with their supervisors and how they perceive their clinical performance compared to their South African / Namibian counterparts.

Methods

A qualitative study was conducted among the medical practitioners practicing in South African and Namibia in the public and private sectors from October 2023 up to June 2024. The snowball recruitment method was used to enroll participants. A combination of zoom and face-to-face interviews were undertaken. Data collection was conducted by the PI and two co-investigators who have undergone training in in-depth interview technique. The number of participants was determined by data saturation by the twelfth participant. Thematic data analysis was employed.

Results

Four themes with subthemes emerged: (1) foreign-training relevance to their own countries – this needed contextualization, (2) reception by fellow colleagues which was supportive and negative, (3) interaction with supervisors varied – supportive and negative, (4) performance comparison – struggle at internship but caught-up with fellow colleagues with time through commitment, and some excelling as medical officers.

Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that the reception of medical practitioners who trained outside South Africa and Namibia is less welcoming. This has a negative effect on the efficiency of healthcare team in rendering the required service delivery in patient care. There is need for the governments of these countries to develop policies to resolve this challenge.