Imposter syndrome: Part ‘self’ part ‘other’

Dr Nighet Riaz

This short article will discuss how imposter syndrome can affect a person’s sense of identity and belonging. I will briefly share some of my experiences before discussing why a decolonised curriculum can, by examining our histories and their intersections with Europe and the UK, support opportunities for black and minority ethnic (BME) educators and students in teaching and learning, and help them to understand who they are.

Firstly, as a mature student and, now, an older British Pakistani Muslim female early-career researcher and associate lecturer, I questioned my identity, the relevance and impact of my research, my place in academia and the worth of my academic qualifications and achievements. This level of self-reflexivity threw into sharp focus the fact that there was something missing that was making me feel inadequate. Clance and Imes (1978, p. 241) have noted that those suffering from imposter syndrome do not experience an internal sense of success despite their many achievements and professional standing in the academy and society.

Dr Nighet Riaz is an early careers researcher and associate lecturer in the University of the West of Scotland (UWS). Her research explores how young people and communities can become ‘othered’, fuelled by moral panics to tackle the perceived disaffection of young people and communities who have been identified as ‘at risk’ of social exclusion. Nighet teaches on graduate and post-graduate modules on the topic of equality and inclusion. Her interest in race, identity and belonging has led to Nighet becoming an active member of BERA, where she now co-convenes on the Special Interest Group on Race, Ethnicity and Education and is a research, training and development partner in Scottish Association of Minority Ethnic Educators (SAMEE).