An Investigation into the Role and Impact of Learning Mentors in
Primary Schools in England
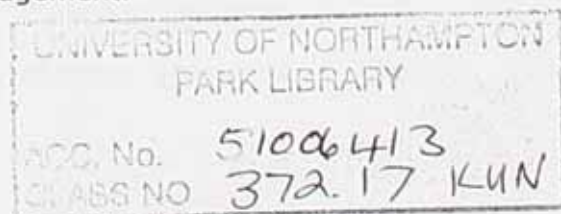
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Abstract

The Labour Government which came to power in 1997 introduced the Excellence in Cities initiative in 1999 in order to address what were perceived to be low standards and falling attainment levels experienced by inner city schools in England. The learning mentor programme, which was part of this initiative, created a new group of educational professionals who were deployed in secondary schools with the mandate to remove barriers to learning in order to enable disaffected children to participate more fully in their learning. It was expected that this would ultimately improve standards and raise attainment levels. Initial positive outcomes prompted the widening of the programme to include schools outside the cities and later on to involve primary schools. The phenomenological case study which is the focus of this thesis analysed data collected using semi-structured interviews with learning mentors, mentees, parents of the mentees and teachers, which were guided by grounded theory and document analysis, to seek a clear definition of the role of the learning mentors within the primary school. The study based on ecological systems theory used thematic analysis to identify main themes within the data which indicated certain commonalities within the responses of the research participants. The analysis also indicated that these common themes were not present within the existing literature which suggested a certain difference between the role of the learning mentors as generally presented and the perception of the service providers and service users.

The results of the research indicated that service users including mentees, parents and teachers as well as service providers i.e. primary school learning mentors perceived that their most important role is to be an available, approachable and non-judgemental listeners. Such a role allowed those pupils who are faced with barriers to learning, which are different from learning difficulties or special needs to seek appropriate help without the trauma of being labelled. The research also indicated that the ability of the learning mentors to provide appropriate support during various stages such as identifying the barriers, developing appropriate strategies and

implementing those strategies are more positively welcomed compared to other support professionals such as counsellors. The findings also indicated that although not measurable in quantitative terms, mentoring support has a positive impact on the social and academic outcomes of the mentees, as it provided them with an opportunity to realise their potential. However, the results also indicated that due to various reasons including the absence of an accepted universal definition of the role, appropriate structure and regulations which govern their training, recruitment and career progression, the learning mentor role has been subjected to much misperception with the result that potential service users could feel reluctant to seek the learning mentors' help as well as the learning mentors themselves being deployed for tasks not identified as part of mentoring.

The study provides an understanding of the role and impact of the primary school learning mentor based on empirical data which are closely associated with the lived experiences of the participants. This knowledge is valuable in facilitating the most appropriate deployment of the learning mentors by service providers as well as encouraging wider use of this support mechanism by providing service users with the accurate description of the role of these professionals. Further, research outcomes highlight the need for better training, putting in place appropriate recruitment criteria for the learning mentors and providing opportunities for career progression.

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Abbreviations

LM – Learning Mentor

DfE – Department for Education

OFSTED - Office for Standard in Education

ITE – Initial Teacher Education

ITT – Initial Teacher Training

QTS – Qualified Teacher Status

NQT – Newly Qualified Teacher

PGCE – Post-Graduate Certificate in Education

EiC – Excellence in Cities

ECM – Every Child Matters

DfES – Department for Education and Skills

DWP – Department for Work and Pensions

DfEE – Department for Employment and Education

LSU – Learning Support Units

CLC – City Learning Centres

EAZ – Education Action Zones

GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education

LEA – Local Education Authority

ONS – Office for National Statistics

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training

SENCO – Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

TA – Teaching Assistant

NMC – Nursing and Midwifery Council

BERA – British Educational Research Association

UKCC – United Kingdom Central Council

UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

Introduction

This thesis provides an empirical study of the role and impact of learning mentors in primary schools. Learning mentors are professionals employed by schools to support efforts to raise standards by removing barriers to learning which prevented pupils from accessing learning (DfEE, 1999).

The Context

By the late 90s, there were serious apprehensions about low levels of attainment in inner city schools and this gave rise to growing concern about the need to address this situation by raising standards. The Labour Government which came to power in 1997 introduced the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative in 1999 as their flagship programme aimed at raising standards and attainment levels particularly in the inner city schools where problems of socio-economic disadvantage were most severely felt (The Treasury Office, 2003; DfES, 2005). The initiative sought to raise standards and learning outcomes through a number of measures such as setting high expectations for every individual, increasing the diversity of provisions which enabled schools to collaborate as part of a network for extending and enhancing opportunity and equality for pupils (DfEE, 1999). The learning mentor programme was one of several key strands under this programme along with Learning Support Units (LSU), Education Action Zones (EAZ), Gifted and Talented and City Learning Centres (CLC).

There has been a general perception that the EiC initiative has had some success in raising standards in the inner city schools (DfES, 2005). However, when discussing the success/failure of the learning mentor programme, it is important to remember that it was initially intended for and implemented in secondary schools. Therefore, most of the early reports into the impact of this initiative pertain to secondary schools. Department for Education records indicated improvement in standards of schools that implemented the initiative compared to those that did not (DfES, 2005). According to this report, GCSE results for the previous academic year witnessed an improvement of 2.5% in within Local Authorities which implemented the

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programme compared to 1.2% improvement in those authorities which did not (Cruddas, 2005). Actions taken subsequent to this report (DfES, 2004), despite enabling school leaders to allocate resources according to school improvement priorities, highlighted the difference between raising standards and school improvement which according to Cruddas (2005), is a much bigger issue. It is in this context of school improvement where learners are more actively engaged and the school leaders attempt to reduce the gap between highest achieving pupils and lowest achieving pupils (Fullan, 2003) that the role of the learning mentor becomes significant. In 2003, the EiC initiative was followed by the Every Child Matters (ECM) initiative (DfES, 2004) which had implications for the role of the learning mentor. The objective of the ECM was to achieve the five outcomes for all pupils namely, being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being. (DfES, 2004). The aim of ECM was similar to that of the learning mentor initiative namely, to ensure that every child is provided the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Cruddas (2005) was of the opinion that the learning mentors were well placed to help deliver the five outcomes envisioned in the ECM initiative by removing different barriers to learning faced by many pupils.

Significance of the study.

The significance of this study is twofold. Firstly, despite the implementation of the learning mentor programme in a considerable number of primary schools, the role has not been appropriately defined, particularly in the primary school context. Moreover, no major critically evaluative study has been carried out in this area. The majority of existing reports which were sponsored by the Department for Education have dealt with the secondary school sector. However, it is important that indications of disaffection are identified and addressed in early stages particularly in primary schools. However, lack of appropriate definition clearly setting out their role and empirical research and literature based on such research on learning mentors in primary school can inhibit their effective deployment. In order to address this gap in knowledge, this study focuses on the primary school sector.

Secondly, it sets out to provide a detailed analysis of the impact of learning mentors through focusing on a particular locality. A brief look at the characteristics of the locality and population being supported by the learning mentors will shed light on the significance of this study. According to the current data available from Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2014), only 14.9% of the local working age population were recorded as having qualifications of NVQ level 4 or above while 20.1% of working age population had no qualification. Reports also placed this area as one of the worst affected by problems of unemployment in England with nearly 9% of working age population being unemployed in the year 2012-13. ONS data showed that up to the year 2010, 19% of working age population has been dependent on welfare benefits of one type or another. These statistics are indicative of the very low levels of motivation and self-esteem contributing to low levels of attainment where only 51% of pupils were able to secure a GCSE (A*-C).

The above ONS data provides very powerful indicator of not only a very high incidence of barriers to learning generated by various factors, both social and economic, but also the need to put in place appropriate mechanisms to counter these issues. Additionally, this also highlights the importance of and the urgent need for empirical research in this area. The following statistical information relates the implications of this study to the issues confronting the education sector as a whole. Recent statistical data released by the Department for Education (2014) estimated the number of 16-24 year olds, not in education, employment or training (NEET) in England to be approximately 932,000. Although these young people do not form part of the primary school sector, it is also a fact that these young people do not find themselves in such desperate situation overnight as demonstrated by statistical data. For example, Department for Education (2014) statistics showed that in the academic year 2012-13, there were 37,870 fixed term exclusion and 670 permanent exclusion in primary schools alone. Similarly, 6,000 primary school pupils missed more than 56 sessions in a year while 11,490 pupils missed 46 sessions or more and the number of those pupils who missed more than 22 sessions stood at 131,875 up to Autumn term, 2013 (DfE, 2014). Although significantly less when compared to 2009 statistics (DfE, 2014), this is still an unacceptable level of absence.

Furthermore, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (2014) data provides a glimpse of the huge number of children living in out-of-work benefit households.

The implications of these data is that existing provisions have not fully succeeded in addressing various issues of disaffection leading to both permanent and fixed term exclusions as well as school absence. Despite this evident failure on the one hand and suggestions by existing limited literature and other reports about the positive contribution of learning mentor intervention on the other, it is a cause for concern that no substantial, independent empirical research has been carried out in this field. Furthermore, even the existing reports have certain limitations particularly in the area of reliability because of their affiliation to policy makers who could potentially be perceived as being more interested in promoting their interests and agenda than the welfare of the general public. Therefore, as Watts (2001) and Colley (2003) suggested, the possibility of control by policy makers in the tone and purpose of these reports place their objectivity in doubt. In addition, many of these reports do not give detailed attention to important areas including the unique nature of the role of the learning mentors, their training and development as professionals and the impact of mentoring, particularly on the learning outcomes of primary school children. Such drawbacks can have a negative impact on the reliability of these reports. This study intends to a make positive contribution by building on the existing body of knowledge and information about the role and impact of the learning mentors. This research will also explore suitable methods for efficient deployment of the learning mentors for the benefit of pupils affected by barriers to learning.

This study has been modelled on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and explores the role of the learning mentor in removing barriers to learning which prevent children from participating in learning thereby enabling them to realise their full potential. By applying the principles of the ecological systems theory, barriers to learning can be described as those factors in environmental systems within which the child lives and learns, particularly the microsystem which has the potential to inhibit a child's learning and development. For example, it is possible that family - including parents and siblings - or peers can cause a negative

influence on the confidence, attitude and outlook of the child. Cruddas (2005) held that learning mentors are well placed to enable the children to attain the five outcomes enshrined in the ECM policy. Learning mentors as professionals have the mandate to remove such barriers through their close interaction with the affected pupils and other agents such as parents, peers, or teachers. This could include various activities such as guiding, advising, nurturing, supporting, encouraging and guiding. As part of their efforts to provide appropriate support to the mentees, the learning mentor may also be required to interact with a number of other professionals including, head teachers, Special Education Needs Co-Ordinators (SENCO), social workers, counsellors, child protection officers or education welfare officers.

This study explored the role and impact of the learning mentors by answering the following research questions:

1. How do service users and service providers in primary schools in England perceive the role of the learning mentor?
2. How is the work of the learning mentors developed and monitored?
3. What are the perceived impacts of the learning mentor intervention upon the social and educational outcomes of pupils?

The first question examined how the role of the learning mentor has been perceived by service providers, including the primary school learning mentors themselves as well a service users particularly primary school children and their parents/carers. The second research question investigated whether the learning mentor role has been effectively developed and efficiently maintained and monitored, particularly in the area of training and preparation. The goal of the third research question was to examine the perceived impact of the learning mentor intervention on the social and educational outcomes of primary school children.

Background and setting

This study involved 6 different primary schools within a single Local Education Authority (LEA) in England. These schools had implemented the learning mentor

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programme from the early stages of its introduction and therefore were considered most suitable sources of data for the study. Demographically, nearly 96% of the population in the area belong to white ethnic group and the rest comprises of various ethnic groups. The designation of 'highly deprived' is based upon the DWP (2014) data that uses standard definition of poverty (families on less than 60% of median income) and rates of employment and home ownership. This particular locality where the schools were situated was designated as highly deprived with high levels of unemployment, lack of economic development and huge dependence on welfare system.

Based on information gathered during the initial stages of the study it was considered most ideal to conduct a phenomenological case study using an interpretive approach. In order to enhance trustworthiness of the data, a two pronged method of triangulation was employed. Firstly, a multiple method of data collection has been used. While the primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews with the participants, document scrutiny as well as questionnaire survey was used. Although generally questionnaire survey is used during the initial stages of research, in the present case it was used at a later stage to compare the response of participants to selected initial questions. Secondly, the study included multiple types of participants; the learning mentors, mentees, parents of mentees and teachers. This has enabled the study to obtain a diverse perspective on the topic under investigation.

Structure of the thesis

The main purpose of the study is to evaluate the role of the primary school learning mentor. In order to be able to do this a clear understanding of the definition of the concept of mentoring and how mentoring is carried out is necessary. The literature review section which consists of chapters 1, 2 and 3 explores the definition of mentoring by distinguishing it from other forms of support. Chapter 1 examines the distinction between mentoring and other forms of support such as counselling, coaching and apprenticeship which are perceived to be similar but are essentially different to mentoring. Chapter 2 considers the distinction between primary school mentoring and mentoring which as practiced in various adult settings such as

business organisations, healthcare and education with particular focus on initial teacher education which makes considerable use of mentoring to train newly qualified teachers striving for Qualified Teacher Status. Chapter 3 moves further towards arriving at a definition of mentoring within the primary school context by examining the distinction between learning mentors and other professionals such as teachers and those providing additional support to pupils such as teaching assistants.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 deals with the methodological and practical aspects associated with the conduct of this research. Chapter 4 explains the current research as essentially an inductive approach employing qualitative methods. As primary school children were the focus of attention as well as being participants in the research, the ethical issues, particularly in research involving children has also been given detailed attention in this chapter. In addition, the concept of informed consent while conducting research and various issues associated with obtaining children's consent or assent where it is not possible to obtain consent. Chapter 5 explains the reasoning behind the selection of the phenomenological case study method for this study as well as the use of ecological systems theory as the theoretical framework. Identification and selection of sample is one of the most important stages in research and chapter 6 explains the various issues associated with the process and how it applied to the current study. This chapter also deals with semi-structured interview as a method of data collection as well as issues associated with interviewing, particularly young children. Chapter 7 deals with data analysis and explains how thematic analysis has been used to draw out specific themes from the transcribed interview data.

Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11 discuss the findings of the study based on the data collected and analysed. As explained earlier, participants included service providers and service users and these chapters have dealt with the findings from the perspective of various types of participants separately. This section explains how participants' responses indicate that the listening role of the learning mentor is most important in a primary school setting and that they are able to bring about a positive impact on the mentee's life and learning through various stages of support which is ultimately facilitated by their various dispositions. Chapter 11 in particular focuses

on the perceived impact of mentoring on primary school pupils from the perspective of different participants.

Chapters 12, 13 and 14 are dedicated to the discussion of research findings about the perceived role and impact of learning mentors and their implications as far as existing literature is concerned as well as efforts to arrive at a definition of the primary school learning mentors by distinguishing them not only from other forms of mentoring but also from other professional roles within the primary school. The focus of chapter 13 is a concluding discussion on the impact of mentoring on the attitude, behaviour and relationship of the mentees as difficulties associated with obtaining a precise quantitative measurement of the impact of mentoring. Chapter 14 is dedicated to the discussion on the process of training and recruitment of primary school learning mentors particularly in comparison with other professionals within the primary school setting.

Finally, Chapter 15 concludes this thesis by drawing together the implications of the findings with respect to the role and impact of the learning mentors together with recommendations which it is hoped will facilitate more efficient recruitment, training and deployment of primary school learning mentors so that pupils who need their support can draw maximum benefit.

CHAPTER 1

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF MENTORING I. AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPT OF MENTORING AND HOW IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT.

This study is concerned with the role and impact of learning mentors in primary schools in England. Although the term mentor has been widely used in a range of contexts, the role of primary school learning mentor has developed relatively recently. As discussed in the introduction section on pages 1 and 2, the learning mentor role was a new measure which sought to address the low levels of attainment which affected inner city schools. Therefore, in order to understand the characteristics of learning mentors it is appropriate to consider what the term mentor means. 'Mentor' and 'mentoring' are typically associated with achieving a particular task which involves support. For example, media coverage of celebrities and sports personalities often randomly use the term mentor in general conversation without adequate consideration to what the role involves. However, in a professional context a precise definition of what mentoring involves is particularly important.

To be able to evaluate the impact of learning mentors in primary schools three things are necessary. Firstly, it is necessary to define mentoring and distinguish it from other forms of support such as counselling and coaching. This will be the focus of chapter 1. The chapter is divided into five different sections. The first section demonstrates how mentoring is used in different professions related to business and medicine as well as education. The next section explores the origins of mentoring in three different societies. The third section considers how mentoring is used in different professions. Section four considers characteristics of mentoring in order to appreciate what it involves. The final section looks at mentoring as a relationship between individuals and therefore explores in detail various factors that have a significant influence on mentoring outcomes.

Secondly, it is important to recognise how mentoring operates within different contexts and its outcomes. This will be the focus of chapter 2 which looks at

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mentoring in different contexts such as business, healthcare and education. Thirdly, it is necessary to distinguish mentoring in these contexts from primary school mentoring as well as differentiate it from other forms of support within primary school. Chapter three draws out these distinctions leading to a consideration of various issues that need to be investigated in order to arrive at a realistic evaluation of the impact of the role in primary school context.

1. 1) Mentoring: a widely used term.

Mentoring is said to have influenced individuals from diverse backgrounds including entrepreneurs, scientists, sportspersons and prisoners. A simple search on the Internet, for example, offers a glimpse of the frequency and scale of the use of the term 'mentor' especially when referring to individuals who had considerable, positive impact on others' career or achievement (Peer Systems Consulting Group Inc., 2012). The following illustrations of people who have been associated with mentoring either as mentors or mentees will elucidate this. In the field of sports Waldermar de Brito, a renowned Brazilian footballer, was mentor to football legend Pele; famous tennis player Billie Jean King was mentor to Zina Garrison; in the scientific realm Charles Darwin who formulated the theory of evolution was mentored by John Stevens Henslow and in contemporary world of business, Sir Edward Pickering is said to have mentored Rupert Murdoch the media mogul (P.S.C.G.I., 2012). Academics and researchers who have written extensively on mentoring themselves acknowledged the influence of mentors; for example Clutterbuck (2004) says,

"I have been lucky enough to have had a number of mentors ..." (p3).

However, this does not necessarily mean that all the individuals mentioned above had a complete and accurate comprehension of the meaning of the term mentoring.

As well as all the real life mentoring success stories, there is an extensive body of literature (Livinson *et al., 1978;* Phillips-Jones 1982; Daloz, 1983; Kram 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Chao, 1992; Kramzien *et al.,* 1997; Wasburn, 2007) which provides evidence of the breadth and popularity of mentoring. Businesses, universities, schools, and disadvantaged minorities have been influenced by mentoring (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1995). However, as most of the literary works

mentioned above were predominantly in the area of business, one might be drawn to conclude that mentoring is associated only or mainly with success in business and management. At times this outlook is reinforced by the scarcity of literature relating to mentors associated with children's education. However literature, (for example Glover & Mardle, 1996; Anderson and Shannon, 1995; Fletcher, 1998; Colley, 2003 and Clutterbuck, 2004) demonstrates that mentoring has been a vital tool in the English education system since the early 70s, but perhaps with comparatively lesser degree of formality and organisation than today. Besides, when mentoring made its foray into the field of education, its focus was mainly teacher training. This perhaps explains the relative scarcity of literature in the field of mentoring for primary school children.

In order to appreciate the significance of mentoring, it is essential to have a basic understanding of the origin and evolution of the term and concept of mentoring.

1. 2) Origin of the term mentor.

The concept of mentoring and its origins can be found in a range of contexts at different times in distant past. It is appropriate to begin by exploring these before considering its use in the late 20th and 21st centuries. The most familiar reference is the popular mythical character 'Mentor' in Homer's Greek epic poem Odyssey. Traditionally, it is held that the term 'mentor' originated from this popular myth. The theme of the story surrounds Mentor who was appointed by Ulysses, the King of Ithaca, to be a guardian to Telemachus his son while he was away for a long period of time, fighting the Trojan War (Fairbaim & Campbell, 2005). A feature in the story that might have some implication for this research is that in the story the role of Mentor is in fact played by the Goddess Athena. In fact, in the course of later discussions, I shall argue that some aspects of 'who' acts as a mentor has some influence mentoring outcome in general, but as far as the current research and its expected outcome is concerned, what is more crucial and relevant is the role that Mentor played, the way it was executed and the ultimate outcome (Caldwell & Carter, 1993).

Despite having its origins traced back to Greek mythology, the theme/concept of mentoring existed much earlier in history and interestingly has been mentioned in a

number of religious literatures. For example, in the Old Testament of the Bible mentoring can be found in the stories of Moses and Joshua or Elijah and Elisha – holy men and religious leaders. The writings reveal how the more experienced individuals – Moses and Elijah - take particular interest in the training and formation of the less experienced – Joshua and Elisha respectively (Caldwell & Carter, 1993). However, the concept of the leader taking a special interest in and training the follower was not restricted to a particular religion or geographical setting. For example the Bhagavat Gita, the holy book of the Hindu religion with a very different historical and geographical background contains a very good example of the concept of mentoring. The story pivots around Lord Krishna, worshipped by Hindus as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu who is part of the Trinity which is the pinnacle of the hierarchy of Hindu deities and it is Lord Krishna who introduces the concept of mentoring. The occasion is when Arjun, the leading warrior of the Pandavas, one group of the warring cousins, was frustrated and wanted to give up rather than fight his cousins, but Krishna encouraged him to carry on his fight against his cousins, the Kauravas, who were considered embodiment of evil thereby fulfilling his duty rather than fall prey to his emotions (The Bhagavat Gita Trust, 2009).

These examples highlight the existence of the concept of mentoring in the past and this can be helpful in understanding the definition and more importantly the purpose of mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2004). One such element that stands out is time i.e. the fact that the notion of mentoring was not confined to a particular period of time in ancient history - the Old Testament of the Bible was written around 1300-1400 BCE (Burgland, 1999), the Bhagavat Gita is believed to have been scripted about 400 BCE or thereabout (The Bhagavat Gita Trust 2009) and, *Odyssey,* the literary work which gave birth to the term 'mentor' was written much later about the 8th century BCE. Another interesting element is the close association with religion. The Bible, particularly the Old Testament is a religious text interpreted differently by different societies and generations but with common faith contents (Fager, 1988). Both the Bible and Bhagavat Gita are religious literature but with entirely different audience and under different social, historical and geographical settings. Different parts of the Bible such as the Old Testament are accepted in varying degrees of reverence and relevance by Christianity, Judaism and Islam, whereas the Bhagavat Gita is the

religious literature accepted only by the Hindu religion. Thus, most ancient literature which contained reference to the concept of mentoring had some kind of religious background. Similarly, mentor in *Odyssey* has close association with religion because *Mentor* was considered to be the incarnation of the Goddess Athena.

Historical illustrations of mentoring in ancient literature reveal not only diverse contexts under which the concept of mentoring existed and developed but also the different purposes of mentoring in accordance with these contexts. While mentoring depicted in the Biblical context was aimed at the preservation and propagation of faith along with the continuation of the social and religious leadership, Bhagavat Gita proposed resolution of a socio-political conflict -often interpreted as the conflict between good and evil- as its purpose. In Homer's *Odyssey*, on the other hand, mentoring has very little to do with social or religious purpose as in the Bible or Bhagavat Gita but in fact deals with a more narrow and personal purpose which is the development and welfare of an individual, Telemachus. At the same time it must be pointed out that all the above instances of mentoring deal with the growth and development of the individual but in varying degrees. This is an important characteristic and purpose of mentoring that has continued to evolve and hence it would be appropriate to say that mentoring is a concept that permeates and surpasses the boundaries of social, religious and personal philosophies. It goes beyond historical or geographical confines and yet makes it obvious that mentoring does not compartmentalise these contexts but makes them intricately interconnected to achieve the ultimate goal of the complete realisation of the true potential of the individual. It is this welfare of the individual as the purpose of mentoring which will become the focus of this study as it progresses.

1. 3) Characteristics of mentoring.

It is appropriate to begin this enquiry with the question 'who is a mentor'? Although mentoring has existed within diverse contexts in the past and its influence on the contemporary society has been recognised as being extensive, attempts to assign a precise definition to it have proved to be elusive and problematic. Here it is helpful to point that such a situation could possibly have significant influence on the implementation and outcome of mentoring. While Garvey (2010) does not consider

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the accepted lack of consensus regarding definition as necessarily causing any problems, Colley (2003) argued that mentoring is a practice that remains ill-defined, poorly conceptualised and weakly theorised, leading to confusion in policy and practice. The argument of the latter presents a definitive relationship between definition, conceptualisation, formulation and implementation of policies and mentoring practices based on such policies. This has significance particularly in school based mentoring which is the form of mentoring resulting from the gradual movement and adaptation of mentoring from a predominantly business and management perspective. In such movement, it is highly probable for the policies and practices to be vague, corrupted or misguided and therefore failing to achieve the desired outcome.

Traditional understanding suggests that mentoring is some kind of passing on wisdom and guidance and this perception is reflected in the manner in which the term is explained, for example in the English dictionary. Clutterbuck (2004) held the view that such general understanding of the concept is unhelpful and leads to confusion and hence emphasised the need to define mentoring in a precise and definitive manner. Klopf and Harrison (1981) and Clutterbuck (2004) described mentors as 'teachers, advisors, counsellors and sponsors for an associate who may be younger and of the same or different sex'. Phillips-Jones (1982) defined mentors as influential people who significantly help protégés reach their goals in life. Fagan and Walter (1982) on the other hand defined the mentor as an experienced adult who befriends and guides a less experience individual. Daloz (1983) considered a mentor as someone who points the way, offers support and also challenges someone on a journey. Anderson's (1987) definition of mentoring was considered as acceptable by Anderson and Shannon (1995) wherein mentoring was described as a process in which a more skilled or experienced person teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person to promote the latter's personal and/or professional development. This view was shared by Carruthers (1993) who used terms such as 'teacher', 'father figure', 'approachable counsellor', 'encourager', and 'trusted adviser' to define mentor. For Megginson and Garvey (2004), mentoring was a relationship with learning and development as its purpose. Wasburn (2007) defined mentor as anyone who provides guidance, support, knowledge and opportunities.

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Gopee (2008) said that the term mentor signified a person taking time out and making an effort to assist others in their learning, to achieve maturity and establish their identity. In the words of Malderez, mentoring is:

> "...the support given by one person for the growth and learning of another...
> and the.... integration into and acceptance by a specific community..."
> (Malderez, 2001, p57)

These are just a few examples of the numerous attempts that have been made to find an agreed definition of mentoring. However, so far such effort has been without substantial success (Kram, 1983; Anderson and Shannon, 1995; Clutterbuck, 2004; Cruddas, 2005; Haggard *et al.*, 2011). This concern regarding the lack of consensus in relation to definition was recognised among others by Roberts (2000) who asserted that there was generally a lack of consensus as to what constitutes mentoring. Further, Hempel (1952), Armitage & Burnard (1991) and Haggard *et al.* (2011), stressed the need for an agreed definition by arguing that we cannot enter into a discussion about something unless we know and agree on what we are talking about.

If it is of such significance, why has an agreed definition proved so elusive? And why is it that mentoring means one thing in the business environment, another in healthcare and something else in education, particularly in the context of school children? A possible response can be traced to the view held by Garvey and Alred (2001), that mentoring is 'versatile and complex'. Thus, a probable reason for the numerous definitions and the resultant confusion may well be because of the wide range of activities that mentoring may involve; the fact that it occurs in response to a need and hence is very much depends upon *why* it is being used, *where* it is being used and for *whom* it is being used i.e. the purpose, expectations and context (Clutterbuck, 2004). In other words, it could be said that various definitions of mentoring came about as a result of different people attempting to explain mentoring and certain activities associated with it which arose within different contexts, stages and environments of human life - education, employment or relationship. The following paragraphs are an overview of the commonalities and differences of these elements which could influence the definition of mentoring.

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Although there is diversity in the definitions of mentoring, certain commonalities in elements and characteristics can be found within them. For example Fletcher (2000) pointed out 'personal interaction' as a significant common element of mentoring. Therefore, although practically all definitions of mentoring may differ peripherally, in essence they all highlight one principle – the personal and professional development of the mentee or the protégé[1]. Another common characteristic as implied in most definitions is the better knowledge or experience possessed by the mentor which provides the ability to act as a role model for the mentee to emulate. Mentoring in such instance is practiced through activities characterised by **teaching, nurturing, supporting, and encouraging** (Anderson and Shannon, 1995). Such activities are underpinned by an ongoing caring and supporting personal relationship. Similarly, this is also indicative of the goal and direction in which mentoring should move – that is the realisation of the full potential of the mentee. It is also a significant fact that despite differences all these activities are intricately interconnected and together constitute the process of mentoring.

At the same time, the manner in which definitions of mentoring are interpreted may significantly influence mentoring outcomes as Colley (2003) held, interpretation and implementation are closely related. Therefore, if wrongly interpreted, certain definitions of mentoring such as the one attributed to Malderez (2001) might appear contradictory in themselves, a paradox or in conflict with the stated goal of mentoring which is realisation of the full potential of the individual. In other words, on the one hand it stated that mentoring supported the learner in the process of learning, but another part of the same definition, portrays mentoring as restrictive - as an attempt, compelling and persuading the individual to conform to the norms of a specific community. This can be construed as conformist rather than assistive in as much as it is coercing the individual to live and act in a certain manner and not according to his abilities and potential. On the other hand, this can be interpreted as a response to the particular need of an individual for assistance in social skills. The same definition reinforces the purpose of mentoring as mentioned above because it is assistive and not a tool to create an individual conforming to a presupposed disposition.

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[1] Protégé is a term synonymous with mentee and comes from the French word which means 'to protect' and thus points to the role of the mentor as someone who protects and cares for.

It is evident that mentoring involves a wide spectrum of supporting activities, both learning and behavioural and might include advising and guiding or simply 'being there' (Clutterbuck, 2004). According to writers, such as Clutterbuck, who have extensively researched mentoring, it is the holistic nature which distinguishes mentoring from other similar supporting activities. This explains the need for mentoring to be distinguished from other supporting activities such as coaching, counselling and apprenticeship. The literature, as mentioned above, suggests that there are dimensions of mentoring which are interrelated but at the same time possess characteristics which enable them to stand on their own. For instance the dimensions of teaching, nurturing, supporting and encouraging, when viewed separately can contribute to boosting of confidence and self-esteem of an individual (Livinson *et al.*, 1978). However, when these activities take place as part of a single, systematic process they constitute the characteristics of effective mentoring. This concept of the convergence of various supporting activities effectively creating the single holistic process of mentoring as expressed by Kerry and Mayes (1995) and others can be represented in the following diagram.

Major aspects of the mentoring role as identified within the literature

Figure 1.1

In order to arrive at a clearer definition of mentoring we can examine each of these four elements in turn and discuss how they relate to each other.

Tomlinson (1995) held that teaching was a purposeful social interaction. Teaching is explained not through a singular definition but as a process using a wide variety of terms and forms (Tomlinson, 1995). It is accepted that the concept of teaching implies an individual or group of individuals possessing enhanced or more extensive knowledge and experience and passing it on to others through a process of modelling, confirming and questioning (Tomlinson, 1995). However, this does not mean merely transferring a precise form of knowledge to another individual or group but a multifaceted process which combines a number of aspects and activities. Here, I would agree with Tomlinson (1995) that teaching is activity designed to promote learning. Some of the terms used to define and explain teaching are educate, enlighten, train, inculcate, interpret, admonish, communicate, impart, instil, inform, propagate, infuse etc. (Geddes & Grosset, 2007). It can be said that there is some element of teaching involved in mentoring as it is considered an activity aimed at promoting learning. As the profession of teaching developed and evolved, it became more precise and teachers often specialised in teaching only a particular subject. However, to certain extent even in such narrow and intensely subject specific teaching involved the above mentioned aspects in some form or another. However, this raises the question as to how to distinguish the role of the teacher from that of a learning mentor in schools. In as far as the learning mentor assists the child in accessing curriculum and learning, it can be said that the mentor is engaged in a teaching role. This is not comparable however, with the role of the class room teacher whose mandate and authority is much more precise and definitive in relation to the school, curriculum and classroom. Hence, the teaching role of the learning mentor is limited to assisting the child to participate in the learning process over which the teacher has the direction and control.

The concept of nurturing implies discovering and recognising the abilities and talents of the mentee and providing appropriate activities to induce growth and finally

produce the desired results. This requires more than just knowledge in general or in a specific subject, or the ability to transfer that knowledge to others (Anderson and Shannon, 1995). Recognising talents and abilities also implies recognising the weaknesses and special needs and therefore involves not only imparting knowledge, but also ensuring the wholesome development of the mentee. Another aspect of mentoring that has found mention is sponsoring and it is a theme that frequently recurs in mentoring programmes within the executive realm such as in a large business enterprise or entrepreneurial entities where the mentor acts as a guarantor or godfather to the mentee thereby creating further and better opportunity for growth to the mentee (Phillips-Jones, 1982, Dodgson, 1986; Anderson and Shannon, 1995). One of the most common examples of sponsoring can be found in political organisations where leaders and the powerful endorse certain individuals. Whether in business, social or political territory, the main reason for sponsoring a mentee could be smooth transfer/retention of power or control over the organisation/enterprise or political authority while safeguarding the interests of that particular group (Anderson and Shannon, 1995).

Encouraging implies confirming and inspiring and at times even challenging the mentees to get involved in activities inducing growth (Anderson and Shannon, 1995). At times it is the affirmation of the positive and at other times egging the mentee on to deal with certain negative or uncomfortable issues. Affirmation can be of either personality – affirm mentees for who they are, or affirm their activity or work - in the positive direction. Encouraging does mean supporting an ongoing activity, but it also involves motivation to take on certain challenges too. In this sense, encouraging is closely associated with counselling which involves listening, assistance with the problem solving process, clarifying and advising (Anderson and Shannon, 1995). However, counselling has developed into a profession with its own sphere and realm. This similarities and contrasts are discussed in more detail in section 1.4 of this chapter.

According to Megginson and Clutterbuck (1995), mentoring is providing support in significant transitions. This is in concurrence with the view of Cruddas (2005) who said, "... it is about supporting and guiding children and young people to move in the

direction of personal growth" (p 78). Anderson and Shannon (1995) held that supporting also implied befriending which in turn implied accepting and relating to. In mentoring, the mentor accepts the mentee and relates to the person and in doing so conveys to the mentee that they are being understood and supported. This process necessitates communication and befriending.

Such explanations imply an ongoing, personal relationship which can be distinguished from the relationship the mentor has with other colleagues or contemporaries of the mentee and this indicates the mentor accepting and a making a conscious attempt to relate to the mentee. The mentor also acts as a role model for the mentee to emulate. Caldwell and Carter (1993) consider parents as a very good example of mentors. They are of the view that few parents may be perfect, but all parents are good enough to set their children out on life's journey with confidence. However, some writers like Dodgson (1986) have attempted to differentiate between career mentors and life mentors arguing that as the term suggests, career mentors have an interest in the career progression of their protégés while life mentors have an interest in the career and life development of their protégés. For the purpose of this study, the concept of life mentor is more ideal as mentoring is an activity undertaken to bring about the development of the whole 'person' of the mentee rather than mere academic achievement alone.

1. 4) How far is mentoring distinctive from other forms of support?

Earlier on in this chapter, different forms of support which are similar to but not identical to mentoring were mentioned. These are different methods and roles which aid the growth and development of knowledge and expertise in various aspects and stages of life and learning. All of these roles provide support for individual or group development. In order to fully appreciate the role of a mentor it is necessary to go beyond definitions of mentoring towards comparisons and distinctions with other roles which provided support for example, *coaching* and *counselling*. In order to define mentoring in the most precise manner possible, it is necessary to consider how it can be distinguished from the other supporting roles.

The term 'coaching' is frequently associated with improvement in performance (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1995) and very often and commonly associated with competitive activities especially sports and athletics such as swimming, sprint / race, tennis, gymnastics etc. or team activities such as football, rugby or cricket. This idea is reflected in Whitmore's (1996) definition of coaching as unlocking the potential to maximise performance. Coaching, according to Clutterbuck (2009), is a directive means of helping to achieve competence. He considers it 'directive' because the coach is 'in charge' and decides the course the process takes. The goals are pre-set and it is often carried out by the coach or a third party. For him the coach is a critical friend who can either challenge the coached or guide by demonstrating to the coached. The result of coaching is evaluated through a performance review with a particular task in view. It is also short term based, i.e., till the coached achieved the prefixed or agreed degree of competence. According to Krazmien and Berger (1997), who researched the hospitality industry, coaching is of vital importance for the development of employees with the best capabilities. However, there is a distinction between coaching and mentoring. Coaching by common understanding focuses on a particular activity or a specific aspect of an activity. Anyone coaching a football team is less concerned about the academic achievement of the player than his ability to control the ball and score goals during a game. The concern of coaching is to perfect a particular ability of an individual or a group and every activity is directed towards the attainment of that perfection. This also implies the involvement of a greater degree of physical activity. On the other hand, mentoring as understood from the various definitions (Phillips-Jones, 1982; Daloz, 1983; Anderson, 1987; Carruthers, 1993; Fagan & Walter, 1982 and Kram, 1983) discussed earlier is concerned with the multifaceted development of the mentee but would involve much less physical activity compared to coaching. Mentoring involves the entire personality of the mentee, not his / her ability to kick the ball into a goalpost. This also indicates the requirement for the coach to have extensive knowledge and expertise in the activity, game or sport that he coaches in. It would be practically impossible for a swimming coach to effectively and successfully coach a cricket team. However, it can be seen from the definitions of mentor that it is possible for someone without extensive knowledge in a particular field to be a mentor.

Although the origin of counselling is not strictly determinable, Coles (2003) held that it was as old as the history of work itself. Feltham (1997) considered counselling to be helping people to discover better ways of dealing with problems. Definition of counselling given by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) called it an engagement whereby a person agrees to give another, time, attention and respect, temporarily in the role of client, thereby providing an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more resourcefully and greater wellbeing (BACP, 2002). This indicates that it is a non-directive intervention. Kerry and Mayes (1995) refer to counselling as a problem solving process because it is helping someone cope and make decisions sometimes by just listening, allowing the counselled to make the decision and take responsibility for the same. Counselling provides an opportunity for a better understanding of him/her self (Coles, 2003). Mentoring differs from both counselling and coaching in many ways. Its concern goes beyond a particular task and focuses on the potential of the mentee in a holistic manner. Unlike the coach, the mentor lets the mentee set the goal / agenda and also, there is no formal evaluation, but the result is decided by the reflection and conduct of the mentee. An evaluation of these views brings out the concept that a mentor is someone who has the skills and ability to be a coach and a counsellor depending on the need of the mentee and the situation they are attempting to deal with. Another major difference between mentoring and counselling is the fact that mentoring is an intervention – often preventive – in the sense that it attempts to avoid the occurrence of a situation while counselling can be perceived as more of a cure or remedial measure aimed at assisting the counselled to overcome often mental status such as depression, stress, addiction or bereavement.

A comparison between mentoring and apprenticeship in fact becomes the study of two very different approaches towards providing support. The general understanding of apprenticeship is 'learn at work', or learning through observation followed by performance. Such programmes are perceived as being able to meet the needs of the learner, contribute towards the growth of the organisation and provide the learners with a recognised qualification (Ainley & Rainbird, 2014; Fuller & Unwin, 2014). This is in complete harmony with the Medieval or early modern understanding and practice of apprenticeship where apprentices (generally male) entered into an agreement

usually through their parents or guardians for a particular period of time (normally between 5 and 9 years) and upon payment of a premium to the employer (Aldrich, 1999). Although apprenticeship was initially voluntary, towards the 14th century, it was made mandatory for manual as well as professional pursuits. The concept has developed and grown in the following period until the present day, and is practiced, though not mandatorily, but for its various benefits, especially in professions such as medicine and law (Aldrich, 1999). Besides, the financial implications have had a complete turnaround whereby apprentices today are paid wages (Gov.uk, 2014). A wide range industries and professions have been included in the apprenticeship initiative in recent times (Gov.uk, 2014). Besides, certain parts of apprenticeship training under the current system are done at a local college or other partner educational institutions. Apprenticeship has been given a boost by the attempts of the government to reduce expenditure and at the same time encourage further learning. This has given rise to the notion of Work-Based Learning (WBL) especially in the post-secondary education scenario in England (Boud et al., 2003). However, the situation has been subjected to criticism due to its abuse by certain elements in the business sector whereby apprentices have been subjected to exploitation, for example by paying them less the stipulated minimum wage (Trade Union Congress, 2013).

The question is whether mentoring and apprenticeship are comparable and the reasons for the same. Boud et al. (2003) pointed out an interesting fact – that apprentices were not necessarily always the employees of the master, but of external agencies or have contractual relationship with external agencies. Apprentices can either self-select to undergo the programme or can be nominated by the parent organisation which employs the apprentice. Further, there is a difference in the ultimate goal of mentoring and apprenticeship – the former has the all-round development of the individual as its goal, while much similar to coaching, apprenticeship is aimed at perfecting a particular ability / qualification/profession of the individual. A close scrutiny will reveal the significance of this fact - that the goal of apprenticeship may not always be the personal growth and development of the individual's capability and self-realisation, but optimum qualification and utilisation of the individual to maximise the success of the organisation. This is much more removed from

mentoring which has the individual as the centre and purpose of all its activity and outcome.

This fact combined with the legal and legislative requirements and controls placed on apprenticeship such as the number of apprentices a master could have, the minimum and maximum period of time involved and remuneration and financial implication involved along with the purpose of apprenticeship quite sufficiently differentiates it from mentoring. However, taking into consideration the definitions, ideas and concepts of both mentoring and apprenticeship, it is quite right to say that there is an aspect of mentoring in apprenticeship because, the master strives to ensure the formation and qualification of the apprentice which involves teaching the trade, nurturing the qualities required for the same, counselling to ensure a smooth atmosphere and period of training and encouraging the apprentice to achieve the goal. Hence, it can be argued that mentoring and apprenticeship are not interchangeable terms, but two different concepts, with distinctive features and empirical background, at the same time depending on the circumstances, complementing each other. Therefore, mentoring can be considered one of the mechanisms and interventions to ensure the success of apprenticeship.

Another aspect that deserves attention is the master – apprentice relationship. Unlike the mentor-mentee relationship, the former is strictly based on the terms of the contract and payment of premium by apprentice or those responsible for him/her (Aldrich, 1999) whereas particularly in adult mentoring, remuneration by the mentee is not a condition or prerequisite and the same would have very little or no influence on the process and outcome of mentoring. Similarly, the mentor-mentee relationship evolves into a much more personal relationship whereas master-apprentice relationship is very rarely removed from the professional relationship whereby the future of the apprentice is often very strongly influenced by the master's opinion and feedback.

The similarities and differences between mentoring and other forms of support as discussed can be represented in a continuum as below:

Coaching   Apprenticeship   Mentoring   Counselling

Figure 1.2.

Mentoring as displayed in figure 1.2 can be viewed as one of the forms of support which exists in a spectrum or band but at the same time is distinctive and different from other forms of support such as coaching and counselling and apprenticeship. It can be derived from the preceding discussion that mentoring is distinct from other forms of support but at the same time contains some aspects of the other forms of support in varying degrees; the nature of counselling being closest to that of mentoring and that of coaching being farthest from it.

1. 5) The mentor-mentee relationship and its implications for the effectiveness of mentoring.

The core of mentoring is a relationship which is development oriented (Westlander, 2009). Darling *et al.* (2006) held that mentoring is a movement that endeavours to foster relationships that promote positive developmental trajectories. A key factor that wields considerable influence on mentoring outcome is the mentor-mentee relationship and it is important to highlight this significance (Rhodes *et al.*, 2000, Dubois *et al.*, 2002). Although 'Mentor' in *Odyssey* is portrayed as inducing significant and positive impact on mentees, this does not need to be necessarily true at all times. In fact, reality could be much different. Mentoring, being basically a relationship between two individuals, could in fact experience low points at some time or other, though not intentionally (Scandura, 1998). Rhodes *et al.* (2000) through their studies established the improvement in value, self-respect and attainment which resulted from mentoring. This relationship may be viewed as a learning partnership between two individuals.

Livinson *et al.* (1978) considered the mentor – mentee relationship as one of the most complex of human relationships and said that the role of mentor is to encourage the

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mentee to pursue his/her dream. As mentioned earlier, this relationship can be controlled by the mentee or the organisation to which the mentee belongs or the organisation which provides the facility. As in most human relationships, the freedom of choice play an important role in ensuring the success of the intervention and the wrong pairing could produce extremely negative if not completely opposite of the desired result. If the mentee is allowed to choose their mentor, there could be a number of factors which influence this choice such as the mentee's situation or position at the time of making the choice, the experience and knowledge of the mentor with regard to the area of mentoring and in comparison to the mentee's own experience, the age of the mentor vis-a-vis that of the mentee, and the gender of the mentor and mentee. Daloz (1999) pointed out that this choice is influenced by the purpose of mentoring arising at different times, the prevailing circumstances and the knowledge and understanding displayed by mentor. The importance of the compatibility of mentor and mentee was emphasised by Fletcher (1998) and Hale (2000). It is extremely important to recognise the delicate balance of the mentor-mentee relationship and it is this consideration that led them to emphasise the fact that wrong pairing of mentor and mentee can be stressful and at times disastrous for the mentor as well as mentee. Instead of assisting development, it can create resentment, suspicion and can fuel disaffection and as Armstrong et al. (2002) stressed the negative impact of forced pairing on the outcome of the mentoring process can be significant. Not only that, it is against the true spirit of the purpose of mentoring which should be aimed at assisting the development of the individual and eventual attainment of independence and realisation of the full potential. This is particularly significant in a situation where the mentor-mentee matching is primarily carried out on the basis of the needs of the organisation rather than the individual, especially when the experience and expertise of the mentor is given preference over the needs and abilities of the mentee.

Keeping in mind the fact that in an organisational setting, the mentors are selected on the basis of skill and knowledge, there could be a clash of personality and individual traits which could ultimately lead to negative impact or even failure of the process of mentoring. On the other hand, if mentee is given the freedom to choose the mentor, a successful personal rapport might be established, but failure to give equal weight to

competence in knowledge and skill, this could adversely affect the outcome of mentoring. Besides, in the case of informal mentoring, it could be the responsibility of the mentee to search for a mentor, and this could prove to be not an easy task. Carruthers (1993) compares mentor-mentee relationship to marriage where he argued that much like in a marriage, discontent and differences can make mentoring relationship a continuous conflict or at best carry on grudgingly, without any purpose or effect. Although initial claims suggested that informal mentoring was more beneficial (Ragins & Cotton, 1999), later researchers (Cotton, Ragins & Miller, 2000) have argued that it cannot be definitively established that formal mentoring is either inferior or less beneficial than informal mentoring

Firstly, Cox (2005) argues that the background of the mentor and mentee may influence the effectiveness of their relationship. For example, it is possible that a mentee from a rural setting might find it difficult to relate to and accept the personality, view and methods of a mentor from an urban background and vice versa. If the mentor is from a similar background as the mentee, it will be easier for the mentor to better understand the issues affecting the mentee and offer solutions. Therefore, if the choice of mentee is limited in this respect, it can have an adverse effect on the outcome. Some studies (eg. Hirsch, Mickus & Boerger, 2002) have indicated that culture, race and ethnicity which is another aspect of the background factor can influence not only the composition of the mentoring dyad, but also its outcome to a significant extent. In the above mentioned study, significant variations in mentoring relationship between male and female both white and black with black females with more ties to significant adults were reported. Similarly, cultural contexts can have significant influence on the formation and outcome of mentoring. For example in societies strongly controlled by cultural norms such as Islamic culture where restrictions can be placed around the formation of mentoring relationship between male and female or the U.S. cultural context, where despite advancements, cultural relationship between blacks and whites may still be influenced by the prejudices of the past (Steele, 1997; Cohen, Steele & Ross, 1999; Knouse & Dansby, 1999; Darling *et al.*, 2006). On the other hand, some studies (Dreher & Cox, 1996; Steinberg & Foley 1999) suggested that racial and ethnic differences do not have massive impact on mentoring relationship.

Secondly, the personality of the mentor and mentee may prove significant. To a large extent, relationship of professionals such as doctors, lawyers or engineers with their clients are not governed and controlled by their personal qualities, but by their expertise (Cox, 2005). However, in the case of mentoring this may not be applicable, for personality plays a significant role in the outcome of mentoring – for mentor and mentee. A mentor should not be considered a repository of all remedies but a source of support, where there are opportunities for learning, growth and development for the mentor too.

Thirdly, gender has the potential to affect the relationship between mentor and mentee. Carruthers (1993) argued that the unequal balance of power between male and female in organisational structures could mean that male mentors might outnumber female mentors. Several studies (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Hurley & Fagenson, 1996) also reported that men were more likely to have mentors than women. It is also not rare that mentor-mentee relationship develops into the realm of more intense personal relationship such as romantic or sexual relationship. Phillips-Jones (1982) in her study on mentors suggested the possibility of this occurrence. This factor, however, is subject to professional and moral ethics and other legal implication such as consent and coercion. Acknowledging the fact that mentees could be coerced into such developments, Livinson *et al.* (1978) calls those who use mentoring to gain sexual favours as fraudulent mentors. In view of the above implications, Phillips-Jones (1982) stated that mixed gender relationship should keep the male-female dynamics in mind to derive the best outcomes and the relationship steers clear of undesirable consequences. The above opinions are evidence that the sexual composition of mentor – mentee relation can greatly influence the outcome of mentoring.

This might be true in the adult world of mentoring particularly due to the fact that legally and morally adults are capable of making their own decisions and hence the aspect of consent is involved. However, moving on to the realm of mentoring in schools, particularly in primary schools this becomes an issue of great concern. Among various reasons is the fact that children at these ages are not considered

capable of giving consent and any activity with a sexual connotation not only becomes improper, predatory and hence absolutely unacceptable but also becomes a legal issue and moves into the realm of criminal matter with the non-negotiable incentive of prison life.

Fourthly, age is another factor which is perceived as influencing mentor-mentee relationship. The majority of definitions imply that in general, the mentor is older than mentee, though there could be exceptions where seniority in experience might come into play. For example, a younger executive might be selected to be a mentor to an older (in age), but new recruit. This might be done in consideration of the experience and expertise of the younger executive in a particular field. This might occur especially in large and well established organisations. However, as Carruthers (1993) held, mentoring implies a difference in the degree of knowledge, experience, learning and expertise of mentor and mentee and the mentor usually acquires this as a result of involvement over a longer period of time, but not exclusively due to seniority in 'age'.

It is clear from the above discussion that balance of power is an important factor in mentor-mentee relationship due to various factors such as gender, age and seniority in profession. However, within the school context, it becomes altogether a different story particularly due to the significant gap in the power and authority of the mentor and mentee. Traditionally in schools, adults such as teachers are perceived as holding position of power and authority (Read, 2008; Haynes, 2008; Montesano Montessori, &Ponte, 2012). Understandably, adults who have the responsibility for managing classes of children and imparting knowledge are in a position of perceived authority over their pupils. The manner in which these adults use their authority does of course vary. It is at this stage of their learning that children often begin to understand the way that power is allocated and used. Learning mentors are seen as being part of an institution which is guided and supervised by individuals who are perceived to be holding authority. Therefore, they occupy a position of power and trust in a similar way to teachers in the school but possibly with less authority than may be assumed for teachers. Any sign of misuse of power and authority by a learning mentor can have serious and adverse repercussions on mentoring outcomes especially as children

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are more vulnerable to the imbalance of power. (Pawelczyk, Pakuła & Sunderland, 2014; Wong, 2014; Oxford, 2014; Rogers, 2015)

Fifthly, negative mentoring can prove to be a serious issue. Although most research has focused on the positive aspect of mentoring as a constant success story and relatively small quantity of research has been carried out on the negative aspect of mentoring (Burk & Eby, 2010). Experience have evidenced that some results of negative mentoring are less learning, lower psychological and career support, depression and withdrawal – both career and psychological and lower job satisfaction (Eby & McManus, 2004). This can impact on the mentor as well as mentee. In fact, negative mentoring can have much more disastrous effect than having no mentoring at all. Research carried out by Cotton, Ragins, and Miller (2000) supports the suggestion that protégés with no mentoring produced better results compared to protégés embroiled in a negative and dissatisfying mentoring relationship. Scandura (1998) defines negative mentoring in terms of dysfunctional outcomes while Eby *et al.*, (2000) defines it in terms of negative mentoring experience. Scandura (1998) identifies four categories of negative mentoring namely negative relations, sabotage, difficulty and spoiling. They are of the view that absence of malice on the part of mentor or mentee does not guarantee a trouble free mentoring process or positive results. Similarly, their research found that half the number of people participating had encountered negative mentoring at some point, even though the final outcome of mentoring was positive. Another aspect that Cotton *et al.* (2000) and Scandura (1998) attempted to draw attention to was the freedom to leave the mentoring dyad. In a normal human relationship, if there is serious disagreement, either party has the freedom to leave, but might decide to cling on for various reasons. In a similar fashion, a mentee might decide against leaving due to the dilemma in facing the risks involved. These could be speculative that the situation would change for the better, the fear of retaliation from the mentor or perceived lack of alternatives.

The purpose of this study is to effectively understand the role of the learning mentor and the impact of mentoring on primary school pupils. The preceding discussion looked at the origin of the concept and different aspects which collectively constitute mentoring. In order to be able to better understand the role, various other similar

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forms of support were distinguished from mentoring and various factors which influenced the impact of mentoring were discussed in detail. However, keeping in mind the focus of the study, the next chapter will consider mentoring in different contexts such as business and healthcare and draw out the similarities and differences between them. This section will also investigate how the concept of mentoring was introduced into the education sector as a whole and finally its introduction into the primary school context.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF MENTORING II. DISTINGUISHING LEARNING MENTORS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FROM MENTORS IN ADULT SETTINGS.

The previous chapter considered in some detail different aspects of mentoring and highlighted the difference between mentoring and other forms of support such as coaching, counselling and apprenticeship. This discussion highlighted the viewpoint that, to a certain extent definition of mentoring is dependent on factors such as purpose, location, culture and recipients of mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2004). However, mentoring is undertaken in a number of settings including healthcare, business and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) for example. In order to arrive at an understanding of the role of the learning mentor, it is necessary to identify the common features if any, this role has with the other forms of mentoring. This chapter seeks to consider how mentoring is organised in healthcare, business and ITE before distinguishing the role of learning mentor. In the absence of a clear definition of primary school learning mentor, this will hopefully provide an appropriate means of understanding the concept of mentoring in a primary school context.

2. 1) Mentoring in Business Organisations.

In a business context, mentoring supports the development of the organisation itself or its personnel which include mentees and mentors. The most important purpose of mentoring in business organisations is to further the mentee's career and to develop executive and managerial talent within the organisation (Clutterbuck, 2004). Some studies (Baugh, Lankau, & Scandura, 1996; Fagenson, 1989; Scandura, 1992) have shown a positive link between mentoring, career expectations and career promotion. Kram & Isabella (1985) and Ragins (1997) further argued that it was not uncommon for mentors to nominate their mentees for promotion and career advancement within an organisation. This could be motivated by an ambition to gain or retain control and/or ownership of an establishment through the individuals or groups which they favour. However, career progression is not the only objective of mentoring in reputed

organisations. For example the International Labour Organisation resorted to mentoring as an instrument to provide ongoing support to employees constantly undertaking fieldwork and therefore lacks an office environment and associated support on a regular basis, (Clutterbuck, 2004 P. 4). Initiating new employees into the organisation or new department is another sector that has witnessed an extensive deployment of mentoring. In such instances mentoring is set up as a system for training new or less experienced employees. However, career progression of the mentee or growth of the business may not necessarily be the reason behind mentoring programmes. McMahon (1993) pointed out occasions where executives and supervisors have become mentors not as part of an established system, policy, plan or requirement on the part of the organisation but voluntarily as an arrangement for their own personal development. In such cases, the mentor's own choice and decision rather than business sponsored programme becomes the reason and motive behind mentoring relationships. Whether sponsored or voluntary, the expert and novice relationship in adult mentoring can have the twin benefits of the progression of the individual as discussed above along with further and smoother development of the business/organisation itself. Besides, it is only natural that under normal circumstances, better performance by the personnel will be translated into development of the organisation itself. Mentoring in business provides a context where the immediate line manager can be the mentor. This supports the initiation of the mentee into the organisation and facilitates career progression of the mentor, as well as the growth and development of the organisation itself. (Megginson, 2006; Fletcher, 2000)

2. 2) Mentoring in Healthcare

Healthcare is one of the sectors where mentoring has been actively and effectively implemented. The following consideration will focus on mentoring nurses and midwives within the healthcare sector. The basic purpose of mentoring programmes in the nursing sector is to enable the smooth transition of individuals from theoretical knowledge obtained as a student to practical experience as a provider of health care to patients (Kitchin, 1993). According to Kinnel and Hughes (2010), in healthcare there is a very strong relationship between theoretical knowledge and its application. They

argue that mentoring enables   the transfer of knowledge skills and attitude from experienced healthcare professionals from themselves to students.

Gopee (2008) looked at how mentoring has emerged in healthcare in response to policy change. In the 1980s and 1990s, nurse education was moved into the higher education sector. Investigations carried out in response to a study highlighted deficiencies in the clinical skills of newly qualified practitioners (UKCC, 1999) ultimately leading to provision of competent and clinically based mentors who assisted the students to acquire the skills necessary to become 'fit for practice'.

The mentors share their knowledge with the mentees and guide them in the process of putting this knowledge into practice. It is important to note that the concept and practice of mentoring in healthcare in England are regulated and monitored by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC, 2008). The NMC has prescribed qualifications and predispositions which an individual must possess to become a mentor, for example, a certain minimum period of practical experience, aptitude and willingness to share their knowledge and appreciate the additional demands associated with being a mentor, which is more formally defined than is typically the case in business organisations. The guidelines for mentoring set out by the NMC reflect the need to continually maintain certain standards of mentoring to ensure maximum benefit. According to these guidelines, to be effective and successful, the mentor and mentee should be able to establish an effective working relationship which generates the possibility and opportunity to facilitate learning, assessment and accountability. Further, there should be evaluation of such learning to ensure that mentoring strives to create an environment for learning and evidence based practice. At the same time the mentor should also be able to display adequate leadership.

Gopee (2008) has given due consideration to the value of mentoring for the mentee based on the opinion of student healthcare professionals. Some of the reasons mentioned by the students are guidance and support, constructive feedback, as a friend, to answer questions that might arise, to build confidence, to share experience and link theory to practice. This emphasised view that the ultimate aim of mentoring in healthcare is to prepare future practitioners with knowledge – theoretical and

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practical – to ensure availability of the best health care for patients. Further investigation to establish the extent to which this impacts on the personal development and fulfilment of the individual is indicated. What makes mentoring distinctive is that it relates to guidance, support, encouragement and constructive challenge.

At this point it is appropriate to understand that healthcare is not the only caring profession which has made use of mentoring. For example, during the late 1990s, The Prince's Trust and the Camelot Foundation in England had set up mentoring systems for those vulnerable individuals leaving care in order to provide them an additional source of support during their transition from care to independence (Clayden and Stein, 2005).

2. 3) Mentoring in Education

These considerations have provided a broad understanding of the rationale, process and implications of mentoring in two different adult specific contexts. Having considered these different contexts, it would be appropriate to look at mentoring within an education specific context for two reasons; firstly it is essential to determine if and to what extent rationale and purpose in the above contexts are applicable to mentoring in education and secondly, taking into account the absence of any universally accepted definition of mentoring and for primary school pupils in particular an evaluation of this sort will act as a stepping stone or common denominator making it easier to understand and evaluate the latter by drawing a parallel between the two. This can be achieved by analysing the circumstances and process which ultimately made mentoring an integral part of initial teacher training it is today.

Although at present mentoring is an integral part of initial teacher training, this was not necessarily the case in the past. The question is how did the change occur and what were the reasons that lead to such change? In the 1960s, there was a rapid growth in the demand for teachers and in order to meet this demand the number of institutions which provided teacher training also witnessed a corresponding increase (Furlong & Maynard, 1995). However, according to them by 1970 the boom in

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demand for teachers ended and the focus gradually shifted to the exaggerated emphasis on academic and theoretical aspect as well as lack of importance given to the practical aspect in initial teacher training (Evans, 1971; Ross & McNamara 1982; Gillard, 2011). Such shift in focus demonstrated indications of a desire and intention to create a better balance between the two as McNamara and Desforges (1978) said,

> "... the time is ripe for the abandonment of the disciplines of education, the effective amalgamation of educational theory and practice and the development of the teaching of professional studies as an academically rigorous, practically useful and scientifically productive activity" (p.2).

According to Bell (1981) many of the developments that ensued prompted the authorities to control, regulate and streamline initial teacher training. This intervention grew to such an extent where even the classroom activity of the teacher began to be directed and regulated by the state (Gardner, 1993).

According to Furlong and Maynard (1995), such interventions by the state had several implications for teacher training and mentoring particularly within initial teacher training. *Firstly*, they pointed out that there was an increase in the amount of time spent in schools as part of initial teacher training to nearly 66 percent of overall course time. Although previously teacher training was dominated by higher education institutions (Tomlinson, 1995), later legislation and policy statements (DES, 198;, DES, 1989; DFE, 2010) have strived to ensure that it was delivered through a partnership between institutions of higher education and schools thereby ensuring that planning and preparation of the curricula was carried out in line with state sponsored policy (Cross, 1995).

Secondly, the new initiatives were indicative of the state's intention and resolve to regulate and streamline training and preparation of teachers and in the process move it out of the perceived excessively theoretical domain of colleges of education and higher education institutions into the more practical experience based environment that existed within schools and real classrooms. In their view, the above movement appeared to indicate that training was a process of achieving certain predetermined

competences. The curriculum for teacher training courses were influenced by and aligned towards attainment of these competences.

Thirdly, this indicated the fact that participating schools played a significant role not only in the process and conduct of teacher training but also in the assessment of the teachers' attainment of the predetermined competences.

Furlong & Maynard (1995) suggested that teacher training could be broadly categorised under the competency model or the reflective practitioner model but their implications were indicative of the increasing influence of standards and competences as the criteria for measuring the abilities of the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT). Although mentoring influences ITE differently under these two models (Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Calderhead, 1989; Tomlinson 1995), the definition of mentoring in initial teacher training as propagated by Wallace and Gravell (2008) implies certain assumptions and presuppositions; that there is sharing of expertise, resources and time; that the mentors are experienced and successful as well as the existence of an arrangement to provide support and guidance to the trainee teacher. Similarly significant is Fletcher's (2000) concept of mentoring in initial teacher training as a means of guiding and supporting trainees, easing them through a difficult transition. According to him, it involves enabling, reassuring directing and instructing, building self-confidence and assisting professional and personal development.

All these were evidence of a significant shift in the pattern of initial teacher training. Official recognition of mentoring as a policy in ITE was effectively begun by Kenneth Clark when he announced in 1992 (Robinson, 2006) that schools were to assume a role in teacher training (Fletcher 2000). This shift gave rise to a number of Training Schools which usually were successful schools and they were given the responsibility of leading a cluster of other schools in this process of school based initial training for teachers (DfEE, 1999; Brooks, 2006; DfE, 2010).

In order to arrive at a definition of a learning mentor in schools and to be able to evaluate that role, the following will begin by drawing out comparisons between

mentors working in ITE, business and healthcare followed by a comparison of the ITE mentor and learning mentor in school

2. 4) Similarities and differences in mentoring in business, healthcare and education with particular reference to Initial Teacher Training.

The preceding discussion gives an overview of the origin and growth of mentoring in various contexts and emphasised the significant development which mentoring has witnessed and the considerable influence it exercises within different professions and various contexts such as business, healthcare and education in the current state of affairs. The question that is relevant to this study here is how far can these be compared?

In all three contexts the underlying goal of mentoring is to utilise the expertise of a more experienced or senior colleague for further growth and development. This facilitates smoother initiation of mentee into the practical aspects of the profession or further development of the mentee's existing skills. However, there are certain noticeable differences which will be considered below.

Firstly, in a business establishment it is usually the immediate line manager or supervisor who is often the mentor, which implies a difference of position and status in the organisational hierarchy but both mentor and mentee owe allegiance to the same organisation. This is different within the context of both healthcare and ITE. The NMC (2008) guidelines indicate that the mentor is often a more experienced colleague who has been working in the same profession and often within the same institution. In ITE this characteristic may not be present (other than the broad similarity that both work in the same profession) because the school which facilitates mentoring and the school which might employ them after training may not necessarily be the same. This indicates that the degree of allegiance owed by both mentee and mentor within education sector is weaker than in the business sector which often provides both mentoring and employment at the same time. In healthcare, the qualification to become a mentor is codified by the organisation and each individual needs to fulfil those conditions whereas in business or initial teacher education, there are no such stringent qualifying conditions. A significant feature which is common to

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mentoring in education and healthcare is that it forms part of the training process and qualifying criteria and hence is mandatory to a certain extent, whereas in a business context, it is not. Consequently, it can be said that mentoring in initial teacher education, mentoring for head teacher and in healthcare, we see instances of 'formal mentoring' and in business it is mostly informal mentoring.

Secondly, the extent to which the career progression of the mentee is influenced and impacted by mentor/mentoring is different in all three sectors. For example, in a business organisation, the career of the mentee can be hugely influenced by the judgment of the mentor who is often the mentee's immediate line manager. The mentee's career progression could also be dependent on the exposure and projection of the mentee by mentor before the senior management or prospective employers. This factor may not have the same degree of significance in healthcare and much less in education where the mentor's influence is limited to the mentee attaining the set standard or qualification rather than securing of employment. The fact that the role of the mentor in ITE is terminated at the end of the training further reduces the possibility of the mentor influencing the career progression of mentee through the employer or senior management.

Thirdly, in business, the role of mentor is integrated into the management responsibility without any reference to the qualification of the manager but not always as a written policy or part of the job role but as an accepted general convention and hence is subject to the decision of individual organisations. However, in healthcare, all management positions do not involve a mentoring responsibility because it is conditional to fulfilling certain criteria such as duration of service. In ITE, all senior teachers in every school may not become mentors but only the teachers in those particular schools which collaborate with higher education institutions in this regard. This follows from the fact that all schools may not be involved in ITE and mentoring. Thus, all nurses working with the NHS can qualify and be a mentor provided they fulfil the criteria, but a teacher's chances of becoming a mentor in ITE depends on the status of the institution employing them irrespective of the length of service or any other qualification they may possess as individuals.

Finally, a noteworthy difference is that in ITE, mentoring forms part of the qualification procedure to join the profession whereas in business or healthcare, mentoring aims to facilitate better practice for those individuals who have already qualified and are in the profession.

2. 5) A comparison between ITE mentors and learning mentors

The forgoing discussion identifies the fact that mentoring adults varies between different types of institutions which has implications for attempting to define what the term means in practice. What remains to be seen is whether these definitions are helpful in defining the role of learning mentors for children or not. Exploring the latter will be the focus of the next chapter. Given the possibility that the ITE mentor and primary school learning mentor may work within the same school or even the same classroom it is necessary to explore if their roles have anything in common in order to avoid any possible misconception that they represent the same concept. Such comparison should provide a clear understanding of the differences and lead to a viable definition of the role of learning mentor in primary school.

In order to make this comparison between the ITE mentor and learning mentor, it is appropriate to start by considering what defines the role of the former. An effective method of evaluating the significance of mentoring in ITE is to assess the response of the mentees themselves. Hobson *et al.* (2006) suggested that trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers considered their school-based practical experiences to be the most valuable aspect of their initial teacher training. In their view, they had a three-fold benefit: firstly, they felt that through these practical school placements they could talk with their mentor or another colleague who was concerned with their well-being and progress. Secondly, school based training provided them with an opportunity to engage in 'professional dialogues' with others who were already in the profession and this in turn prompted them to think about their practice (Medwell 2005) as teachers even before they became fully committed teachers themselves thereby contributing to the quality of the entire teaching profession (Tang and Choi, 2005). Finally, they had a strong view that this experience made them feel part of the teaching community and this in turn helped them build positive relationships with other teachers (Hobson *et al.*, 2006).

Classrooms have become places where teachers learn about teaching (McCann & Ruthford, 1995). It is true that the concept of teaching has undergone radical changes and teaching is no more merely a transmission of theoretical knowledge to the learner thereby implying that teachers are now expected to understand and demonstrate commitment towards the values of inclusion, equality and diversity (Ellis, 2011). The professional standards for teachers (TDA, 2007) envisaged teachers as 'agents of change'. The standards set by the legislator are no more mere competencies, desirable qualities or attributes, but requirements that must be met to obtain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) (Jacques and Hyland, 2003). One of the main components of the standards is a prerequisite for familiarity with practical teaching prior to formal training which includes planning, assessment, teaching and class management (Medwell, 2005). The new Standards for teachers which came into effect since September 2012 makes it mandatory for a qualified teacher to be able to demonstrate that they can meet stringent criteria with regard to practice of teaching as well as personal and professional conduct (DfES, 2012). Some of these criteria for example are; set high expectations, inspire, motivate, challenge, plan and teach well-structured lessons, adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils, upholding the public trust in the profession, maintain high standards of their own attendance and punctuality (DfES, 2012). It encourages NQTs to draw on the expertise of colleagues and utilise information, advice and support derived from them (TDA, 2007).

Viewed from this angle it can be seen that the experienced teachers involved in the training of NQTs perform their mentoring role in range of methods. In ITE mentoring has several purposes, one of them being initiation of new members into the profession. Mentoring helps beginning teachers to understand the practical aspects of how to manage and run a classroom full of children and deliver the content of the subject at the same time. Mentors often act as a bridge by which newly qualified teachers find an example to connect the theoretical expertise they gained to practical aspects. Further, mentoring has the potential to provide a tool for developing professionals within the organisation. According to Baird (1995), the role of mentors in initial teacher training should include co-researching where they research the nature and practice of learning and teaching, being a critical friend who supports the

mentee by providing positive feedback, acting as a sounding board as well as providing challenges to encourage growth and development. These functions are reflected in the description of the role of mentors according to Sopko and Hilgemeir (1999) who described it as a cocktail of tips from a seasoned master. At the same time, Baird's (1995) model of the mentor and mentee as co-researchers provides opportunities of growth for the mentee as well as mentor. Ultimately as Tang and Choi (2005) argued this contributes to the quality of the entire teaching profession thus becoming a means for enhancing the organisation as a whole. The significance of mentoring in ITE in recent times is further stressed by the fact that the Department for Education and Skills has made it a policy to 'make payments to employers of teachers in the sector undergoing ITE to ensure that support in the workplace, such as mentoring, is provided and clarified that the responsibility to make appropriate arrangements rests with the individual employer in partnership with the organisation delivering the training (DES, 2013).

How far can a learning mentor be compared with this the role of ITE mentor as outlined above? These consideration of the role of mentors in ITE reveals certain attributes which are similar to the role of the learning mentors in primary schools but in a different measure, intensity and purpose. Some of these similarities or possible comparisons are discussed below. Just as mentoring in ITE is a method of initiating/inducting new entrants into the practical aspects of the profession (Fletcher, 2000) mentoring in primary school aims to initiate/induct the mentee into the learning community and engage with learning environments and activities. Another common theme in school based mentoring for both adults and children is fostering the wellbeing of the mentees (Egan, 2002) through nurturing, supporting, guiding and providing critical feedback and these are essential for a positive outcome in both cases although with different intensity.

However, there are significant differences in that while in ITE professional wellbeing is the primary though not the sole concern, a holistic wellbeing of the pupil takes priority in primary school mentoring. At the same time there is also the difference that these goals are much more defined and the process systematically organised in ITE (DfES, 2012) while in primary school mentoring it is neither so clearly defined nor is

the process systematically organised (Rose & Doveston, 2008; Mintz, 2010). Furthermore, learning mentors are offered limited opportunities for organised training which remain within the broad spectrum of children workforce and barely role specific (CWDC, 2008; DfES, 2012). Another significant difference is observed in the mentor mentee relationship. Although the mentor serves as a role model, providing critical constructive feedback, nurturing and supporting the mentee, (Baird, 1995; Sopko & Hilgemeir, 1999), there are clear differences between the two types of mentors in this respect. In ITE the mentor - mentee relationship is on an adult professional colleague level and as such it provides much more autonomy to the mentee whereas in primary school context, adult – child character of the mentoring relationship combined with the difference in cognitive and decision making capability of the primary school mentee tips the balance of power in favour of the primary school mentor. Another significant difference is that it is essential for all trainee teachers to go through mentoring as part of the training and it is a criteria to be fulfilled in order to attain the QTS (DfES, 2012) and to be graduates whereas only those children who are assessed to be in need of mentoring are offered the services which gives the mentee certain choice to access or deny mentoring facilities. In other words, the learning mentor role responds to the child's needs rather than a set of professional standards as is the case in ITE.

The purpose of this study is to determine the role of learning mentors and analyse their impact on the educational and social outcome of pupils. In the course of this pursuit, having considered the differences and similarities between adult mentoring and mentoring for children in primary school, the next step is to look at different roles that exist within primary school. This has two objectives; firstly, to find out if there are any other roles which are similar to learning mentor and secondly, to determine if and to what extent such similarities occur and how it influences the outcome of mentoring in primary school.

CHAPTER 3.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF MENTORING III: DISTINGUISHING THE LEARNING MENTOR FROM OTHER PROFESSIONALS SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

The previous chapters discussed the role of mentoring in a range of contexts associated with providing support to adults. However, it is necessary to ascertain whether it is identical with the role of professionals who undertake similar function with primary school pupils. For this purpose, the current chapter seeks to identify the nature of the role of the primary school mentor and distinguish it from the role of other professionals working in the primary classroom. The English education system provides for a number of professionals who support pupils at school besides the teacher. For example, in a modern primary school structure there are learning support assistants or teaching assistants, parent helpers, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO) and counsellors. These professionals influence children's learning and development in various ways. Later in this chapter, these roles will be analysed with regard to their objective, the functions they perform and their remit. The purpose of such analysis is to realise the core aim of this research which is to arrive at a comprehensive view of the impact which learning mentors have on the learning process and outcome of mentees.

It is also important to look at the development of educational policy and legislation because the role of the learning mentor was introduced as part of a policy initiative. The need to investigate this relationship between policies and interventions was highlighted by the arguments of Clough & Nutbrown (2007) that all social science research is carried out under some policy context. Therefore, to fully understand their impact, it is important to look at the origin and purpose of the policy as well.

Gregory (2002) argued that education is something that is not left to chance. Although there is the possibility of ongoing speculations regarding the agenda for change, it is

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clear that policies and legislations in the past have been formulated in order to bring about changes in different characteristics and aspects of education such as its delivery or outcome. Indeed, if the development of learning mentors is regarded as a means of raising attainment, it is based on principles which have underpinned growing influence of the state in education since the 19th century. The underlying principle behind all these changes have been the conviction that ultimately, what is delivered as education needs constant improvement in quality and content (Gregory, 2002).

The second half of the 20th century has been associated with two major educational reforms which have implications for attainment. The Education Act of 1944 initiated a number of changes. Although it had little influence on the contents of the curriculum (Aldrich, 1996), it had a significant impact in the way the future of education was perceived and implemented. It established a tripartite system of education which segregated children based on their abilities.

For the next three decades, the basic tenets as enshrined in the 1944 Act remained fairly unaffected (Chitty, 1992; Gregory, 2002; Poynter, 2004). The driving force behind educational development of this period was the desire to expand, universalise education and make it accessible to a wider society emphasising quality for many rather than excellence for a few (Whitty, 2002). The 1944 Act had established a tripartite system which segregated children according to their abilities. This caused the education system to remain clogged with inequalities and remained a privilege of the elite and exacerbated differences in educational opportunities (Balls, 1981; Poynter, 2004). Towards the end of the 1960s and the 1970s there was a noticeable move towards comprehensive schools which catered to the needs of all children and which removed the need for children to be assessed at the age of 11 in order to determine their secondary school. However, from this point forward, irrespective of whether this goal has been achieved or not, the focus began to shift from universalisation to quality and standard. The importance of education for the individual and the society particularly due to the fact that every aspect of the modern social life is influenced and shaped by education (Gregory, 2002) gained prominence and began reflecting in educational policies. Questions began to be asked about the efficacy of the education system, particularly in the light of perceived failure of the

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nation's schools, more so when compared to other nations such as Germany, the USA and Japan (Lawson & Silver, 2013, Davies *et al.*, 2002, Poynter, 2004). It was felt that the system was not providing value for money by failing to meet the requirements of the nation and the blame was laid on falling standards. This sentiment was indicative of two things: the impact of education began to be evaluated in comparison to the needs of the industrial society and England began contrasting its education system vis-a-vis other nations both in Europe and outside. The Ruskin speech by James Callaghan in 1976 (Gregory 2002) reflected this perception when he raised concerns about various aspects such as lack of enthusiasm and qualification to cater to the needs of the industrial society, fall in standards of basic precepts of education such as numeracy and the need to address these shortcomings. The speech emphasised the need to remedy the situation by ensuring that pupils were equipped to have a constructive place in the society, to let the child's personality develop to its fullest.

It was this concern for standards that came to be the driving force behind formulation of subsequent legislation particularly The Education Reform Act 1988 (Chitty, 1992; Osborn *et al., 2000*). It was passed by the Conservative government which remained in power until 1997 but the influence of this Act is felt to the present day. The effect of this legislation massively surpassed those of the 1944 ACT (Chitty, 1992; Osborn *et al.*, 2000; Whitty, 2002) in a number of ways. This Act introduced the National Curriculum which was the first official attempt at creating a common curriculum for the whole nation which could be assessed in both primary and secondary school levels. This ultimately resulted in enormous pressure on schools to compete in the market (Whitty, Power & Halpin, 1998) hence effectively introducing the operation of market forces into the field of education and those in favour of this view believed that this would effectively lead to a rise in standards (Osborn et al., 2000; Gregory, 2002; Poynter, 2004). This sense of competition was further reinforced by the decision to relate availability of funds and finances to the number of pupils in a school which in turn depended on the reputation of the school (Gregory, 2002; Poynter, 2004). Another notable development after the 1988 Act was the introduction of Office for Standards in Education, (OFSTED) in 1992. This was the government agency entrusted with the task of school inspection to ensure they adhered to all the

policies and guidelines prescribed (Pollard *et al.*, 2000 p.8). In Davies' (2002) view, policy decisions in education were fueled by the desire to create what was considered useful knowledge in direct relationship to creation of economic wealth (Whitty, 2002). Growth of competition increased pressure to achieve better performance in examination resulting in a diminished emphasis on personal development of the individual and reinforcement of the concepts of justice and dignity (Osborn *et al.*, 2000, Davies *et al.*, 2002, Whitty 2002). At the same time, the increasing influence of political aspiration and affiliation on policy and legislation in education was becoming obvious with the advent of the New Labour Government in 1997. The pace and direction of educational reforms initiated by the 1988 Act continued but it was combined with a concern for social inclusion and advancement of the basics of literacy and numeracy (Pollard *et al.*, 2000, Osborn *et al.*, 2000). In 1996, Tony Blair, the then shadow prime minister declared that the three priorities for his government were *education, education and education* (Pollard *et al.*, 2000; Davies *et al.*, 2002; Chitty, 1992). This was preface to a number of the new reforms initiated by the same government some of which had far reaching consequences for both the teaching and the taught community with much more focus on quality, attainment and participation. This period also witnessed the co-existence of continuity and contrast between the policies of Conservative and Labour governments (Pollard *et al.*, 2000). In 1998, the Labour government suspended certain aspects of the National Curriculum such as history, geography, art and music in order to provide emphasis to other primary areas such as literacy and numeracy. The government did not make its plans secret but declared that its aspiration was to ensure that all pupils left school with necessary competence in these areas. Although this was lauded by some sections of the society, there were others who disagreed for the reason that it was a reflection of the lack of commitment to a broad and balanced curriculum as envisaged in the National Curriculum (Pollard *et al.*, 2000). These changes had a profound effect particularly on teachers through increased pedagogic prescriptions, setting the required competency requirements for teachers, school inspections, introducing the league tables, target setting and linking of teachers' salary to classroom performance. (Pollard *et al.*, 2000).

3. 1) The emergence of learning mentors.

It is under this struggle between the principles of increasing standard and universalisation of education or rather a desire and attempt to combine the two that the subject of learning mentors gains significance for the fact that the policy initiative was conceived to advance education in this direction. There were a number of initiatives that were conceived during this period including Beacon Schools Programme, Education Action Zones (EAZ), Excellence in Cities (EiC) and Every Child Matters (ECM) (Hayward, 2001). The term learning mentor as a policy intervention first appeared in 1999 as a part of the new government initiative called Excellence in Cities (EiC), with a stated goal to improve learning by removing barriers and obstacles to learning (Cruddas, 2005). Initially this was to be introduced across schools in six cities namely Manchester, inner London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds and Sheffield. It was only in 2000 after a favourable report about this initiative in these cities that it was extended to the primary sector and other cities.

The above analysis helps explain how learning mentors came to be introduced. However, in order to appreciate the reasons for this, it is necessary to address two questions: Firstly, why was there yet another policy intervention in the long list of policies? Secondly, what are the barriers to learning that the policy talks about? In response to the first question, Hayward (2001) stated that mentoring opened up new ways to work with pupils who have experienced difficulties and who have fallen through the net during other interventions. This is in itself is an indirect acknowledgement of the fact that despite several policies, procedures and interventions which already existed, pupils have been 'falling through the net'. His opinion also lends credence to the view that the policy makers' expectation that mentoring as an intervention would be effective in plugging those gaps in the net. As regards to the second question, there is a significant possibility of confusing learning difficulties or disabilities with barriers to learning. Cruddas (2005) argued that considering barriers in the context of development within relationships would be beneficial to understanding barriers. This view reflects the view of Bronfenbrenner (1979) who placed considerable significance on the connection between the pupil and other individuals present within the learning environment. They are *like* but not the

same as emotional and behavioural difficulties. In this context, Cruddas (2005) makes the difference between those children who have learning difficulties and those who are underachieving. According to her, a child with learning difficulties may not necessarily be an underachiever when their difficulties are taken into account (because they are achieving in proportion to their ability) and hence cannot be compared to their peers who do not have difficulties. On the other hand, the term underachievers refer to those pupils who have the ability to perform, but do not do so because they are lazy but as a result of certain issues other than learning difficulties. It is here that the work of learning mentors comes into context as it is their remit to work with these pupils to increase participation, achievement and sense of belonging (Cruddas, 2005).

Therefore, learning mentors work with those pupils who have the potential, but not achieving because of social and personal issues which undermine their participation and thereby learning experience. Some of these barriers could be low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence, uncontrollable anger, sadness, aggressive or violent behaviour, tendency for self-harm or withdrawal, all of which hinder their attendance, affective development, and consequently social, intellectual and emotional development (Cruddas, 2005).

3. 2) Mentoring and other forms of support within primary schools.

In order evaluate the impact of learning mentors in primary school, it is important to have a clear idea of their place and position within the classroom. This is important because there are a number of professionals who support the learning activity of pupils within the school. These forms of support might at first glance appear similar to mentoring particularly because of their apparent nature but a closer examination would reveal the fact that they are in fact not identical to mentoring. Hence, it is appropriate that the role of learning mentor is distinguished from other similar roles. The following discussion will help draw out such distinction and I propose to begin this scrutiny with the role of the teacher, the most influential agent of learning within the classroom.

3. 3) How is the role of learning mentors different from that of the teacher?

There are significant differences between the role of mentor and teacher. These distinctions can be understood by providing an insight into the role the teacher. Teachers were traditionally considered dispensers of knowledge and information (Reynolds, 2000). However, as society changed, the role of the teacher broadened. By late 20th century, the role of the teacher required a much wider range of qualities. Lawn (1987) defined a teacher as a guide, counsellor and instructor of the young. The role of the teacher has become defined in terms of competencies, subject expertise, collaboration, management and supervision (Woods et al., 1997). It has been argued that legislation, marketisation and managerialisation of education combined with the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 and its subsequent revised versions in 1995 and 2000 defined the role of teachers in a specific and professionally oriented manner (Woods & Jaffery, 2002; Muijs & Reynolds, 2011). McGivney (2001) argued, that policy documents came to view learning as a process of acquiring knowledge, skills and competences for the labour market rather than as process leading to deeper understanding, personal enrichment and development. The National Curriculum and its associated tests and assessments greatly increased the pressure on teachers (Davies et al., 2002) as they were expected to produce better outcomes in more diverse curriculum with the amount of time and resources already stretched to their limits. The effectiveness of the role of the teacher is evaluated on the basis of several indicators such as clarity in teaching and administration, organization of lesson structure, classroom management, time management and the quality of questioning and feedback (Kyriacou, 2009; Muijs & Reynolds, 2011).

A teacher has to undergo extensive training prior to becoming a fully qualified professional. The 1960s witnessed a significant increase in training institutions driven by demand for teachers leading to neglect of the theoretical aspect of training (Ross & McNamara 1982; Furlong & Maynard, 1995). The requirement for degrees, together with PGCEs for graduates raised the status of the profession as they increasingly replaced teaching certificates in the 70s and 80s. This period witnessed a vigorous debate about the relationship between theoretical training and practice leading to a rethink (Bell, 1981; Gardner, 1993). This subsequently led to the emergence of a

system which was aimed at finding a balance between theoretical and practical aspects of training. Another feature of this change was the increased involvement of schools and experienced teachers along with institutions providing training and awarding qualifications to teachers (Gardner, 1993; Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Tomlinson, 1995). Since 1992 the role of schools, usually in partnership with universities, has increased significantly. However, teachers still have to be graduates and it remains mandatory for a teacher to obtain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) through their training, which is subject to stringent checks and quality assurance mechanisms enforced by the Secretary of State for Education (DfE, 2012a). There is an ongoing revision and evaluation of these standards by state authorities such as OFSTED which has the remit and duty to inspect schools and higher education institutions engaged in providing QTS to ensure that all those achieving QTS possess the highest standards in work (DfE, 2012). There is an official list (the latest being the one which became effective from September 2012) of standards which are mandatory for all teachers. These include for example being able to set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge, to be able to adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils, possessing strong subject knowledge and so on (DfE, 2012). Besides, all institutions providing Initial Teacher Training (ITT) must receive accreditation from the Teaching Agency (DfE, 2012b). However, it has been found that there is no such mandatory qualification or standards to become a learning mentor. This also means that in the case of learning mentors, there are no training requirements or mechanisms for quality assurance as in teacher training.

The nature of teaching is based on theories of learning and child development. Teaching in its early form was essentially instructive (Hoyle, 1969). However, the advent of industrialisation and economic growth altered the political and social agenda and with it the views of learning theorists. Purely instructive teaching and passive learning was sidelined by learning theories which considered experience as the sources of knowledge (Davies *et al.*, 2002). Present day learning theories centered on this view and others loosely described under the heading 'constructivism' can be traced through the seminal writings of Piaget and Vygotsky (Pritchard, 2010). A currently held view is that pupils construct their own knowledge of the world through exploring, asking questions and interrogating their current knowledge and intuitive

theories and modifying these in the light of new experiences. Simply put, we might say that pupils see, do and thereby understand concepts (Petty, 1993; McGuigan & Russel, 1997; Pritchard, 2010). Although authors such as Piaget and Vygotsky shared a belief that understanding is constructed and internalized by the learner rather than simply transmitted from teacher to learner, they do differ in some respects. Piaget promoted cognitive constructivism in which learning is an activity that involves learning through thinking whereas Vygotsky promoted what has become known as social constructivism: a social, collaborative and interactional activity. He argued that teachers can encourage independent learning through support or 'scaffolding' that enables learners to reach higher levels of attainment that would otherwise not be the case if left to their own devices (McGuigan & Russel, 1997; Pritchard, 2010).

Broadly speaking, constructivist theory and the growing involvement of the state in the school curriculum and teacher education lead to the requirement for personalized support and attention for each pupil within the classroom. For example, the *Every Child Matters* initiative by the government could be seen as a move in this direction. Such initiatives were aimed at the holistic development of children and defined five areas of children's education and welfare: Being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being (DfES, 2004). Such levels of state involvement indicated a further shift in the focus and role of the teacher towards a more child-centered approach. The role shifted radically from merely facilitating learning within traditional boundaries of subject knowledge towards a balanced social, economic, moral, spiritual and cultural wellbeing of children. However, as a consequence, this greatly increased the range of responsibility as well as expectations placed on teachers. A greater workload and pressures associated with moves to enhance teaching quality have provided a context in which mentoring now finds its place in the classroom. It is in the light of evolving, changing views of learning and teaching that the distinctive roles of teacher and mentor can be described and analysed.

These key characteristics of teaching in the present context provide a basis for defining the similarities and differences between the role of learning mentor and teacher. Firstly, teachers undergo extensive training prior to becoming fully qualified

professionals whereas the learning mentor undergoes the training post-appointment which usually lasts around five days only and this aspect is been highlighted in this research project.

We have seen that the present standards governing the acquisition of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) are detailed, rigorous and very prescriptive. Within the classroom, teachers are the most visible influence upon the learning experience of their pupils. However, the learning mentor is concerned with only those children who are prevented from accessing learning because of certain 'barriers'. The learning mentor's role appears to be to support certain pupils to overcome these barriers which prevent them from participating in the manner which the teacher intends: actively and collaboratively. According to Cruddas (2005) learning mentors are in search of opportunities to open up institutional spaces by creating a conducive atmosphere that generates dialogue between the institutions and young persons and their families. From a pedagogical perspective, learning is seen as a social activity with intimate connections to community life (Cruddas, 2005). The mandate of the learning mentor is thus to facilitate participation in such learning activity. The role of learning mentors in this process is emphasised by developments in the teaching profession which in fact was a contributing factor towards its formation.

Clearly, the role of the teacher is closely associated with and often influenced by the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, in the case of learning mentors, no such guidelines are present regarding the specific nature and outcome of their deployment other than the general statement that their remit is to remove barriers to learning (DfES, 1999). As a result, compared to the deployment of teachers, schools were given extensive flexibility to deploy and utilise learning mentors according to the needs of individual children.

A further difference in the role is that, broadly speaking, teachers facilitate learning in an academic context. In contrast, the role of learning mentors is relatively less classroom based as they act as agents who facilitate the appropriate conditions for learning such as supporting the development of the social skills and working relationships required for effective academic progress. Clearly, this also leads to a

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fundamental difference in the relationship between the teacher and pupil as opposed to that between mentor and pupil. Although there is, as pointed out by Fletcher (2000), a one-to-one teacher to pupil relationship, including personal attention and personalised learning, the pupil is generally within a group of his or her peers. In mentoring however, the mentee often receives the complete attention of the learning mentor in an intense, one-to-one relationship.

3. 4) How far can the learning mentor be distinguished from the teaching assistant?

What is the role of the Teaching Assistant (TA)? Initially, the role of the teaching assistant was not clearly defined. Vincett *et al.*, (2005) argued that despite the huge increase in the number of teaching assistants (DfEE, 2000), there was a lack of definitive ways in which they could be used to best support the teacher. There was no agreement as to who should be doing what and how. Traditionally, the TA's role was rather exclusively to assist in the education of pupils in special schools (Balshaw & Farrell, 2002). Their role almost automatically came to be very important and the TAs were gradually regarded as having knowledge about everything. Even though it was not necessarily meant to be, it was assumed that they were almost like a 'jack of all trades', stepping in wherever and whenever the need arose (Bentham and Hutchins, 2006). As Birkett (2008) puts it, their job role was anything that the teacher could not or did not want to do – from sorting out children's work, mixing paints, putting up wall displays and taking them down, playground duties, hear children read, making tea for teachers and even cleaning and washing up that was required in a classroom. However, there were gradual changes and as Birkett (2008) suggested that they were employed as occasional classroom assistants with the purpose of helping the teacher with general classroom management. In this sense, the role of the teaching assistant was to 'support' both teachers and pupils (O'Brien & Garner 2001; Lee 2002). Sage & Wilkie (2003) even commented that 'teaching assistant' is the 'preferred' term to describe any support staff who works in the class alongside the teacher. It may be noted that at the time they were introduced, they required no training and had no official job description.

There was a significant rise in the number of TAs (Hancock *et al.*, 2002) and the three

main reasons for this as pointed out by Lee (2002) in her Local Government Association report (No.34) are: The inclusion of children with a wide range of needs into mainstream schools thereby creating the need for more classroom support. Difficulty in recruitment and retention of qualified teachers who could fulfil the targets set by the government; and The increase in bureaucratic and paperwork made mandatory by law thus making the teachers feel overburdened and hence the need to provide relief to them. At the same time, Sage & Wilkie (2003) pointed out increased availability of opportunities for progression, funding and organised training as another reason for more people choosing to become teaching assistants. OFSTED (1994) reported that by 1993, nearly 14,000 support staff were being employed by Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to ensure that pupils from ethnic minorities were receiving quality access to the National Curriculum. According to some reports, (DfEE, 2000; Vincett et al., 2005) from 1992 to 2000, England witnessed a 112 percent increase in the volume of education support staff and majority of these were classroom assistants a term synonymously used for teaching assistant.

According to the data made available by the Department for Education, the number of teaching assistants rose to nearly 45000 in 2002 and the increase further gained steam reaching 1,23,500 in 2011 (DfE, 2012). This gains further significance when considered alongside the fact that there was a further 10,500 special needs support staff within the class room bringing the total classroom support to a rather large number i.e. 1,34,000 compared to 2,02,000 teachers during the same period (DfE, 2012).

Estelle Morris, Secretary of State for Education and Skills in 2001, while commenting on the report produced by Price Waterhouse Coopers, agreed that TAs would have to be given more responsibilities and involvement by supervising classes, covering teacher absences and giving pastoral and individual support to pupils (Morris, 2001). Besides, as they were expected to assist children in special schools or children with special needs in an inclusive school, to be an effective and successful TA it was necessary to be familiar with all aspects of SEN provisions – the national policy as well as individual school provisions (Rose, 2005). Bentham and Hutchins (2006) suggest that to be successful, TAs need to be familiar with not only special needs of

the pupils but also common medical issues such as Asthma and medication –
including the effect, duration etc. given to pupils with ADHD and other conditions.
Policy changes in education reaffirmed the 'unwritten concept' whereby TAs were
expected to involve themselves much more in general teaching, administration and
assessment. The effect of the Warnock Report of 1978 and the ensuing education
reforms of the 1980s increased the number as well as the role and responsibilities of
TAs to a great extent (Walton, 2009).

Classroom education has undergone vast changes in practice, policies and education
law and so have all the roles associated with it. The role of teaching assistants was no
exception. Consequently, it may be noted that these days, teaching assistants have
come to have a more formal role in every day class room administration, planning and
teaching. They are much more associated with and contribute to the planning and
delivery of the curriculum (Watkinson, 2008). O'Brien and Garner (2001) have gone
further and described the role of teaching assistants and identified it with that of
educator, instructor or teacher. Birkett (2001) almost reinforced this view by
providing insight into practical methods and advice on how teaching assistants can
support a child with special needs, how to deal with the documentation and paper
work such as IEPs. DfES (2000) puts the main roles performed by teaching assistants
into four main categories: support for the pupil, support for the teacher, support for
the curriculum and support for the school. Despite such views regarding the positive
benefits of having a classroom assistant, some studies (eg. Marley & Bloom, 2009)
have reported that children who are supported by teaching assistants actually achieve
less than children with the same abilities, but not supported by a teaching assistant.
Similarly, there is the perceived view that one effect of having a teaching assistant is
that the designated child is less disruptive and distracted and hence promotes
discipline in the classroom thereby reducing the teachers stress level and allowing
more time to work with the rest of the class. However, this questions the efficacy of
teaching assistance in relation to the 'every child matters' slogan and makes it appear
that the purpose of all these is to have a less disruptive class rather than promoting
learning and attainment to the fullest for everyone.

A review of the roles of learning mentor and teaching assistant reveals the possibility

of misconception that these roles are interchangeable. This is due to the general perception that both are engaged in activities that support the pupil. However, a closer scrutiny of the circumstances and parameters governing these roles will make the differences in these roles more perceptible. There is a view that roles of the support staff are usually indicated by their job title and hence, a teaching assistant is concerned with 'teaching' and similarly, the learning mentor's role is concerned with learning. This might give rise to a debate because although it may be possible to appreciate that while the work and activities encompassed by each role continues to be the subject of much debate, there can be no definitive definition and demarcation as to what actions are supportive of *teaching* and what actions are supportive of *learning*. Another fact that comes to the fore as far as the role of the learning mentor is concerned is that although it is explained specifically *what* the outcome of mentoring intervention is expected to be, it does not dictate as to *how* the outcome is to be achieved. This allows the schools to alter, modify and channel the intervention as a response to individual needs, unlike the prescriptive approach of a teaching assistant (Rose & Doveston, 2008). This needs and can be distinguished in the initial stages itself. It may be said that the roles of the support staff – which include teaching assistants and learning mentors – are suggested in their titles. As the names suggests, rather literally, the teaching assistant's role is about imparting knowledge and developing skills as a means of supporting the teacher. The role of the teaching assistant generally takes place within the context of the classroom as indicated by the term 'teaching' within a school setting. It is more associated with the curriculum and its direct implementation. On the other hand the role of 'learning mentor' is associated with supporting the pupil to access 'learning' (Cruddas, 2005). It is about providing support for children, listening to them, encouraging them and also working as a link facilitating cooperation between the pupil and the school. This differentiation is supported by Cruddas (2005). The role of the learning mentor as generally understood and set out in the EiC documents (DfEE, 1999) is highlighted by the responsibility to strive to remove barriers to individual learning, not only within school, but beyond by enhancing individual learning and raising aspirations and achieve full potential. What makes learning mentors different from other forms classroom support is the focus on *learning* rather than teaching (Cruddas 2005). The teaching assistant in contrast, has the responsibility to assist the school – meaning

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teacher – in the administration of the common curriculum through planning and execution. Clutterbuck (2004) stresses the fact that to perform the role well, a mentor should be able to hold themselves back despite the urge to pass on the accumulated wisdom and expertise, and allow people to learn for themselves.

Other forms of support available are parent helpers or other volunteers who work within classrooms to support pupils. Again, in most cases, these individuals or professionals only augment the work of teachers and TAs (Thomas, 1987). They are not directly linked to the participation and attainment of the pupils in the wider connotation of the term within the school and learning atmosphere. Their interaction is limited to particular subjects or topics within the curriculum such as reading, literacy and numeracy (Elliot et al., 2000).

Another form of help available to children within the school is the school counsellor (Baginsky, 2004). To some extent, the counsellor helps the concerned pupil to engage and participate in the learning process by listening and discerning and determining the cause and effect of issues involved. However, there are certain important differences between the learning mentors and counselors. According to Lloyd (1999), a counsellor is a trained, accredited and professional and is supervised and operates 'in accordance with formal legal, ethical and professional requirements. Most often, counselors are external professionals requisitioned by the school to deal with a particular pupil. Again, the professional competence of counselor is much varied from that of learning mentor in that the counselor listens to the issues and problems raised by the child and suggests solutions to that particular problem (McLaughlin 1999). They do not deal directly with the overall learning ability, process and performance of the child. This also implies that unless any particular issue arises, the counselors may not always be required to be present in the school as a member of staff whereas learning mentor is always accessible with the school for pupils, parents and other professionals and work with them to enhance the learning and participation of children who do not have the need for a counselor. In Jones' (1970) view, sustained also by Maybey & Sorensen (1995), counselling is for those who feel the insecurities and uncertainties of adolescence and children with symptoms of emotional disturbance and maladjustment including severe psychiatric disturbance.

3. 5) The primary school learning mentor: Towards a definition?

Chapter 1 analysed various definitions of mentoring and distinguished it from coaching and counseling and the distinction between mentor and counsellor or coach was also drawn out.

Chapter 2 consider the view that the definition of mentoring is influenced to a great extent by the matter of why, where and for whom it is being used by exploring how mentoring with adults has developed in three different contexts – business, healthcare and initial teacher training. A comparison between mentoring in these contexts with learning mentors can help define what makes the latter distinctive. Sauvé Bell Associates (as cited in Cruddas, 2005) proposed a functional definition of the learning mentor as someone providing support and guidance to children by removing barriers to learning in order to promote effective participation, enhance individual learning, raise aspirations and achieve full potential. The main object was providing access and encouragement to engage. This is different from the role of 'mentor' as understood in the business or healthcare sector where the mentor helps the mentee develop further within the role assigned for example as a manager or team leader.

Secondly in healthcare, the mentor is primarily concerned with assisting the mentee in making the critical and important transition from theory to practice – supporting, reassuring and guiding them to navigate this territory by building self-confidence and providing them reassurance when needed, as well developing specific skills for occupation whereas in the primary school context it is less specific in that the learning mentor facilitates access to participation in the process of attaining life skill not *a* specific skill itself.

Thirdly, there is a difference in power relationship between adult mentor and learning mentor in primary school. The disproportionality of power between the mentor and the mentee is much more manifest in a school context when compared to mentoring in business or healthcare. This can significantly influence both the process and the outcome of mentoring in primary school because contrary to the school mentee, mentees in business/healthcare/teacher education has much more control over factors that influence their personal and professional relationships.

Fourthly, mentoring in general usually is part of the process of meeting a person's needs whether mentee requests it or not – it may incorporated into the role as a requirement for the mentor and almost mandatory for mentee to be supervised and supported by a senior more experienced colleague or line manager irrespective of the need whereas in primary school mentoring it is different – it is neither incorporated, nor mandatory because mentoring for pupils in primary school is initiated only when the need arises in the form or personal, social or relationship issue for the pupil. Although learning mentor is available within the school, every pupil within the school is not mentored as a matter of policy and principle.

The purpose of mentoring in a primary school context is to remove barriers and enable pupils to access learning. This is different from mentoring as discussed in business, employment or healthcare. Mentoring a primary school student can be more difficult particularly due to the possible complex and multiple factors creating such barriers. Whitty (2002) for example, concluded that inequalities in housing, health and other disadvantages have a considerable impact on education and educational inequalities.

At this point it is appropriate to distinguish between mentoring in schools with adults entering the profession through Initial Teacher Training and mentors working with children. Baird (1995), argued that mentors in ITT acted as co-researchers into practice of classroom learning and teaching, as a critical friend who provides positive feedback and provides challenges to effect growth and development. Mentoring encourages NQTs to draw on the expertise of colleagues and refer to sources of information, advice and support from them (TDA, 2007). Learning mentors on the other hand assist the pupils to engage and to participate in the learning process. They enable the pupils manage themselves, and to remove the barriers which hinder that participation.

In ITT mentors are experts and mentee seeks to learn the same activity that is the practical aspects of classroom based teaching. In this aspect, the personal and professional relationship between mentor and mentee is much more comparable than

the relationship between the learning mentor and primary school pupil. This has implications for the power equilibrium and independence is concerned as the mentee in ITT is more capable of making independent decisions and choices than the primary school mentees.

Finally, if the role of the learning mentor needs to be distinguished from mentors working with adults, the current chapter has considered how far their role needs to be distinguished from other adults working in the classroom

3. 6) Primary school learning mentor: Issues to be investigated.

Rogers & Freiberg (1994) compared schools to factories and boxes – passive and detached from the product - and pointed out the long overdue need for them to be transformed into active learning communities working towards a person centred education where pupils are considered partners in school improvement, not merely being subjected to experiments and examinations. The main purpose of major educational interventions such as EiC and ECM has been to achieve this transformation, but the question is how far they have succeeded in this? The purpose of this study is to look for cognisable indications of impact in this direction and this will be achieved by; first, establishing the role of learning mentors and second, evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the role. This is further explained below.

It is also important to evaluate the role of learning mentors because in order to be able to assess the impact of an activity or a phenomenon, there should be a clear idea or understanding about that activity or phenomenon. It is imperative then that to achieve a reasonably realistic evaluation of the impact of the learning mentors, the role should be properly identified and defined. However, the lack of a universally accepted definition, together with the fact that learning mentors work alongside a range of other professionals, means that this role needs to be defined. The preceding discussion has attempted to define what makes a learning mentor distinctive from both adult mentors and other professionals, such as teachers, teaching assistants and counsellors but it remains to be seen how far this is the case in practice. Therefore, this study will attempt to arrive at an acceptable description of the role derived from the evaluation of the activities of learning mentors as they occur in a real life situation and based on

such description, the study proposes to analyse the impact of learning mentors. This has significance as preliminary discussions with learning mentors in the early stages of this project suggested that learning mentors undertake multiple roles including those related to other professionals TAs or Child Protection Officers working in the primary classroom. This aspect deserves further investigation as this could have a very decisive effect on how the role is perceived, performed and what its outcome is.

Secondly, this study will also strive to determine whether the role of learning mentor is a passive one merely fulfilling an obligation to ensure pupils conform and comply or an active role which actively encourages pupils to access learning by affecting necessary changes in outlook, attitude and approach. Consequently, a major focus of the study is the evaluation of the impact of learning mentors on different aspects of primary education such as attendance, attainment, relationship-social and emotional- as well as participation. Impact generally represents a measurable aspect, an effect that is perceptible or detectible. This implies a change, a movement from previous position. Although some reports (Rose & Jones, 2007; Rose & Dovestone, 2008) indicated some progress towards achieving such change, there has been no conclusive evidence. Although the number of learning mentors has witnessed a rapid growth (DfES, 2004) this cannot be construed to mean they are effective or are fulfilling their purpose because in contexts such as this numbers are merely indicators, not evidence.

Thirdly, the impact of mentoring in primary school depends on several factors and these require detailed examination particularly due to the fact that their role is to remove educational barriers. Some of these factors which this study proposes to evaluate are mentioned below.

The role of learning mentor is not undertaken in isolation, but through a partnership between the whole school establishment, including staff, parents and the pupils themselves. Hence, mentors' relationship with other members of staff at the school has considerable influence on mentoring outcome. Therefore, it needs to be seen how far the changing attitude and attainment of the child are the result of mentoring in comparison to other forms of support available.

Fifthly, the relationship between the qualification, expertise and training of learning mentors and their effectiveness needs to be investigated. The learning mentors' motivating factors such as rewards and acknowledgement also deserve attention because they can have significant influence on the performance of learning mentors as individuals and this fact has been highlighted in the initial discussions.

However, it must be acknowledged that there are several difficulties in obtaining a precise measurement of the impact of learning mentors and the most significant of these is the fact that it is not strictly quantifiable. As learning mentors work in collaboration with other staff, programmes and services, it might not be possible to accurately differentiate between the impact of mentoring and that of others. However, despite these reservations the study is intended to produce a much more clearly defined definition of the role of the learning mentor and their impact than exists in current literature.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodological issues and aspects which are applicable to this research are dealt with in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. This chapter examines those aspects which are associated with approaches applied as well as various ethical issues encountered and addressed throughout the course of this research. Particular attention has been paid to specific issues such as consent, assent and access, particularly when conducting research with children and young people. Chapter 5 examines how this research qualifies as a phenomenological case study and the theoretical framework on which this is study is based. Chapter 6 deals with research methods employed for data collection including semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires the purpose of which was different from the traditional use of questionnaires. Chapter 7 explores the process of data analysis particularly Thematic Analysis which was used to analyse data for this study.

4. A. 1) The current research as an inductive approach.

Many of the procedures related to the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data are associated with specific approaches such as grounded theory (Strauss & Corgin, 1990), phenomenology (Mannen, 1990) and discourse analysis (Cheek, 2004; Gee, 2013). In addition to these, there are a number of more generic analytical approaches to managing and interpreting qualitative data which offer a clearly delineated procedure to follow. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) proposed that qualitative research should involve the study of phenomena in their natural settings as an attempt to interpret these in the light of meanings attached to them by people. However, there is no unanimity among researchers as to the precedent that should be given to specific approaches to the analysis of qualitative data (Punch, 2009). While researchers like Miles & Huberman (1994) identified six commonly adopted approaches to educational research, others, for example Tesch (1990), have identified far more. As all researchers in this field suggest, the justification of choice of approach is paramount for any researcher who wishes to demonstrate credibility.

The two major methods of reasoning associated with qualitative research can be described as deductive and inductive approaches. Deductive reasoning works from the more general principles towards the more specific conclusions. The process starts with generalisations, and examines whether these are applicable to specific instances (Hyde, 2000). Therefore, arguments based on rules, laws and generally accepted principles form the basis for deductive reasoning and the conclusions follow from observation and analysis of available facts. Their conclusions are based on proof rather than assumption.

Unlike a deductive approach which favours *apriori* reasoning, an inductive approach uses knowledge derived from sensory experience (Hanna, 2006). Inductive reasoning begins with the observation of specific instances and based on their findings, strives to establish generalisations - it moves from more specific facts and observations to broader theories and generalisations (Burns, 1989; Hyde, 2000). According to Burns (1989) the general orientation of qualitative research is towards construction of theories that are founded on inductive reasoning, while MacNaughton & Rolfe (2010) observed that an inductive approach was common in qualitative studies associated with postmodern and interpretivist paradigms. In Punch's (2009) view, induction is central to the search for regularities in the social world whereby concepts are raised through induction. Jeffreys (1998) maintained that there was a close association between induction and generalisation. According to him, learning is based on experience and this leads to inferences from past experiences and on the basis of such inferences, future experiences are predicted.

This basic difference in both the approaches based on the process is illustrated as below:

Deductive Approach
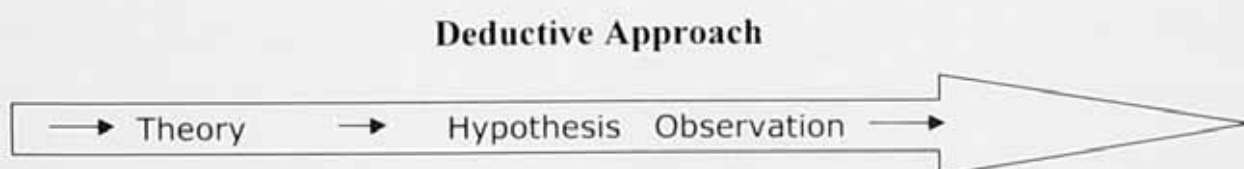
Figure 4.1

Inductive Approach

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Theory ← proposition ← Analysis

Figure 4.2

As illustrated in figures 4.1 and 4.2, both the approaches move in different directions. While a deductive approach begins with theory and confirmation of the theory in specific instances this is the end result, inductive reasoning begins with observation and theory is the final product.

Although these general theories resulting from inductive reasoning follow from specific observations, the approach is subject to some weaknesses. Although qualitative researchers tend to favour inductive reasoning as suggested by Burns (1989), in most instances, theory developed from qualitative investigation in this manner is untested theory and therefore lacks the degree of certainty when compared with the conclusions of deductive reasoning. While deductive reasoning possesses a higher degree of certainty, the inherent weakness associated with generalisation means that because the conclusion are based on premises and hypothesis, there is a lesser degree of uncertainty compared to deductive reasoning.

According to MacNaughton, Rolfe and Blatchford (2010), in the inductive method, the researcher embarks on the research journey with the least amount of expectations and preconceptions. The current study identifies with this view particularly regarding the relationship between the research journey undertaken by the researcher and preconceptions associated with it. The process of embarking on a research project required the researcher to formulate general aims, research questions and epistemological assumptions, but personal disposition permitted the researcher to begin the process without prejudice or preconceived notions. The researcher had limited experience of the environment and the concept of mentoring and primary school learning mentor in particular. The fact that the researcher was unfamiliar with the systems within which the research topic operated as well as his unfamiliarity with the minute details of the topic in particular enhanced the objective and impartial

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consideration of the data as well as the entire research project. This enabled the operation of an inductive method, allowing the data to emerge with the participants acting as the deciding element (MacNaughton, Rolfe and Blatchford 2010). The researcher's role was one of considering and analysing the data as objectively as possible and drawing out conclusion as presented by the data itself. However, it needs to be recognised this had some disadvantages too. The researcher had to make additional efforts in order to familiarise himself with the educational systems and practices and with mentoring in particular. The application of an inductive approach to the current study is illustrated as follows:

Current study as an Inductive Approach

Theory of Role & Impact ←—impact←—analysis←—LM information
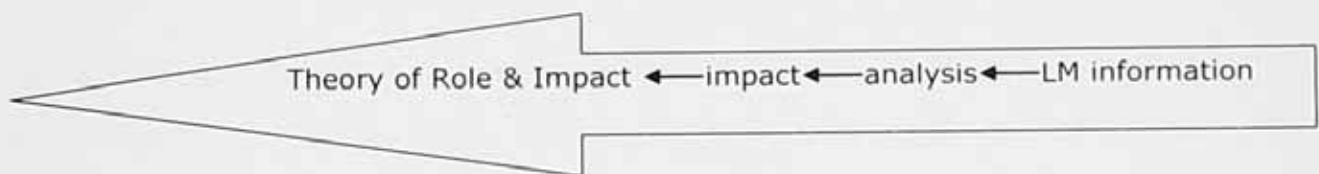
Figure 4.3

4. A. 2) The question of Qualitative versus Quantitative approaches.

According to Punch (2014), the simplest way to differentiate qualitative and quantitative methods of research is based on three factors; the paradigm or the way one approaches the social reality being approached, the methods used to collect data and represent the phenomenon being investigated and finally the data, where quantitative data is often represented in numbers whereas qualitative data is mostly words. Yoshikava *et al.*, (2013) had described quantitative and qualitative research in a similar manner stating that quantitative methods analyse numeric representation of the world or the phenomena being researched, while a qualitative method analyses non-numeric representation such as words, texts, narratives, pictures or observations. They were of the opinion that the world is not inherently qualitative or quantitative, but that it is the historical attempt to represent and interpret the world through numeric or non-numeric systems that makes research about the world qualitative or quantitative. According to Khouri (2010), there is a further difference in that qualitative research seeks to discover meaning and understanding, rather than to verify truth or predict outcomes.

Plowright (2011) writing in the Journal of Mixed Methods Research (established in 2007) challenged the notion that quantitative and qualitative methods were mutually exclusive and argued that they could be used together. Such a movement resulted in a third method which involved the integration of qualitative and quantitative research and data for a research study namely, mixed methods (Creswell, 2014) where the investigator collects qualitative and quantitative data and integrates the information contained therein to interpret the phenomena. It is for the researcher to determine the sequence of collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and also to decide on the priority and weight accorded to each (Ivankova *et al.*, 2006; Creswell, 2014; Schindler & Burkholder, 2014).

In light of this advice, it can be said that the current research is predominantly qualitative in as much as it used semi-structured interviews as a primary method of data collection, and the data collected consisted of words and texts, which according to Creswell (2014) is qualitative in nature. A questionnaire survey method has also been used and although Creswell (2014) identified this as a quantitative method, in this instance, it was used with open ended questions as a means of comparing participants' response to certain questions over a period of time and through using different methods namely face to face semi-structured interviews and questionnaire together in order to verify responses.

4. A. 3) The current study as emancipatory research.

The goal of an emancipatory approach to research according to Letherby (2006) is to address the subject of social enquiry, and Wilson (2001) held its goal as reducing existing injustice. Oliver (1992) echoed the same opinion where he argued that emancipatory research "is about the facilitating of a politics of the possible by confronting social oppression at whatever levels it occurs" (Oliver, 1992, P.110). Although the current research possesses certain features of emancipatory research it does not carry out all the functions of an ethnographic case study which would allow for this description. An emancipatory approach essentially seeks to address inequalities, and the current study investigates learning mentor intervention which looks to reduce inequalities among primary schools pupils particularly with regard to

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their attainment. However, in conducting the current study my view concurs with Oliver's (1992) that empowerment was not a gift, but what people did for themselves and therefore researchers should consider the research task as an activist might in trying to make sense of their actions, rather than as researchers trying to be where the action is (Campbell & Oliver, 1996). Therefore, for the purpose of this research study, mentoring should not be perceived as something that would essentially and automatically remove imbalances but rather as a tool which enabled the mentees to work towards that goal.

4. B) Ethics in research.

Boxall & Ralph (2009) have drawn attention to various developments associated with ethics in research involving human beings and their implications for social science research. Anderson and Arsenault (1998) defined research as the disciplined attempt to address or solve problems through the collection and analysis of data for the purpose of description, explanation, generalisation and prediction. All forms of research are affected by ethical dilemmas and issues which are neither accurately predictable at the outset of the research nor providing prior warnings but capable of occurring at any of the stages or settings of research (Murray 2011; Greig, Taylor & Mackay, 2013; Botwell *et al.*, 2013). As Silverman (2013) said,

> "... because qualitative research inevitably involves contact with human subjects in the field, ethical problems are not usually far away" (p.159).

Despite this inevitability, researchers are expected to ensure a balance between the demand to do justice to their role as researchers but at the same time do justice to the subject matter of their research and protect the rights and values of their subjects or participants (Silverman, 2013; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Greig *et al.* 2013). In the words of Denzin (1989),

> "... our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and studies are given to us under a promise, that promises being that we protect those who have shared them with us". (p. 83)

However, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011), provided a word of caution that it is possible for ethical problems to increase as the transition from the general to the particular takes place. It is in this context that the need for ethical guidelines as well as their role in research has become increasingly important. This development initially emerged as a by-product of the Second World War. Although the subject matter of moral and ethical principles found expression in the policies and guidelines such as The Hague Conventions (Rotabi & Gibbons, 2012), they were confined to the context of armed conflicts. However, after the Second World War and the infamous Nuremburg Trials, the Nuremburg Code was established in 1948 setting up 10 ethical and moral principles relating to research involving human beings (Greig *et al.*, 2013).

4. B. 1) Ethics in Child Centred Research.

Further developments at the Geneva Convention of 1949 drew attention specifically to children and therefore added several other articles intended to safeguard children particularly during conflicts. More recent developments have resulted in the setting up of various organisations such as UNESCO and UNICEF with the precise objective of protecting the interests of children and young people, and these include guidelines for conducting research involving them (Greig *et al.*, 2013). In addition to these broad guidelines, professional groups and organisations have established specific regulations and guidelines for conducting research involving children. Some examples of this are the British Psychological Society (2009), National Children's Bureau, (Shaw *et al.*, 2011), ESRC (2010), BERA (2011) and American Psychological Association (2010).

A significant feature of the earlier guidelines regarding child centred research was the tendency to perceive children as the objects of research, and consequently the need to protect them and ensure their wellbeing (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Sweeting, 2001; Hill, 2005; Alderson, 2008). This perception was also reflected in views and opinions which considered children's lives as being controlled, structured and dictated by adults (Mayall, 2000, 2002). Consequently, children were not used to being asked for their opinion, or their views were disregarded by adults (Cloke, 1997). However, this perception has been marginalised by the new interpretation of children and young

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people as co-researchers as well as independent researchers in their own right (UNICEF, 2006: Alderson, 2008; Murray, 2011; Greig *et al.*, 2013). The purpose of ethical guidelines in the current scenario is not only to protect children and prevent abuse, but also to ensure that their views and opinions are given due consideration because more frequently than ever before, individuals including young children are given the opportunity to voice their opinion on matters affecting them (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). The broad purpose of ethical guidelines is to ensure that the rights of children to form and express their opinion freely on all matters that affect them as provided under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) are upheld and enforced.

Several general factors such as availability of time, access, resources as well as researcher oriented factors such as their goals, training and perception of children, have a significant impact on the way research is conducted, as well as influencing its outcomes. There are several stages and aspects of research where children's interests, participation and representation is safeguarded by ethical considerations. As generally perceived, these include preparation, conduct and dissemination of the research. Each of the above involve two main elements namely, access and informed consent. The following chart is a comprehensive representation of the implications of ethical considerations with regard to the current research.
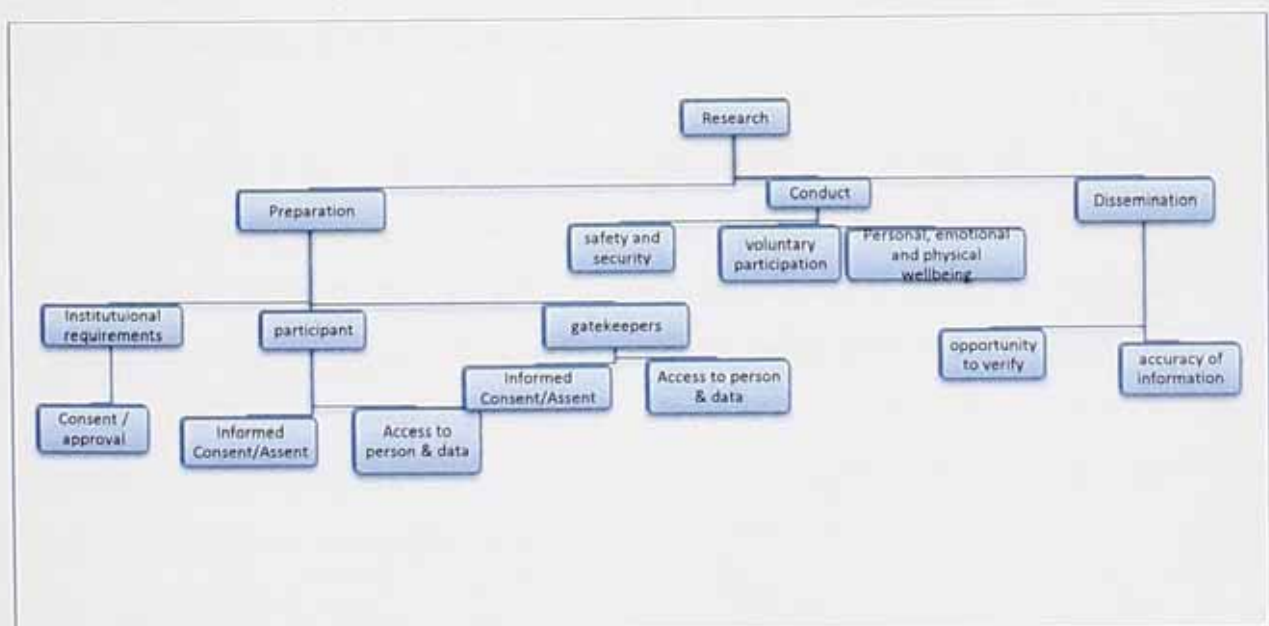
Figure 4.4

4. B. 2) The three main stages in the research project.

In order to achieve a realistic analysis and examination of ethical implications, the current research has been divided into three stages namely preparation, conduct and reporting (the dissemination stage). Adherence to general ethical principles and guidelines such as those established by BERA as well as those required by individual institutions is necessary at every stage of the research not only to comply with these requirements, but also to safeguard the interests of everyone associated with the research.

The preparation stage includes both general preparation for commencing the research, such as constructing a research proposal as well as preparation for specific research activities, such as contacting participants and data collection. This stage is crucial in the identification of possible ethical issues and the various means of addressing them. The second stage which is the most crucial in terms of ethical considerations involves the actual research activities such as data collection which requires contacting research participants or anyone facilitating such interaction. The final stage is the dissemination stage where the researcher makes the findings of the research available to those associated with the research as well as the wider public. At this stage, the researcher is required to negotiate the ideal manner in which information received from participants is made available to a wider population while safeguarding the interests of the participants in particular.

At each of these stages there are three predominant concepts or principles, namely informed consent, gaining access and confidentiality. The researcher is required to address these fundamental principles throughout the research and at the same time negotiate the important task of maintaining the balance between doing justice to the topic and purpose of the research project as well as their own role as researchers (for example, personal development or attaining an academic qualification) which has significant influence on research activities.

At the same time, there are three key players particularly in academic research, namely the **institution, participant, and researcher.** The following section will examine various ethical aspects in relation to these key players in the context of the

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principles of informed consent and access. The purpose of this section is not only to examine the significance of these basic principles in research but also to look the current research and various steps taken to identify different ethical issues, address them appropriately and where it was deemed impossible to address them in a realistic manner, steps taken to minimise their impact.

4. B. 2. i) Institutional Aspect.

The current research has been sanctioned and supervised by an established, authorised and competent institutional body namely The University of Northampton. According to Parsell et al. (2014), securing the approval of ethical bodies is not an easy task and this in turn has the potential to create a sense of anger and frustration among researchers (Isreal & Hay, 2006). Parsell et al. (2014) argued that this was due to the perception that ethics committees in general have the tendency to look at all research through a biomedical lens which in turn could make social science research in particular appear to be restrictive. They further argued that because all ethical guidelines were broadly based on principles enshrined in the Nuremburg Code and Helsinki Declaration (Parsell et al., 2014; Greig et al., 2013), ethical guidelines in educational research even today tend to possess a biomedical characteristic, which can become restrictive. At the same time, the fact that education as a field of study draws on various other disciplines such as psychology, sociology and legal studies only serves to complicate the issue further (McGinn & Bosack, 2004; Shulman, 1988). The situation has not been helped by the fact that educational research is in an era of paradigm proliferation, where traditional positivist research exists alongside interpretivist and participatory research (Bruner, 1996; Donmoyer, 1996; Smith, 1997).

Therefore, apart from ensuring that the research complied with the research and ethical guidelines established by the BERA (2011), in order to comply with statutory requirements, at the preparation stage it was necessary to secure the approval and agree to adhere to the guidelines of The University of Northampton. Accordingly, the researcher, supported by his supervisors and the director of studies, prepared a research proposal which explained in detail the purpose and rationale for the research as well as the process, possible outcomes and implications of the study. The proposal

also contained a detailed description of ethical considerations, which identified possible ethical issues as well as necessary steps to address them or minimise their impact. The proposal paid special attention to issues associated with obtaining the informed consent of all facilitators and participants including children, as well as gaining access to information through individuals and documents in accordance with established ethical principles. The entire proposal was submitted to the Research Degrees Board (RDB) as well as the Research and Ethics Committee (REC) of the University of Northampton. Subsequent to strict evaluation and scrutiny the REC and RDB recommended certain amendments and suggestions to strengthen the proposal and ensure all possible issues were addressed. These were carried out and subsequently, the proposal was granted approval and the research was allowed to proceed. However, the researcher also recognised the fact that the list of possible ethical issues identified in the document were not exhaustive and therefore, it was agreed with the board that in such eventualities, any emerging issues would be brought to the attention of the board along with appropriate remedial measures.

4. B. 2. ii) Participant Aspect.

Although the researcher had broadly identified possible participants based on principles of purposive sampling, this was in order to justify the feasibility of the research which was a requirement to secure the approval of the board, and contact with the participants in any form was not initiated prior to the approval by the RDB and REC. Having secured the approval of the institution, it was necessary to obtain the informed consent of each and every participant individually. The matter was of extreme importance in view of the fact that the research was not only focused on young children of primary school age, but they were also the main participants. The researcher recognised this important fact during the preparation stage as well as during the actual process of data collection and necessary steps were taken to secure informed consent and ensure that access to the participants and any other information was governed by ethical guidelines.

4. B. 3) Consent and Access.

Anderson and Arsenault (1998) described research as the disciplined attempt to address or solve problems through the collection and analysis of data, whereas Shuttleworth (2008) described it as a process of steps in gathering of data, information and facts for the advancement of knowledge. Such general descriptions as well as the use of terms 'steps' and 'process' in particular suggest that research is not an isolated, single phase activity but a set of activities which form various stages of a complex process in order to achieve a specific goal which might be solution to a specific problem in its narrow sense or in a much wider context, advancement of knowledge. It is possible to argue from such descriptions of research that the human element is invariably influential in all research. Research involves interactions between the researcher and researched in different ways and in varying degrees. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the interests of both parties are safeguarded particularly within the context of such interactions. As far as child centred research is concerned, the area of focus in such interactions is informed consent and access and therefore, they constitute the most important subjects of ethical considerations. The following sections will include a detailed examination of these aspects and their implications for the current research.

4. B. 4) Informed consent.

Consent is the most essential part of ethics in any research. The Nuremburg Code (Irving, 2013) which laid the foundation for ethics in research (Ghooi, 2011; Annas & Grodin, 2011) stipulated that it must be a properly informed consent and it must be given of free will (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). In their view, consent allows both the researcher and the participants to avoid occasions or allegations of abuse, feeling exploited, deceived or used. Informed consent requires that the participants be provided with adequate information regarding the scope and purpose of the research, the extent of participation requested the possible outcomes of the research, any negative impacts of the research and possible benefits or detrimental effects. Such information must be provided prior to securing consent of the participant.

Consent can be either explicit or implicit. Participants in an semi-structured interview for example are required to give explicit consent, usually in writing, prior to the actual

interview, whereas someone participating in a questionnaire survey can be deemed to have provided the consent implicitly by their very act of responding to the questionnaire (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; Alderson & Morrow, 2011). Again, consent can be either written or oral. Although, it is ideal to secure the consent in writing, participants may also provide consent verbally prior to participating in the interview. It can also be one off consent where the participant provides a comprehensive consent at the beginning of the project to encompass any activity associated with that particular project. On the other hand, depending on the convenience and satisfaction of the parties and the project involved, the participant might be required to provide consent for each individual activity.

The current ideas of children's consent for research involving themselves, are broadly governed by guidelines established under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989). It's various articles strive to safeguard the interests of child participants in research. Although compared to biomedical research, educational and social science research carry a lesser degree of the risk of coercion, it is not altogether absent. While Article 12 of the convention is designed to ensure that view and opinions of children are given due consideration, Article 14 strives to ensure freedom of thought and conscience. Several Articles such as 17, 19, 32, 36 and 37 are designed to prevent abuse, exploitation and unlawful interference with the privacy, honour and reputation of the child.

4. B. 5) Parental consent and children's assent.

Decisions over consent and access are very often influenced by the age and competence of children. There are arguments for and against the ability of children to give informed consent before certain age, but there is no consensus. In certain instances, it is even legally held that children's consent, strictly speaking, is not consent (European Council, 2001; Miller, 2004). Despite evidence demonstrating children's ability to understand and process information from a fairly early stage, they are reluctantly deemed capable of taking independent decision to participate in research. (Gopnick *et al.*, 1999; McDowal, 2010; Murray, 2011; Gray, 2012). Beazly *et al.*, (2009) were of the view that the theme of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was to ensure children's right to be properly protected within the research

process as envisaged in Articles 3,12,13,17 and 36. According to Weithorn & Sherer (1994) and Hill (2005), considering children as equal partners in research involving them, is a powerful way of recognising their ability and sense of control. However, there is no scientifically established process to ascertain beyond reasonable doubt the exact age at which children are deemed capable of giving consent. It is for this reason that Weithorn and Sherer (1994) insisted that rather than treating children as a class and dismissing them as incapable of giving consent, each child should be assessed on individual merits and based on the purpose and nature of the particular research.

In view of a perceived lack of concurrence on whether children were capable of independently giving consent for research, Articles 3, 5, 14 and 18 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989, 2009) provide that the parents might give consent on behalf of and according to the capabilities of the child. In some cases, it may even be possible for teachers to give consent on behalf of the child in situations where they are deemed to be *in loco parentis*. However, it is necessary that the children agree to be participants and this is identified as assent or their acceptance to be participants in the research. In certain instances of social science research which involves minimal risk (Ross, 2006) and the direct benefits can be achieved only through such research, it is perceived as permissible to conduct research with assent rather than consent (Ross, 2006; BPS, 2009). Assent indicates consent provided by the parent along with the child's agreement to participate in the research but to be considered valid both must be secured prior to conducting the research.

In summary, assent indicates three significant concepts; first, assent is considered a form of consent or agreement by minors who are perceived as not having the legal competence to give consent. Secondly, assent indicates capacity of children to understand some, but not all issues and implications, particularly the more complex aspects associated with providing consent. Thirdly, and in a negative perspective, assent may also indicate a passive state where the child is insufficiently informed, too afraid or ignorant to be able to refuse consent (Ross, 2006).

However, the concept of assent is fraught with issues. For one, there is the possibility that children's assent may be used to cover up children's refusal (Ross, 2006). Although it is advisable and desirable to obtain the consent of the parent along with assent of the child, according to Alderson & Morrow (2011), it can prove to be a hazard because of several factors such as time constraints or even some teacher's insistence that their pupils are capable of giving consent. Yet they argued that it was safest and in the best interest of everyone to obtain consent as well as assent, should a conflict or contest arise later on.

The dual concepts of consent and assent bring about the possibility of conflict between the two. Skelton (2008) pointed out the very real possibility of one party agreeing while the other disagrees. For example, a parent might provide consent, but the child might refuse assent for fear of any personal wrongdoing, such as substance abuse being brought to light. On the other hand, the child might happily give assent while parent refuses consent to prevent detection of child abuse or neglect (Hart & Lansdown, 2002).

As far as the current research was concerned, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Efforts were also taken to ensure that consent/assent of concerned parties was obtained in a manner which was considered reasonable and appropriate. Accordingly, first of all, the permission of an appropriate authority at each institution was secured after providing them with all necessary information regarding the research project, and evidence of approval by the supervising institution was made available. Subsequently, their written consent for the conduct of the project was secured along with permission to contact prospective participants, including learning mentors, teachers, pupils and parents. Here, it is important to point out that the principle of purposive sampling was employed to identify potential participants. As the first step in sample selection, the project was presented to a group of learning mentors led by the Excellence Cluster manager. They were provided with statement of purpose and process involved in the project and the opportunity to seek further information associated with the research directly from the researcher and first supervisor, who was also the director of studies. Although a number of learning mentors initially expressed desire to participate in the research, some of them

eventually withdrew from the project without citing particular reasons. As the research project progressed, another one of the learning mentors expressed inability to participate due to time constraints.

In accordance with the principle of snowball sampling which was used for this study, the learning mentors were then approached to identify possible participants from among several mentees. These mentees and their parents were provided written information with regard to the aims and objectives, possible implications as well as the process involved in the research. They were also provided with an opportunity to seek further information directly from the researcher if they so wished. In view of the age of the children participating in the research, a separate information documents (Appendix 3) which explained the project in simple words without technical jargon were made available to potential child participants and their parents. The research details were shared with the learning mentors and their help was enlisted to inform participating students and provide clarifications if they needed particularly if the researcher was not personally available to provide them the information. Additionally, taking into account the advice of Alderson & Morrow (2011), the consent of the parent as well as consent/assent of the child was obtained on the same document. This also served to ensure that the parent and child were able to consult each other about their participation in the project, thereby avoiding the danger of one sided consent/assent as pointed out by Ross (2006). In order to further avoid conflict, the professionals within the schools were involved in securing the consent of the parent and the child. The freedom and independence of the participants was highlighted by the fact that one of the parent participants who took the initiative of approaching the researcher, ultimately withdrew from the research minutes before their planned interaction citing anxiety and panic as the reason.

Here, it must be pointed out that documents such as an information sheet for participants were prepared over several stages and with guidance and suggestions from supervisors and other researchers within the School of Education. For example, the participant information documents for various participants were scrutinised and reviewed by supervisors during tutorials and by other active researchers during the School of Education research support meeting. The suggestions received at these

interactions resulted in improving the language and expression to meet the adequate standard and at the same time address many of the ethical dilemmas. These statements were presented to the Research Degrees Board and the University's Ethics Committee for approval prior to being circulated among participants.

These measures were taken to ensure that all possible steps were taken to obtain informed consent from all participants. At the same time, steps were also taken to diminish the impact of possible conflict with regard to consent/assent.

4. C) Access.

Giving consent or assent is only one aspect of participating in research. Subsequently, the actual process of research or data collection taking place and this stage can present several difficulties. There were several elements which contributed towards the challenges including the commonly recognised issue of gatekeepers to other elements which were inherent in the researcher-participant relationship such as significant cultural and other background differences. This in turn also affected gaining access to the information contained in the data.

Adults are often the first point of contact to gain access to children (Hill, 2005) and it was no different in the current research with regard to the 'gatekeepers' phenomenon. Despite apprehensions regarding institutional participation, the learning mentors' partnership made it easier for the researcher to present the project to the heads of institutions. This also ensured that the gatekeeper effect was minimised to a certain extent. Although snowball sampling allowed the researcher to reassure participants and identify participants in a time bound manner, it presented the possibility of bias as the participants were selected by the learning mentors whose role and performance was being investigated as part of the research. This impact was, however, minimised by providing participating mentees with maximum privacy while keeping their safety, welfare, comfort and child protection regulations as a priority. Steps were taken to ensure that a responsible adult was present and visible to the child but that they could not hear the child or influence their responses. Being semi-structured in form, the child was allowed to lead the interview with the researcher only ensuring that it remained within the subject area of the child's experience of mentoring in that

particular school. The issues surrounded the parents who were selected to participate in the interview but they were not accompanied by anyone else and this provided them opportunity to provide unbiased view.

With regard to physical access, the schools and participants were given complete and absolute freedom. Although there isn't a particular time of the year which is ideal for research activities in a school (Beauchamp and Houghton, 2012), every effort was made to ensure that the disruption to the school and classroom routine was kept to the minimum. To achieve this, each participant and all the schools were allowed decide the date, time and place for the interview to take place. However, in order to ensure protection and safety of all participants and to ensure ease of access in physical terms, participants were reminded that that ideally, interviews and other data collection activities were held within the school premises of each participant.

Another possible issue associated with access was the personal, cultural and linguistic difference between the researcher and participants. Certain difficulties were identified on both sides in understanding idiosyncratic use of expressions or language. However, in view of the researcher's recent experience within local schools, it was considered that such issues were insignificant and unlikely to impact upon the outcome of the process. The support of the supervisors who were familiar with the language and system was deemed sufficient to address any difficulties which arose in this regard. The fact that the researcher was accompanied by and introduced to other participants by a familiar adult who helped explain the project and process helped minimise the effect.

4. D) Dissemination.

Dissemination is the third stage of the research activity where ethical considerations become significant. Song *et al.*, (2010) noted that dissemination of research findings face the danger of being biased depending on circumstances. According to them, research projects with positive findings are likely to be disseminated more favourably than those with negative findings. Although ethical requirements were fulfilled by making provisions for the participants to verify and amend their statements, particularly in the interview method, the researcher has the responsibility to report the

actual findings of the study in a method and language that is easier for participants to understand because as Sandelowski and Leeman (2012) stated, the findings of qualitative studies are sometimes presented in a format that is difficult to understand which in turn hinders implementation. Added to this drawback is the concern about children's capacity to understand and respond to abstract ideas and concepts (Brodzinsky, Singer & Braff, 1984; Berti & Bombi, 1988; Mathews, 1992; Hill, 2005; Siegal, 2013). Siegal (2013) attributed this to the difference between the conversational worlds of adults and children. Therefore, Sandelowski & Leeman (2012) suggested adopting different strategies, for example creating thematic statements of findings which will be easier to translate into intervention and implementation. Taking the above discussion into consideration, one of the objectives of this research project is to prepare a research report which can be easily be understood by primary school children and their parents who were the most important participants in this project. Efforts will also be made to make such report accessible to all those who stand to benefit from learning mentor intervention.

CHAPTER 5.

METHODOLOGY II. RESEARCH METHOD

5. 1) The current research project as a phenomenological case study.

In this chapter the methodological approach adopted for this study is discussed in detail, and alternative methodologies are briefly considered. However, as an emerging researcher, an important principle I was made aware was that there is no hierarchy among the various research methods. Some are more appropriate for a particular instance than another method but this in no way indicates that one method is better or more important than the others. The following discussion is based on this principle. Yin (2014) argued that discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of various research methods must go beyond the hierarchical stereotype. The aim of this research was to study the concept of mentoring in primary schools and how it was implemented in actual situation through the lived experience of individuals associated with the process. Therefore, a phenomenological case study approach was considered appropriate for the current research. There are several reasons for this choice and a brief look at the foundation and principle of both phenomenology and case study method will explain this.

Although it is possible to trace back the origin of phenomenology to Kant and Hagel, Vandenberg (1997) considered Edmund Husserl as the pioneer of phenomenology in the twentieth century. Phenomenological approach strives to comprehend the matter from the perspective of the knowledge and perceptions of specific participating groups. Thus phenomenology is an inductive idiographic approach to subjective experience which is flexible, dependent on the phenomenon and its recounting (Parry, 2003). As Denscombe (2010) and Welman & Kruger (1999), suggested, the primary concern of phenomenology is not to explain the causes of what happens but to describe how social and psychological phenomena are experienced by those involved. A researcher applying phenomenology is concerned with the lived experiences of the people (Greene, 1997; Holloway, 1997; Kruger, 1988; Kvale, 1996; Maypole & Davies, 2001; Robinson & Reed, 1998) involved, or who were involved, with the issue that is being researched.

However, Giorgi (as cited in Stones, 1988), explained that the researcher must carry out the fundamental principle in phenomenological research which is describing with accuracy and without a predetermined framework but at the same time remaining true to the facts. Although Holloway (1997) and Hycer (1999) commented on the reluctance of researchers using phenomenology to adhere to prescribed techniques or specific steps, there is no denying that it is necessary to have some guidelines for the smooth conduct of even phenomenological studies. Therefore, although following phenomenology, the current study also employed case study method.

5. 2) Epistemology

According to Hussey & Hussey, (1997), there are three commonly accepted principles of research namely that research is a process of enquiry and investigation, that it is systematic and methodical and that it increases knowledge. Within the context of the third principle, Carter & Little, (2007) argued, it is impossible to engage in such increase or creation of knowledge without at least a tacit assumption about what knowledge is and how it is constructed. Epistemology has been commonly defined as the theory of knowledge or that branch of philosophy which deals with the nature, scope and source of knowledge (DeRose, 2002; Schwandt, 2001; Whitcomb, 2011; Neta, 2014). In other words, in the context of qualitative research, epistemology deals with the process through which knowledge is constructed. Harding (1987) considered epistemological issues as issues concerning an adequate theory of knowledge or justificatory strategy and for this reason, epistemology can be viewed as justification of knowledge (Carter & Little, 2007; Williamson *et al.*, 2013). According to Carter & Little (2007) epistemology influences methodology, implementation of method and form, voice and representation in the method. In other words, depending on the researcher's epistemological positions, they will be drawn to different methodologies or even different variants of the same methodology. Similarly, epistemology will also influence the researcher's conceptualisation of the participants in research, either as active contributors or passive subjects. Finally, epistemology defines the researcher's conceptualisation of his/her audience and how the researcher communicates with this audience and various participants.

According to Creswell (1994) and Holloway (1997), a researcher's epistemology is his/her theory of knowledge which determines how the research will proceed to study the social phenomena. In the context of my current study, the epistemological positioning is explained as follows. Firstly, I was of the conviction that data was contained within the perspectives and perceptions of the participants in the learning mentor programme in primary schools in England. These participants included the learning mentors, the mentees and parents of the mentees, teachers and other co-ordinators of the programme. Secondly, because of such conviction, it was considered necessary to engage with participants in order to collect meaningful data and the selection of data collection methods was guided by this positioning.

5. 3) What is a case study?

Because the main purpose and process of the current research was the exploration of the phenomenon of mentoring including the role performed by the learning mentors as well as the impact of mentoring within primary schools, a case study approach focused upon this environment was considered most appropriate. As for the question about defining the nature and definition of case studies, there has been a tendency to consider case study research as an explanatory stage of other research methods and as a result, case study was not considered a research method at all (Yin, 2014). However the situation has undergone changes and according to Yin (2014), case study is now a common research method in many fields such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and social work and Yin has agreed with Stake's (1995) observation that case study has been gaining popularity within educational research. In Yin's (2014) opinion, interest in case studies is prompted by the desire to understand complex social phenomena. Case study can be described as an empirical inquiry which investigates a particular phenomenon in a real life situation within which it occurs. In Hamilton's (2011) opinion, a case study approach strives to build a picture of the research topic through various methods of data collection to gather the views, perceptions and experiences of various individuals associated with the particular case. Although definition is important not only for understanding the concept of case study but also to answer a number of associated questions (Yin, 2014), there was a longstanding absence of clear consensus about the definition and understanding of case study. This

was despite a wide range of examples and references to case studies (Lincoln and Guba, 1985)

5. 3. i) Definitions of case study.

According to Eisenhardt (2002),

"The case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings" (Eisenhardt, 2002. p.8).

Thomas (2011) defined case study saying,

"Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame — an object — within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates." (Thomas, 2011. p.23)

However, Bassey (1999), Yin (1984, 1993), Kemmis (1980), Stenhouse (1985) and others held the view that case study research in social sciences was different from experimental research by virtue of the fact that it is an enquiry conducted in a real life context and unlike the experimenter who manipulates the variables in an effort to establish their causal relationship, case study researcher observes the case in order to understand or explain the phenomena that is under investigation. Case study is a distinctive form of empirical enquiry (Yin, 2014). Bassey (1999) argued that case study which is systematic, critical enquiry aimed at contributing to the advancement of knowledge and wisdom is a genuine research.

According to Stenhouse (1985) case study method involves collection and recording of data about a case or cases and the preparation of a report or a presentation of the case whereas Sturman (1994), considered case study to be a generic term for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon. The latter perception has the

potential to raise confusion as to whether the term 'case' refers to a single instance or multiple instances.

Yin (2014) cautioned against confusing case study with fieldwork due to definitional shortcomings. He held that there are two parts in the definition and understanding of case study where the first part relates to the scope of case study and is considered an empirical inquiry which investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the real-world context may not be clearly evident (Yin, 2014). According to the second part which focuses on the features of case study, it is an inquiry which copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data indicates and as one of the results, it relies on multiple sources of evidence with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion and the result is that it benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014). Hamilton (2011) argued that triangulation enhances the quality of the research by providing a more accurate and robust view of the case. It may be noted that while Yin's (2014) definition had a predominantly realistic/positivistic leaning, Stake (1995) leaned more towards interpretive paradigm.

5. 4) Categorisation of case studies.

As briefly mentioned earlier on, various authors have assigned different types of case studies to various categories based on the purpose of the research. A more detailed discussion would facilitate a better understanding of the current research. According to Bassey (1999), there are three categories of case studies, namely theory seeking and theory testing case studies, storytelling and picture drawing case study and evaluative case study. In his view, the theory seeking/theory testing case studies are the most useful as they facilitate fussy generalisation and he argued that it enables educational researchers to defend their research activity as being meaningful. Silverman (2013) too had stressed the importance of generalizability within the context of case study research. The concept of generalisation will be examined later on in section 7 of this chapter. There have also been some perceptions of similarity between Bassey's (1999) theory seeking / theory testing category and the two categories of case studies identified by Yin (1993) namely, exploratory case study and

explanatory case study respectively. Bassey (1999) dealt with another category identified by Stenhouse (1985) namely, evaluative case study in which a single or collection of cases is studies to judge the merit and worth of policies, programmes and institutions for the benefit of policy or decision makers. Zinal (2007) explained that the concept has remained the same and described this category as educational research which strives to assess the effectiveness of educational policies or practices. This description reflects Bassey's definition of evaluative case study where he said case studies were,

> "Enquiries which set out to explore some educational programme, system, project or event in order to focus on its worthwhileness. The case may be tightly structured as an examination of the extent to which the programmes stated objectives have been achieved..." (Bassey, 1999. p.63).

Different researchers have proposed other categories/styles of case studies on the basis of different norms and criteria. For example, Stenhouse (1985) identified four broad styles of case study namely, ethnographic case study, evaluative case study, educational case study and action research case study. However, in the light of the above discussion, the current research is to be considered to belong in the category of evaluative case study. This is mainly because as stated in the above quote, the purpose of my research is to enquire whether and to what extent the learning mentor programme within primary schools have been able to achieve their goal and purpose. This however does not assume that such an evaluation could not be carried out any other categories of case study, but only that in this particular instance, an evaluative case study would be best suited.

5. 4. i) Single case studies and multiple case studies.

Another basis for categorisation which has been cited by Stenhouse (1985), was the number of cases included in the study. As the name suggests, it could be the study of a single case or contain multiple cases (Yin, 2014; Bassey 1999). Although they provided wide-ranging details about the case being investigated, single case studies have been criticised for being susceptible to incorrect inferences based on erroneous measurement, particularly in quantitative research (George & Bennett, 2005).

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However, they also recommended that this criticism can be overcome by undertaking multiple observations of the single case. For example, one of the rationale offered by Yin (2014) for selecting a single case study was that it would be a longitudinal case where it is studied over separate points of time.

On the other hand, case study could include multiple cases (Stenhouse, 1985; Bassey, 1999; Silverman, 2013; Yin, 2014). The current study closely resembles the example of multiple case study provided by Yin (2014) namely the study of school innovations where each school becomes an individual case but the study as a whole includes several of such individual cases. The current research has been classified as a multiple case study for a number of reasons but mainly because there were six different schools which were part of the study. The study examined how the learning mentor initiative was implemented in each of these individual schools, thus fulfilling the characteristics of a multiple case study. Furthermore, as explained later on in section 6.1 which deals with sampling issues, this study was conducted using data collected from multiple groups of participants including mentees, parents of mentees, learning mentors and teachers. In those schools which had more than one leaning mentor, the study also looked at different groups which were led by different learning mentors and consisted of different pupils, parents, and teachers. At the same time these separate groups were also part of each school which were single individual cases within the research study as one case study. In other words, this study consisted of various levels of multiple case studies. Therefore, as a multiple case study, the current study can be considered to have addressed some of the weakness associated with single case studies.

5. 5) Sampling issues in case study research.

Siggelkow (2007) and Hamilton (2011) highlighted sampling issues associated with case studies. In addition to the issue of numbers, case studies are sometimes accused of biased samples. However, they argued that in a case study, it may not be possible to select a representative sample, and it may not even be ideal that the sample is representative of a particular population rather resort to purposive sampling which selects cases which possess the specific profile under investigation. In this context, Siggelkow (2007) highlighted the question of number of samples. Although the

question of number of cases being studied is associated with the generalizability of the theory, it was argued that under certain circumstances, even a single case research cannot be summarily dismissed due to lack of huge numbers. It was also argued that the aim of case studies should not be negate existing theories or prove them wrong but provoke new ideas.

Yin (1989) argued that interviews and documents are part of a group of six sources of evidence for case studies which included direct observation, participant observation, physical artefacts and archival records. In line with the principle of mixed methods research, multiple sources of evidence enhance the concurrent validity of the case (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Practical as well as theoretical aspects of sampling and data collection within the context of this research are discussed in chapter 6, section 2.

5. 6) Case study method and generalisation. Fuzzy generalisation, and applying principles of generalisation in the present case. Why is it crucial?

At the beginning of this chapter the characteristics of this research study as a case study were examined and as Cohen & Manion (1980) pointed out, one of the main aims of case studies is generalisation about the population. As Polit and Hungler (2004) state, generalizability indicates the extent or degree to which findings about the particular sample being studied are capable of being applied to the population. But an important question which arises in any discussion about the relationship between case study research and the concept of generalisation is whether a single instance is sufficient to establish generalizability. While Yin (2009) was cautious about the limited scope of generalizability of case studies, Bassey (2001) used the term 'open generalisation' which stated that a specific activity, if conducted in exactly the same manner as specifically done on a previous occasion, will produce the same outcome, irrespective of the location, time or the personal characteristics of the individual conducting the activity.

The phrase 'fuzzy generalisation' has been used by Bassey (2001) to argue the generalizability of case studies in respect of relatively small samples. However, the concept of fuzzy generalisation is not exclusive to social science or educational

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research (Kosko, 1994; Zadeh, 1997; Mi & Zhang, 2004; Majumdar & Samanta, 2010). According to Bassey (1999), generalisation in physical sciences are perceived as being associated with absolute truth. However, he argued that such generalisation based on absolute truth and irrefutability is impossible in educational research. This is why the concept of fuzzy generalisation is important because it was claimed that evidence based on data it is possible to conclude that it is either possible, likely or unlikely that singularities could occur in similar situations. Bassey (1999, 2001) argued that this is a qualitative statement rather than absolute certain claim and therefore used Fourali's (1997) term 'fuzzy' to refer to possibility of generalisation which was true in 'most' cases but not necessarily in 'all cases. Bassey (2001) explained the difference using two forms of statements – in scientific generalisation, 'particular events do lead to particular consequences' whereas in fuzzy generalisation, 'particular events 'may' lead to particular consequences'.

However, the concept of generalisation cannot be summarised in these two statements. As far as scientific generalisation is concerned, defining the limited number of significant variables will enable generalisation and prediction of events/results. However, the fact that educational research like other social science research deals with large number of variables and these variables are invariably linked to individuals who are different from each other makes it extremely difficult to achieve generalisation (Bassey, 2001). However, despite a number of criticisms he raised, Hammersley (2001) agreed that the concept of fuzzy generalisation proposed by Bassey was of considerable value. In his view, it is useful in the formulation of theoretical knowledge of causal relationship between concepts. He also argues that the issue of multiplicity of variables is not confined to social sciences as Bassey (2001) argued but in fact it affects physical sciences too. Hammersley's (2001) view is that it can only tell what 'could' happen provided specific conditions existed. For him, the purpose of generalisation whether fuzzy or otherwise is to facilitate sensible judgements about what is likely to happen and suggest best course of action in such an event. It is in this sense that I would apply generalizability to the current research so that the service providers and service users in the learning mentor intervention are able to make sensible judgements for the best possible outcomes.

5. 7) This research project as a case study.

As the foregoing discussion on methodologies have shown, I adopted a phenomenological, interpretivist orientation which relies on an ideographic, inductive generation of theory and used semi-structured interviews and template analysis to generate categories. I adopted a case study method due to its various advantages some of which were described by Adelman *et al.* (1980) and endorsed by Nisbet & Watt, (1984) and Bassey (1999). The main advantage is that although difficult to organise when compared to other research data, case study data was strong in reality. Another advantage of case study research from which this study benefited is that it recognises the fact that social truths are both complex and embedded in social situations. Case studies in their opinion are able to offer support to alternative interpretations arising from different or conflicting viewpoints of participants. As Bassey (1999) pointed out, compared to other kinds of research reports, case studies present research data in a publicly accessible form. One of the most important strengths of case studies is that they begin in a world of action, they are conducted in that world of action and finally, they contribute to that world of action by being able to be interpreted and put to actual use. In the case of this study, it is grounded in a world of actions namely the learning mentor intervention and as such involved nearly everyone who is associated with the learning experience of the mentee such as the learning mentor, parents and teachers. As Nisbet & Watt (1984) pointed out, case studies are able to focus on certain unique features which could escape a large scale research but in fact could be key to understanding the phenomenon and the findings, they argued are more easily understood. Another notable advantage of case studies is that it is easier for individual researchers such as PhD candidates to undertake them as they do not necessarily require a large team of researchers. A further benefit of case studies, again fully applicable to the current study is the possibility of studying unanticipated and uncontrolled events and variables (Cohen Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Despite the list of advantages mentioned, case studies suffer from a number of weaknesses too. The main weaknesses of the case study method was the aforementioned issue of generalizability where the question whether genuine generalisation can take place where n=1. Idiographic nature of case studies only served to restrict the generalizability as pointed out by Yin (2009). As Nisbet & Watt

(1984) pointed out, their generalizability could be restricted to its application being recognised by other researchers. Although Bassey (1999, 2001) argued in favour of fuzzy generalisation, there is still the issue of bias and subjectivity which results from limited possibility of verification and cross-checking as highlighted by Nisbet & Watt (1984) and Cohen *et al.,* (2011). However, as Robson (2002) and Yin (2009) responded, case studies opt for analytic generalisation as different from statistical generalisation in other methods. Therefore, while statistical generalisation is concerned with frequencies, statistical significance and effect size, analytical generalisation is less concerned about sample size as its ability to contribute to the generalisation of the theory because the case represents itself (Stenhouse, 1978; Stake, 1995; Verschuren, 2003; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Besides, Silverman (2013) pointed out that the goal of case study research is not to enumerate the frequency or count the number of instances where particular case has occurred but to arrive at a reasoning based on deductive inference. This according to him is because the focus of case studies is on social relations, not merely individuals. Flyvbjerg (2006) held the view that all arguments against case study research were based on certain misunderstandings such as a perception that theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical knowledge. Another misunderstanding is that due to difficulty in generalisation, case study cannot contribute to scientific development which leads to a perception of case studies as being useful only for generating hypothesis rather than testing them.

5. 8) Theoretical framework.

The motivation for the use of theory in the earlier stages of interpretive case studies is to create an initial theoretical framework which takes account of previous knowledge, and which creates a sensible theoretical basis to inform the topics and approach of the early empirical work.

The current study is based upon the Ecological Systems Theory propounded by Bronfenbrenner (1979). This theory maintains that the environment in which children live and learn is made up of different systems, and that these systems play an influential role in the child's development. These systems are Microsystems, Mesosystems, Exosystems, Macrosystems and Chronosystems. Microsystems which

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are closest to the child and consist of the most intimate individuals and setting within which the child lives such as family members, school or friends. The next layer forms the mesosystems which are the relationships between the Microsystems, for example the relationship between the parent and the school. Exosystems are situated next to mesosystems and these are the events or situations which have an impact on mesosystems. For example, issues at a parent's workplace can affect the state of affairs at home. Next layer is the macrosystems which are the larger cultural environments surrounding the family such as the economic status of the locality. The outermost layer is the chronosystem which is related to transitional events that affect the child such as transition from one stage of schooling to another or from one school to another.

Although these systems influence the psychological development of the child in various degrees, the main focus of the study was the microsystems or school. The learning mentors were at the core of the microsystem also which included other players such as teachers, parents and other professionals. It is important to note that these different components of the microsystems overlap because although the main agent who implements the mentoring intervention is the learning mentor, the entire process is also influenced by the others. For example, the teacher plays a significant role as the adult individual who is most closely associated with the academic activities of the child while parents have the strongest influence on the children's lives. By being present in the class rooms in particular and the school in general, other professionals such as teaching assistants, playground supervisors and dinner time supervisors have certain influence. Although not represented in the diagram, peers of the mentees too have certain influences on the implementation and impact of the learning mentor intervention. The fact that they exist within the microsystem and the mentee interacts with all of them is the basis for their overlapping. This concept of the theoretical framework is represented in the following figure.
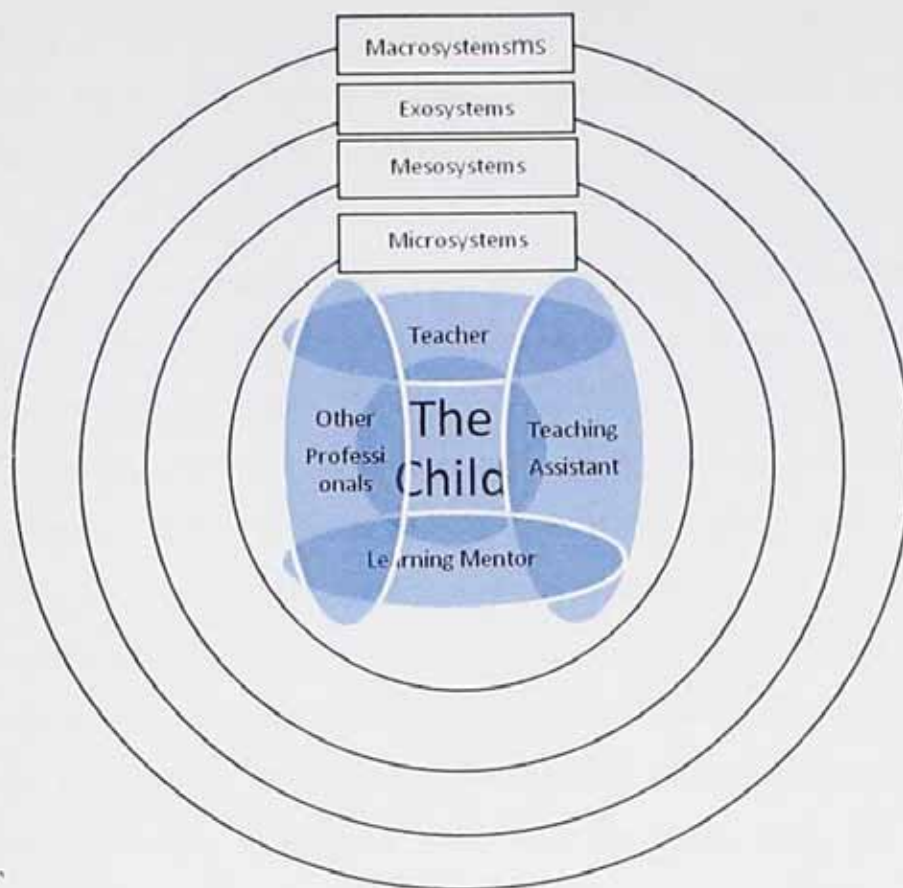
Figure 5.1 (Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory)

CHAPTER 6

METHODOLOGY III: SAMPLING - IMPORTANCE OF SAMPLE SELECTION IN RESEARCH PROJECTS

Robson (2011) has emphasised the importance of sampling as a means of ensuring that those fragments of information and evidence which are gathered during the research process can be co-ordinated in a systematic way and related to a specific population. He suggests that the process of defining an appropriate sample for a project is a critical factor in being able to justify the findings extracted from data. Mason (1996) has argued that qualitative research should arrive at results that are in some way generalisable. Generalisability is the extent to which the findings of an individual study may be applicable to more general situations. In small scale research this presents a particular challenge, as outlined by Hedges (2004) who states that because it is impossible to study all members of a population (such as all learning mentors) it is difficult to achieve a sample that enables generalisation. However, as Bassey (2003) has indicated, even small studies that are based upon carefully constructed samples may enable a degree of "fuzzy generalisation" whereby it is possible to make suppositions about data and to discuss this in terms of what might be typical of a broader sample.

Seale (2004) defines a sample as a selection from within a wider population to which the research findings could be attributed by means of generalisation. In other words, through sampling, we are able to make inferences about the relationship of a particular characteristic which is investigated with the whole population from which the sample was selected. Population (also sometimes called the sampling frame) includes everything within a particular category and according to Burton et al., (2008) is not just 'people' but the total number of units involved in the research which could be people, organisations, objects, places, organisms or animals. Clearly in relation to educational research our sample is generally made up of individual people who may play different roles, such as teachers, pupils or learning mentors.

Hedges (2004) described a sample as a miniature model representing an overall population of similar characteristics, but at the same time he pointed out the fact that

it was only a part of the population and hence it is not to be considered an exact replica of that population. However, the resemblance of the sample to the population as far as possible to the characteristics under investigation enable researchers to arrive at inferences regarding the broader population but is dependent on several factors such as the size of the sample and the method of selection.

In the opinion of Curtis *et al.,* (2000), it is not possible to have a universal set of sampling criteria. However, if this is taken simply at face value this does leave room for disorganised selection because as Coyne (1997) and Robson (2011) argued, all aspects associated with sample selection is of vital importance in any qualitative research. Similarly Patton (1990) pointed out that the process and results of sample selection have a profound impact on research outcomes. Therefore, in the absence of a universal criterion, Miles & Huberman (1994) highlighted the need to select samples based on an agreed and reasonable set of criteria.

The sample –also sometimes referred to as participants - has equal importance to the working practices of the researcher him/herself and there are a number of factors that influence the selection of samples such as feasibility, time frame, research framework and the extent of representation of population (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Samples can often be a compromise based upon the opportunities that exist for the individual researcher to devote time to field work. For this reason an important criteria for sample selection is to enquire if it will serve to influence and improve the issues which are of central importance to the research within the timeframe available to the researcher (Stenhouse, 1980).

6. 1) Types of samples.

Sampling methods are generally divided into probability samples and non-probability samples (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Hedges, 2004; Robson, 2011). As the term suggests, in probability sampling, every unit of the population has an equal chance or possibility of being selected as a part of the sample. Such selection is done on a random basis. This can be carried out in a number of ways such as lottery or random table method or as is done often nowadays, using computer programmes which are easily accessible to researchers. Methods such as systematic sampling, stratified

random sampling, cluster sampling and multi stage sampling come under the broad umbrella of probability sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Robson, 2011).

A positive aspect of probability sampling is that samples have an equal chance of being selected and can therefore be seen as truly representative, but on the other hand it has some drawbacks due to the fact that it presupposes a complete list of the entire population which in many instances is a practical impossibility especially where the population is large in size/number (Robson, 2011). Similarly, where systematic sampling is employed, even though every individual within the unit has equal probability of being selected in the first instance, subsequent selection of a sample is somewhat prefixed or determined because of the employment of a particular system. For example selecting the nth unit after the first choice – implies a definitiveness of likelihood of particular units being selected (Robson, 2011). Such probability also depends on the manner in which the list is organised – for example in alphabetic order. Similarly, in stratified sampling, certain stratum could be under represented or overrepresented and this necessitates special measures and manipulations to ensure equal and viable representation (Robson, 2011).

In non-probability sampling, there is no random selection of samples and this is the major difference between probability sampling and non-probability sampling. It deliberately seeks to represent a particular group or class in which the researcher is interested (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011). This presents the danger of increased bias compared to probability sample as it is less representative of the entire population. But to claim that a probability sample is entirely free of bias would be fallacious too (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011; Robson, 2011). Under the broad group of non-probability sampling one could include convenience sampling, quota sampling and purposive sampling.

For the purpose of the current study, purposive sampling was applied. Purposive sampling is when the researcher selects the sample based on its fulfilling a particular characteristic or criteria (Hedges, 2004; Cohen, Morrison & Manion 2011; Robson 2011). Therefore, the sample is chosen for a specific purpose and fulfils the needs of the particular research, but at the same time cannot claim to represent the wider

population (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011). Despite drawbacks, this mode of sample selection is ideal in certain instances where it is pointless to opt for random sampling in which case most of the sample may have no connection to or is ignorant of the subject matter being researched, particularly because the purpose of the research is to gain in-depth understanding of the subject matter (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011).

Curtis *et al.*, (2000) suggested several criteria for acceptable sample selection such as relevance to the conceptual framework, possibility of the sample generating rich and relevant data for the research, possibility of generalisability and being able to answer the research questions. Taking into consideration the information and insights gained in relation to sampling and associated issues, schools employing learning mentors in a specific area of England was identified as a possible location for data collection. There are a several reasons for selecting this particular locality. Firstly, the majority of primary schools in the local authority in which the focus area was included had an established history of employing learning mentors. The area has often been designated as one of the most deprived areas in the region resulting in difficult and complex issues being present within the locality as a whole and schooling and education in particular along with a high incidence of unemployment and social problems. In response, the learning mentor scheme was being implemented as a means of tackling these issues, similar to other initiatives in this field across the country. Therefore, it would be valuable and constructive to find out if and how far mentoring has been successful in containing and countering the undesirable effects of social deprivation as was allegedly being exhibited in the region.

The sample established for this research consisted of 29 participants in total including learning mentors (N=9), mentees (N=7), parents/carers of mentees (N=8) and teachers (N=5). These participants were selected from six different schools within a single Local Education Authority in England. The average pupil strength of the participating schools was approximately 300 within the age range of 5 to 11 years. These schools were located in areas where incidence of social and economic deprivation was considered to be relatively high and therefore were designated as being characterised

by low economic and social development, security and motivational factors. School and category wise details of participants are given in the following table.

School	Gender	Mentee	Year group	Mentor	Parent	Teacher
S1	M	1	5	1		
	F				1	1
S2	M			1	2	
	F	2	2	2	1	3
S3	M	1	4	1		
	F				1	
S4	M			2		
	F	2	5, 3		2	1
S5	M	1	6	1		
	F				1	
S6	M			1		
	F					
Total		7		9	8	5

Table 6.1

The main criteria for selecting each of the schools within the study was that they employed learning mentors and had made provisions for this special support to be made available to pupils who they regarded as needing it. The individuals researched within these schools were selected on the basis of their relationship to mentoring i.e. they were directly involved in the process of mentoring pupils in primary schools or were indeed in receipt of mentoring support. This was the criterion for selecting parents/carers as well i.e., their wards were directly availing the benefits of the learning mentor scheme.

Within purposive sampling, snowball sampling is a method of collecting data and building up a sample base. In this method, the researcher usually identifies a small number of individuals who fulfil the characteristics under investigation and these are used as contacts to identify and approach other individuals who fulfil those characteristics (Cohen, Morrison & Manion 2011; Robson, 2011; Hedges, 2004). This method is deployed in instances where access is difficult, the issue being researched is sensitive or where outside access to sample in a direct manner is difficult.

Once the practicalities in identifying and contacting samples were reviewed, it was considered best to resort to snowball sampling for a number of reasons. Firstly, as an individual, it was difficult, though not impossible to identify every individual who worked within the numerous schools in the region. Also, due to the legal requirements and restrictions involved such as the welfare of pupils and child protection, it was considered convenient and accessible to approach institutions and individuals through others who had access to and were associated with the subject under research i.e. learning mentors. Similarly, it was considered favourable to secure the support of learning mentors when approaching pupils particularly when considering the sensitivity surrounding the issues involved in learning mentoring.

Accordingly, the support of an individual who had earlier worked in a professional capacity in the location where a number of schools had employed learning mentors was secured. In the initial stages, after obtaining necessary consent, the researcher along with his Director of Studies visited a school in the area which was offering learning mentor support to pupils. The school had taken a number of steps to ensure that the pupils derived the maximum benefit from the initiative. The initial meeting and discussion with the head teachers centred around the scope of the research and the possibility and interest of the school and learning mentors employed there to participate. The senior learning mentor working at the school was also involved in the discussions and everyone concerned – head teachers and learning mentors – expressed their strong support for the project and their willingness to participate in the research. It was decided that once the formalities such as the approval for the proposal from research and ethics committee of the university were completed and the research instruments were finalised, the schools would be contacted to carry the research forward.

In the meantime, the Co-ordinator of the Regional Learning Partnership which is a network for learning mentors in the area was introduced to the researcher and initial contact made with the coordinator of the network through the research supervisory team. A meeting was organised with the Co-ordinator of the Regional Learning Partnership and in that meeting guided and assisted by the director of studies the project was explained to her and permission sought to present the project to the

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network members at their meeting. The researcher offered to explain the project to the members and to gauge the response of the members regarding their participation. Once the Co-ordinator of the Regional Learning Partnership received a positive response, the researcher was given an opportunity to formally present the details of the research to the network members during one of their formal meetings. Accordingly, on the 16th of June 2011, the researcher along with his Director of Studies made a presentation to the members explaining the purpose, process and the extent of participation required from the members. The meeting was also an opportunity for the members to ask questions regarding various aspects of the research and its scope. Following the presentation, all those present expressed their interest and willingness to participate and contribute towards the project. Subsequently, the Co-ordinator of the Regional Learning Partnership offered to further assist the researcher by introducing the basic information regarding the project at the head teachers' meeting that was soon coming up to explore the support and willingness of different schools to participate in the project.

Snowball sampling was also used to facilitate and gain access to parental participation and parental consent for pupils' participation in the research which was voluntary. Besides providing detailed information in writing to mentees as well as parents/guardians of mentees, written permission was also secured from parents as well as mentees prior to making contact. This form of sampling enabled the researcher to gain the trust and reassurance of the participants in a more authentic manner than if the researcher attempted to establish direct contact with them, particularly in view of the legal and ethical requirements such as child protection policies and confidentiality aspects.

There were a number of positive aspects and benefits to this particular method of sampling. Firstly, it provided an opportunity for the researcher to work with the local authority through the partnership co-ordinator who was in fact representing the local authority. This in turn enabled the researcher to secure the support of the local authority. Secondly, approaching learning mentors through the partnership ensured wider and confirmed participation along with the backing of the partnership. This also provided access to a larger sample of mentees and their parents/guardians. Krueger

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(1998) held that dealing with administrative requirements of the research could be time consuming and could adversely affect the interest of the participant or the researcher. Hence, a major benefit in this instance was that it enabled the researcher to save a considerable amount of time and resources through opportunities to interact with the learning mentors as a group on several occasions, except when one-to-one interactions was mandated by requirements of the research ethics code established for the project.

Sampling in social science is not an exact science and as with most factors within research, sampling method in this research had its own limitations. To begin with, it was possible that various dispositions of the participants could adversely affect the strength of the sample in several ways. It was possible that the participants perceived participation in this research as mandatory because it was conducted in their school, or as an opportunity to please others involved or doing them a favour either in expectation of further rewards or as a favour in return for something. For example, with parents it is possible that the parents of mentees consented to their own or their ward's participation for the above reason of expectation or gratitude on a personal level, or in other words, a silent obligation. Similarly, it could also be due to some sort of apprehension that refusal would lead to negative reaction from learning mentors or school authorities. The possibility of similar pressures on school authorities or individual learning mentors is another aspect which could have adverse impact on the research. The possibility of the school authorities or the learning mentors identifying this as an opportunity to showcase their achievements with an expectation of reward such as increased remuneration was also recognised in the initial stages of the research. Besides, it was possible that the learning mentors expected the research outcomes to highlight their achievements within the school context and possibly beyond.

There were certain advantages and disadvantages in collecting data from a sample selected from among those working within the same system and under the same local authority. One of the advantages was that this sample could possibly provide consistent data because all the participants were associated with and governed by the same policies, procedures and functions. It was similar in the case of the mentees and

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their guardians in as much as they were from within the same social and geographical environment thereby adding further strength and reliability to the data collected. On the other hand, there was the possible danger of stereotype responses particularly considering the fact that all the samples worked under the same local authority and were part of the same learning partnership which implied that they could be influencing each other's' opinion in a significant manner and this could have considerable impact on the study outcome.

Cohen *et al.*, (2007) pointed out the very real possibility of the researcher's personal bias influencing the research. The qualitative nature of social science research makes it extremely difficult to conduct a fully objective study. Similarly, the researcher has limited or no control over the bias of the participants. However, all possible precautions were taken to ensure that the samples and data collected were secure and objective to the extent that this was possible.

6. 2) The issue of sample size in qualitative research.

It is possible for qualitative research to be affected by misconceptions about the importance of numbers in sampling strategy to ensure an appropriate and adequate sample size. Sample sizes may be too small to support claims of having achieved either informational redundancy or theoretical saturation, or too large to permit the deep, case-oriented analysis that is the raison-d'etre of qualitative inquiry (Sandelowski, 1995). Determining adequate sample size in qualitative research is ultimately a matter of judgment and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected against the uses to which it will be put, the particular research method and purposeful sampling strategy employed, and the research product intended (Mason, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2013).

However, there are no hard and fast rules regarding the exact size of the sample required (Patton, 1990; Robson, 2011). On the other hand, there is a common understanding of an optimal size of sample (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Sample size has a significant impact on generalisability. There is also a direct relationship between the sample size and the likelihood of error in generalising. A larger size of sample would reduce the possibility of error in generalisation (Cohen & Manion, 1994;

Robson, 2011). The desirable size of sample is also determined partly by the presence of homogeneity / heterogeneity. This is particularly influential in instances where the purpose of the research is to generalise from sample to population (Robson, 2011; Cohen & Manion, 1994). Similarly, the size of the sample and accuracy of the results may be co-relational.

6. 3) Use of interview for data collection.

Real life research is not strictly set in a location specifically designated for research such as a laboratory. Due to this nature, it is quite often confronted with the need to adapt methods to conduct research. Interview in qualitative research is an interactive method which involves the researcher who is the interviewer and the participant who is the interviewee and the process of asking questions and possibly receiving answers to them (Robson, 2011). In real life research, the interview is used to gather information from people in their own words about their lived experience, their views and opinions or their expectations. Interview can be about a reality that is external to the interviewee such as events or facts or about internal experience of the interviewee such as meanings or feelings (Silverman, 2010). In qualitative research, interview attempts to consider and understand what is being researched from the interviewee's point of view (Kvale, 1996). Therefore, the interview as a research method involves active participation of both the researcher and the researched and generation of data as the main objective of such participative interaction. (Robson, 2011; Gillham, 2000)

In Gillham's (2000) view, conversation is one of the basic forms of human interactions. He opined that the interview was essentially a conversation between two people asking and answering questions not necessarily for the benefit of either the person asking or the one answering questions. And according to Silverman, (2010) doing an interview is one of the most natural things in the world. In social science, communication and conversation are key component of generation and transfer of knowledge and hence the significance of interviews in social science research (Gillham, 2000). It is in this connection that Kvale's (1996) use of traveller and miner as a metaphor to describe the interviewer becomes relevant. In his opinion, knowledge often lay buried within the interviewee and as the miner unearths the precious minerals, so does the interviewer reveals the valuable knowledge that is

within the interviewee. In his view, through the purification process of transcription and analysis of the raw data, the pure knowledge of facts and meanings can be verified by authentic experiences. The traveller metaphor compares the interviewer to a traveller who sets out on a journey searching for knowledge, wandering through places, entering into conversation with people in unknown territories and eventually returning with his collection of knowledge meticulously and systematically ordered and retold to people at home.   At the same time, the knowledge thus created might also impact upon and change the outlook and response of the researcher him/herself.

The conversational characteristic of interview was the main factor which favoured its choice as the preferred method for the current research particularly in view of the experiences of the participants. As primary school children were the focus of the study, it was concluded that completing a questionnaire would not be in the best interest of the project for several reasons. In view of their level of communication ability and use of language particularly in research matters, it was felt that a questionnaire would not have sufficiently addressed the needs of the child participant in explaining and offering clarification regarding the research topic or the questions. Similarly, a detailed explanation and using different expressions would enable the respondent to provide a much more factual and realistic response. Besides, in keeping with the confidentiality aspects of the ethical requirements, it was not possible to enlist the help of a third party to assist the children with completing questionnaires. Therefore, an interview was considered the most suitable method for this research.

6. 4) Different types of interviews.

While some writers refer to kinds of interviews, others talk about types of interviews but they both indicate the same. Broadly speaking, interviews can be either face to face or distance interviews. While as the name indicates, the first one involves a personal and close interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, distance interview can take the form of telephonic interview or electronic interview where e-mails or more recent technological innovations such as skype are used to generate responses.

On the positive side, a distance interview can be time saving for those participants who are difficult to reach because of distance or those for whom it may not be

possible to participate during the normal course of the day without affecting the activities of a number of others, for example primary school teachers. It can also be cost effective in terms of travel and other expenses. It also removes the pressure on the interviewee to come up with an answer straightaway and offers them time to reconsider their responses (Gillham, 2005; Kvale 1996). Gillham (2005) also mentioned their employability in situations where there are social restrictions on interaction between different groups or genders of people. Another advantage of electronic interview is that it can be conducted with several participants at a time whereas face to face interview can be conducted only one at a time or one group at a time.

However, it might be daunting to disclose intimate or personal details and views to an interviewer who is impersonal and a long distance away. Besides, for ethical purposes, it may not always be possible to determine whether the response was from the participant without any external influence. Similarly, non-verbal response have much impact on the information being provided and a distance interview could miss out on such responses. Establishing personal trust can make it easier to provide disclosures regarding sensitive matters (Gillham, 2005).

Generally, based on the degree of standardisation, interviews have been classified into structured interview, semi structured interviews and unstructured interviews (Robson, 2011). In the unstructured interview, the interviewer is concerned with a general area of interest allowing the interview to develop within this broad region. In a semi-structured interview, although there is an area of interest and a general order and wording of questions to be asked, these are modified and changed according to the progress of the interview process and response of the interviewee. In semi-structured interview, structure is balanced by flexibility resulting in rich data (Gillham, 2005). On the other hand, in structured interviews the questions are predetermined with fixed wordings and there would be very little deviation from these. The only differentiating factor between questionnaires and structured interviews is that the latter contains a larger number of open ended questions (Robson, 2011). However, there is also a contradicting view that this classification is false (Gillham, 2000). In his opinion,

however loosely or highly structured, the qualifying characteristic is that interview is an organised activity with a certain degree of flexibility.

A research interview is conducted in order to generate information and understanding about a particular subject being researched. It revolves around the general aims as well as the specific questions of that particular research. Although as is usually the case in educational research, the purpose of research is to inform practice and influence policies, the beneficiaries may not necessarily be the participants themselves (Gillham, 2000).

Although there are various forms of interview, there is a common element of control present in all of them and generally it is the interviewer who has this control. However, this control is in essence a method of managing the path of the interview process and not so much a means of eliciting favourable response from the interviewee (Gillham 2005). In this context, Gillham (2005) advocates the importance of remembering the fact that although the interviewer is managing the interview, it is in fact the interviewee who possess the information and who has something to tell the interviewer about the particular area that is being researched and as such is controlling the process.

Semi structured interviews were considered ideal for the current study particularly because of the balanced combination of structure and flexibility. Although time consuming in terms of transcribing and analysis, this form of interview offered the necessary freedom for the interviewer and interviewee to discuss various aspects of the research topic while keeping the core of the study in focus. Furthermore, interviewing children would require much more flexibility and freedom than adults and their answers could be more wide ranging.

An essential requirement for a productive interview is to avoid pre-conceived notions as they will prevent the interviewer from drawing out information from the interviewee, which in turn may result in missing out important aspects or information (Gillham, 2000). It is also important as Gillham (2000) stressed to avoid interruptions, background disturbances and intrusive curiosity as these might have an

unconstructive impact on the data derived. In his opinion, it is beneficial to have a suitable location to avoid or minimise this effect. In certain circumstances it may not be possible to avoid these factors completely due to legal and ethical requirements associated with research and the vulnerable nature of participants such as is the case with children. Although these might compromise the quality of data produced, they are unavoidable and the only option is to try to minimise their impact. In the current research, experience confirmed the above situation where a non-participating individual (a member of staff from the school) was required to be present at the interview location. Although there is a possibility that this could have influenced the depth and truthfulness of the pupils' response it was necessary for the conduct of the interview and to ensure adherence to the legal and ethical requirements of the time.

There are a number of benefits and drawbacks to employing the interview as a method of data collection in social science.

To begin with, unlike methods such as questionnaires where the researcher proposes the possible answers, in an interview the interviewee determines their response in a spontaneous manner providing much more freedom and flexibility with regard to the amount of detail (Gillham, 2005). Additionally, the interviewer can use prompts to encourage the interviewee to provide more details or guide the conversation in a direction that is beneficial to the research. Similarly, unlike with questionnaires, an interview could bring out information that is not directly identified in the question but yet is hugely relevant to the research (Gillham, 2005)

In Robson's opinion, interview provides an opportunity to investigate the cause of actions by directly asking people questions rather than merely observing and assuming conclusions (Robson, 2011). At the same time, interview provides the best possibility and opportunity to follow specific information or a line of inquiry emerging spontaneously as that could make a valuable contribution to the research (Robson, 2011). Face to face interviews present the interviewer with the opportunity to observe the expressions of the interviewee and this might qualify the response further. This is not the case with other methods of data collection such as questionnaires. The interview also provides the interviewer and interviewee with the

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opportunity and flexibility to explain and modify the responses and expressions directly and immediately avoiding the possibility of uncertainty or misinterpretation of the response further down the line. (Robson, 2011). Unlike questionnaires where a respondent has limited freedom to respond largely choosing from given options, the interviewee is able to formulate his/her response in a more open and independent manner (Gillham, 2005).

In qualitative study, attitude, opinion or value cannot be assessed by a single, rigid question and its answer by the respondent (Robson, 2011). Therefore unlike a questionnaire with rigid responses, by asking multiple questions data collection by interview can act as a form of triangulation to verify the response.

For all the benefits of interview listed so far, it is not without drawbacks. Interviewing is time consuming. The organising aspects such as obtaining necessary consents, finding a time that is convenient for the interviewee and interviewer, the interviewee's responsibility for covering absences and such related activities are often difficult, time consuming and often dissuade participants. Even after such arrangements being made, the actual interview could still be time consuming and this presents the possibility of interviewee fatigue which in turn makes the genuineness of the response suspect. The time factor becomes further significant in instances where interviewees are children or individuals with special circumstances. (Robson, 2011)

A major disadvantage of the interview as a data collection method is that it requires transcription which is time consuming and may involve financial expenses. It also falls upon the researcher to ensure confidentiality and authenticity where such transcription is carried out by third party professionals.

Gillham (2005) also points out the negative connotation of the term interview in specific contexts such as a police interviewing an accused. He recommends that according to the situation and area being researched, use of terms which corresponds to interview such as discussion or chat might be more appropriate to generate more meaningful data and participation of interviewee.

Fitness for purpose has to be central criterion for choosing the type of interview selected for a particular study (Gillham, 2005). Having considered its benefits and drawbacks, interviewing was considered the most suitable method for the current study as it enable the respondents, particularly primary school pupils to be in their usual natural surroundings. This not only provided a calming environment to the respondent but also a much more comprehensive understanding of their background and situation (Kvale, 1996). Semi-structured interviews provided the ability to guide the direction of the interview towards the research questions at the same time allowing the participants to construct their own responses and determine the pace of the proceedings.

6. 5) Questionnaire Surveys.

Surveys and questionnaires are among the most popular methods of data collection (Punch, 2009; Newby, 2010; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Denscombe, 2014). Although predominantly associated with quantitative research, they are also perceived to be linked to gathering qualitative data at a particular point time and they are often concerned with proportions and percentages of participants who responded to specific questions in a particular way (Punch, 2009; Denscombe, 2014). However, as Cohen *et al.* (2011) argued, questionnaire surveys can also be used to compare standards or conditions for the purpose of presenting a rational analysis. However, Newby (2011) pointed out that one of the drawbacks of survey method is that it may not provide for all possible responses or allow the participants to respond in the way they like to.

Questionnaire survey method has been employed in this study but not for the traditional purposes described above. The main aim of the questionnaire was to compare the learning mentors' response to specific questions at two different stages of the study - during the semi-structured interviews which were the main method of data collection and at a later stage whereby their response to the same questions at two different stages of the research were compared with a view to enhancing the trustworthiness of the data. In order to address the drawback pointed out by Newby (2009), and allow all possible responses, the survey contained open ended questions

(appendix 9). This is dealt with in detail in section 12.1 which discusses the findings of the study in more detail.

CHAPTER 7

DATA ANALYSIS.

7. 1) Thematic Analysis and its place in the current research.

The current study used a combination of content analysis which Krippendorf (2012) considered to be potentially the most common and important research technique in social sciences (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009) and thematic analysis which focuses attention on identifiable themes and patterns of behaviour which emerge from the interview data (Aronson, 1994). Content analysis has certain quantitative characteristics whereby it determines the frequencies in which particular categories occur (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). However, Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) argued that it goes beyond merely counting frequencies and as Patton (2002) described,

> "It is any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2002. p. 453).

It evaluates textual information in a standardised manner in order to enable researchers to make inferences based on information derived from such an analysis (Weber, 1990). According to Cohen *et al.,* (2003), it is a reflexive interaction between the researcher and de-contextualised data which in their view are themselves interpretations of a social encounter. They noted that unlike quantitative data, content analysis in qualitative research does not have a universal set of conventions.

Hsieh & Shannon (2005) defined qualitative content analysis as

> "A research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278).

Joffe and Yardley (2004) argued that the researcher or person analysing the data makes inferences in the course of such analysis but cautioned that it must be done

systematically and objectively identifying characteristics of the text. As pointed out by Cohen *et al.* (2011) qualitative data analysis relies heavily on interpretation and the subjective nature of interpretation and the possibility of multiple ways of interpreting (Braun & Clarke, 2006) the same phenomenon has both strength and weakness. Others such as Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) and Creswell (2003) too recommended that subjective components such as researcher's biases, values and judgements have the ability to influence the interpretation of the data.

Thematic Analysis is often used in ethnographic studies in which interviews are the major method of data collection, and focuses attention on identifiable themes and patterns of behaviour which emerge within the interview data (Aronson, 1994). Braun & Clarke (2006) argued that it offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. Although there are some similarities between content analysis and thematic analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011: Creswell, 2003), Joffe & Yardley (2004) argued that the latter dedicates more attention to the qualitative aspects of the data being analysed. Therefore, it allows the researcher to combine the quantitative aspect i.e. the frequency of the term being examined with the meaning of the term within the particular context being researched. While one opinion held that thematic analysis was a tool for analysis across different methods (Boyatzis, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000), others argued that it should be considered a method in its own right (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun & Clarke (2006) proposed that there are six phases in thematic analysis. However, they held the view that like any qualitative analysis guidelines, their proposals too were only guidelines, not strict rules and therefore, as Patton (1990) argued, they needed to be applied in a flexible manner to fit the research questions and data.

Thematic analysis begins with the first phase where the researcher becomes familiar with the data and at times this involves repeated reading of the data which in turn assumes the fact that verbal data need to be transcribed. Although Cohen *et al.* (2011) suggested that it is possible to carry out analysis of interview data directly from the audio data, it is recommended that transcribing the interviews would facilitate a better

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opportunity to analyse this and some consider it a key phase of data analysis in interpretative qualitative methodology (Bird, 2005). For the purpose of the current research study, semi structured interviews were the main source of data. The interviews as well as the transcription were carried out by the researcher using voice recognition software. This was considered a useful opportunity for further familiarising with the data (Riessman, 1993). Besides, listening to the audio data repeatedly in the process of transcription helped to recall and establish links with various contextual features, such as what happened before, during and after the interview and non-verbal expressions of the participants and the information contained in the verbal data which was transcribed. To some extent, this served to mitigate the drawback pointed out by Cohen *et al.* (2011) that analysing data obtained from interview transcriptions might omit non-verbal aspects. Besides, this decision to transcribe the interviews in this manner meant that it was not necessary to re-visit the transcript to verify conformity with the audio data which would have been necessary if transcription was carried out by someone else (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The next phase of thematic analysis involves coding which has been described as the act of assigning a concise label to a particular text or group of texts which contain an idea or information which indicates its relevance to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Cohen, *et al.*, 2011; Guest *et al.*, 2011; Seidel & Kelle, 1995; Newby, 2010). Miles & Huberman (1994) considered coding to be part of data analysis whereby data is organised into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). The coding practice in this instance was theory-driven (as opposed to data-driven) because the purpose of the process approached the data with the specific research questions in mind (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). At the end of this stage, 10 major codes were identified. These were LI, LE (listening) ST, SP (support), DT, DO, Dap, DAa (Disposition), MP (mentoring programme), and TR (Training).

Following coding, the process enters the third phase, namely searching for themes. While a code is a concise label representing relevance to the research question, a theme represents a level of patterned response that is related to the research question based on prevalence (Aronson, 1994) and it is both meaningful and coherent (Braun & Clarke, 2011). They called this process coding whereby the researcher constructs

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themes based on the prevalence and similarity of patterns. This phase is concluded by collating coded data to relevant themes. Here, it has to be pointed out that the same individual section of data can be coded several times and may fit into more than one theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Aronson, 1994). Aronson (1994) identified two levels at which themes can be identified namely, semantic and latent. While semantic themes contain rich description of the entire data it is mostly concerned with surface meaning. The latent themes deal with underlying patterns and assumptions and require more detailed interpretation in the light of the area of interest and specific research questions.

Braun & Clarke (2006) recommended that in the next stage, a review of themes be carried out in order to refine them, whereby similar themes are merged to form a single theme or a single theme is divided into multiple themes or even identifies new themes. The purpose of such an exercise is to ensure that the final result is a set of working themes in relation to both coded extracts of data as well as the entire data set so that they provide a convincing account about the data and whatever is being studied. However, they also cautioned against incessant modifications and additions and the need to recognise the point of saturation where nothing substantial is being added.

The next phase should define and determine various aspects of the data being explained by each theme and should also explain what each theme is about (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This stage of working out a set of themes is followed by the next phase namely the writing up stage where a final analysis and writing up takes place. The result of this stage will tell the 'complicated' story of the data in a convincing manner.

Analysis of data for the purpose of the current study revealed three major themes. Firstly, it showed that according to the perceptions of the participants, listening was the major, defining characteristic of mentoring role in the primary school setting. At the same time, it also emerged that the learning mentors listened to various participants about their attitude, behaviour and relationship. The second theme which emerged as a result of data analysis showed that the learning mentors listening activity resulted in various forms of support to understand barriers, devise appropriate

strategies and to remove and to implement those strategies. The third theme revealed that some participants perceived the learning mentors as possessing various dispositions which enabled them to carry out the listening and provide appropriate support. All the three themes provided a holistic view of the perception of the role of primary school learning mentors, their impact on the social and academic attainment of pupils and in the process provided an overview of the development and monitoring of the role of the learning mentor.

While acknowledging the fact that thematic analysis was an easier method and required less theoretical and technical knowledge compared to other approaches such as Discourse Analysis or Content Analysis, Braun & Clarke (2006, 2011) cautioned that it should not be mere collection and organisation of extracts from the data. Rather, it should make sense and provide meaning to the data. They also cautioned against using the data collection questions as themes without making sense of the pattern that emerges within participant responses. However, despite the many weaknesses, thematic analysis is easy to learn and offers flexibility to the researcher. Besides, while it is able to summarise vast amounts of qualitative data, it can also highlight the similarities and differences across the data set. Thematic analysis also allows social and psychological interpretations of data which can lead to unanticipated insights and policy development. It is for these reasons that I have chosen thematic analysis for this research study.

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS PART I: PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF THE LEARNING MENTORS.

In this chapter the findings of this study will be discussed. These findings are concerned with the perception of the role of the learning mentor as derived from the analysis of transcripts of interviews conducted with learning mentors, mentees, their parents and teachers of pupils accessing mentoring in primary schools.

It is important to reiterate that the current study has two dimensions. Firstly, it seeks to understand and analyse the role of the learning mentor in a primary school context. Secondly, based on such analysis, to evaluate the extent to which the role has fulfilled its purpose. Schostak (2002) argued that powers and various capabilities of individuals and communities can be discovered and exercised only under conducive circumstances. This argument is pertinent when researching the role of primary school learning mentors whose role is to help remove barriers which mentees face within their learning environment (Rhodes, 2006).

It is possible that the phrase 'removing the barriers' might appear to suggest changing the attitude or disposition of the pupils themselves in order to enhance their access to learning. therefore, it is important to point out that there are two dimensions in which the term 'access' is used in this study. The first refers to the physical dimension where the pupils' access to the formal structure and environment of the school or classroom is involved. The second dimension refers to the psychological aspect where despite being physically present in the school or classroom, the child is unable to participate in the social or academic activities and the learning process itself. In both the instances, barriers to learning in some form or other act as the contributing factor which prevents access to learning. However, these barriers may not always have a causal relationship with the mentee i.e., it may not be the inherent attitude or disposition of the mentee which is creating the barrier. There may be several aspects over which the mentee/pupil has very little or no control and yet these aspects become

dominant factors preventing access to learning. For example, parental relationships, parents' disposition or the financial circumstances of the family or their outlook towards education are all factors over which the child does not have substantial influence or control, and yet could potentially and significantly influence the pupils' access to learning as mentioned above. Therefore, it can be said that removing barriers to learning does not necessarily involve changing the attitude or disposition of the mentees but those who are responsible for the existence of such factors (Cruddas, 2005).

This draws attention to a unique relationship between the role of learning mentors and the barriers which they seek to remove, a relationship which makes it imperative that this study analyses the role of the learning mentors from different viewpoints. These different viewpoints include the perspective of the mentees who are intended direct beneficiaries of the initiative, the parents and teachers of the mentees who are not only closely associated with the learning activities of the mentees but also are largely responsible for creating a conducive atmosphere for learning and finally the learning mentors themselves whose mandate is to facilitate the same. The benefit of considering the perspectives of a range of people associated with mentoring is that it provides an insight into the range of potential barriers confronting the children's educational development including both the school and home environment.

While it is particularly important to evaluate the impact of mentoring on various aspects of primary school pupils' learning outcomes such as attendance, attainment and relationship at various levels, this part of the study which investigates the nature of the role of the learning mentor provides a basis for determining the impact on the above aspects.

An outline of the chapter: Confidentiality and protection of personal details.

In order to protect the identity of the individuals and schools which participated in the study, all personal and institutional information has been anonymised using unique identification for each participant. The letters indicate which participant group they belong while the numbers identify each individual participant. S=school, C=child, M=mentor, T=teacher and P=parent. For example S1C1 means child 1 from school1

and S2M3 means mentor number 3 from school 2 or S5P1 means parent 1 from school 5.

The data has been categorised to reflect the responses of three different groups of participants. Accordingly, the first section of this chapter considers how mentees perceive the role of the learning mentors in relation to their attendance, attainment and relationships. Mentees' perceptions have been deliberately selected as the starting point in this process of analysis because they are the main and intended beneficiaries and hence their perception is most important. The second section of this chapter analyses the learning mentors' own perception of their role in order to establish the similarities, differences and complementarities between the perceptions of the mentees and the learning mentors. This section will evaluate how the practitioners perceived and understood their role and remit. This will not only lead to better outcomes for the mentees by making the role more effective but also provide an opportunity for other stakeholders such as the schools and the learning mentors themselves to put in place necessary mechanisms to ensure positive outcome and effective implementation of the role within primary schools. The third section of the chapter analyses how the parents of the mentees perceive the role. The main reason for the inclusion of the perception of the parents is the fact that the learning experiences of children are not confined exclusively to either school. It is in fact a combination of both in the right proportion, a joint venture where one complements the other. For example, a favourable condition at home is more likely to facilitate higher levels of attainment at school and the same would apply to carrying on the learning experience at home (Swap, 1993; Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom 1993; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Blatchford, 2010). Such an association and interplay of the home/school experience of pupils which makes teachers' perception of the role of the learning mentors the fourth important section of this study. The fact that teachers are the primary and most important agents in the school life of the mentees particularly in respect of the time factor makes it important to include the teachers' perception in the study so that a balanced and realistic analysis is carried out.

8. A) Mentee's perception of the role of the learning mentor.

As the direct and intended chief beneficiaries of the learning mentor initiative, it was essential to understand how primary school pupils perceived the role of learning mentors which is the focus of this section. Such analysis will help in determining the mentee's perception not only based on their experience mentoring as well as their perception of the particular school's practices in making such information available to prospective mentees.

However, it needs to be appreciated that understanding, analysing and interpreting primary school pupils' perception of the role of the learning mentor especially against a backdrop of the policy setting is not an easy task. This is due to possible difficulties associated with their young age which could affect their understanding or comprehension of an interview question together with their relative inability to express their view in a clear, systematic and logical fashion (Bruck, Ceci & Hembrooke, 1998; Clark, 2005). Besides, I was aware of the fact that the mentees were responding to questions and prompts about an adult whom they identified as being in a position of authority within the school and the effect such imbalance of power would have on their responses. Overall, it was indeed a difficult task to elicit independently thought out specific details, particularly from the younger participants. However, interviews were conducted in a manner where the emphasis was placed on their experience and reference was made to their personal and sensitive circumstances only when necessary.

Despite the above considerations which influenced the nature of the data from mentee's responses, the children's perceptions were enlightening and informative. Firstly, it was evident that they saw the role of the learning mentor as being primarily outside the classroom. All responding pupils confirmed that the learning mentors were not directly associated with the academic activities of the mentees. Although mentors did not work within the classroom, some of the mentors occasionally entered the classrooms, but for non-academic support for the mentees. For example, in response to the question about the mentors' involvement in the classroom, mentee S2C1 said,

"...No, she doesn't come in the classroom."

At the same time, this showed that the mentees often associated the learning mentors with non-academic issues such as relationships which potentially have an impact on their attitude towards learning as mentee S2C1 said,

"Sometimes, it is a bit like, if you're upset about friends or something..."

Mentee S5C1 made a direct reference to his family and said,

"We usually just talk about my family".

However, irrespective of whether their interaction was within or outside classrooms, there were two distinctive roles performed by the learning mentors as perceived by the mentees: they were predominantly seen as listeners and they were also perceived as someone who provided support. In addition to these two, the mentees disclosed their perceptions regarding the disposition of the learning mentors which were essential characteristics that had significant influence on the two roles mentioned above. The following sections will examine and elucidate mentees perceptions of these roles of the learning mentors.

8. A. i) Mentees perception of the role of the learning mentors listening to them.
According to Fisher, (2001) effective problem solving generally involves helping the person to identify strengths and weaknesses and assisting them to not only establish goals, but also strategies for achieving the goals. Mentees perceived learning mentors chiefly as listeners, as someone who had time for them. For example, mentee S4C1 said,

"I can talk to people; I have people there for me like (mentor's name). And that's pretty much it".

Similarly, mentee S4C2 said,

"If I'm upset then I come down and talk to (mentor)"

This was considered a reflection of the perception that the learning mentor discharged the role of a listener.

All mentees who participated in the study except one, discussed the fact that they engaged in a conversation with the mentor as part of the mentoring process. This, together with above statements and the fact that some of the participants referred to such conversations several times during the interview has reinforced the fact that in their opinion, listening and conversation was an integral part of mentoring.

The data indicated two main aspects of the listening role of mentors– Listening to internal issues and external issues. The first aspect exists where mentors listen to children who are anxious about issues which are intrinsic to them such as feelings and emotions. For example, S2C1 reported,

"But I just like talking to them" and *".... I tell Ms. L. If I get upset".*

There is no evidence to suggest that the children are encouraged to approach the mentors only in the event of a particular type of problem as S2C2 said,

"I tell him any problems that I've had".

Further, in response to a question about the subject of their 'talk', the mentee responded

"... Stuff like feelings or like that".

In a similar way, S1C1 replied that they could,

"... just put over the worries to a side and you can talk..."

And S4C1 reported'

"If I feel a bit upset, I'll talk to her".

The second aspect is listening to problems faced by mentees which are the result of issues which were external to them and often beyond their control. Examples of such issues included parental relationships, friendship issues, family circumstances or issues such as bullying, particularly in school over which the mentees had little or no control. For example mentee S2C1 said,

> "I struggle with numbers and it gets all mixed up. I tell Ms. L. If I get upset when I am in maths".

The academic side of the above statement will be discussed further in the chapter which examines the impact of mentoring on the academic attainment of children. What is relevant to the current discussion is the mentees' recognition of the support and opportunity provided by the learning mentors in dealing with the mental and psychological effects of an external factor such as difficulty with numeracy. The focus of attention here is not whether the learning mentor directly assisted the child with maths lessons, but that mentoring activity enabled the child to calm down and participate in other learning activities. Friendship issues were another major aspect which acted as a barrier to learning. Although it might appear to be insignificant, for the child it could be the most important factor which prevents them from learning. Not only making friends but keeping the ones they have was difficult for some of the mentees. In the words of S2C1,

> "Sometimes, it is a bit like, if you're upset about friends or something..." and "I had a lot of friendship problems .... because I got upset and people got upset".

In what could be interpreted as bullying by the child, S2C2 said,

> "If someone is giving me a hard time on the playground, he will stop it".

Learning mentors listen to mentees With regard to barriers caused by problems associated with the family as S5C1 said,

"... We usually just talk about my family...".

Similarly, S2C1 said,

"... If there is a family problem, if I fall out with mum or something...".

Further, the problem at home may not directly involve the child. For example, in response to the question as what did the child talk to the learning mentor about, the reply was,

"Like with my mum, like, stuff has went on for years and then, like, if I feel upset, I'll talk to her (mentor)".

This can also be interpreted as the child's recognition of the issues within the family, the lack of ability to address the issues within the family and possibly as the child's sympathy with the mother and the resulting reluctance to further burden her by discussing it with her. However, as with all issues of such sensitivity we need to exercise some caution when making such interpretations which may not be definitive.

Here, it is important to explain that just as relationship between parents could become a barrier to learning, the relationship between the child and one or both the parents can become an obstacle and therefore the subject of conversation between the learning mentor and mentee. Although it might seem insignificant to others, disagreement with a parent, even regarding what they are expected to achieve can become a major barrier to learning. For example Parker *et al.*, (1999) in their study which examined the relationship between parent-child relationship and children's school readiness, claimed that a high level of parental aggravation and strictness over time had the potential to increase the possibility of the child being easily distracted. Furthermore, a hostile attitude in the classroom might result in developmental deterioration such as a decrease in associative vocabulary skills. Similarly, neglect and malnourishment were found to have a negative impact on the social and academic outcomes of children (Culp *et al.*, 1991; Trickett & McBride-Chang, 1995; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Mentees found it useful to discuss such issues with the learning

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mentor both to get the matter off their mind as well as potentially mediating with the parent. For example, when asked about the topic of conversation with the learning mentor, mentee S2C1 said,

"If there is a family problem, if I fall out with mum or something"

And the same mentee also said,

"Yeah, I tell mum, well, don't want to tell mum but I think Ms. L tells mum so I don't have to talk to her myself".

Although the first part of the sentence appears to suggest confidentiality issues, the latter part indicates otherwise. The statement suggests the child' was relieved about bringing certain matters to the mother's attention without having to speak to the mother herself. At the same time, this statement is indicative of the different levels of comfort a mentee finds in discussing the same matter with two different adults i.e. the parent and the learning mentor.

Mentees also reported their inability to confront parents, particularly if they were concerned that it would lead to disproportionate reaction from the parents and in such instances, they were able to communicate through the learning mentors who acted as a buffer. For example, mentee S4C2 said,

"...We talk to them, I talk to them. And then she phones mum and mum talks to us when we go home. ... because I speak to Ms. F., (learning mentor) she tell my mum and then mum talks to us".

Similarly, S2C1 said,

"Yeah, I tell mum, well, don't want to tell mum but I think Ms. L tells mum so I don't have to talk to her myself".

Such examples highlight the fact that the mentees' feeling of confidence and relief for having someone who listens to them. It is to be noted that the concept of 'conversation' with a mentor about an issue which bothers them has been mentioned more than 30 times by 6 participating mentees using different terms such as talk, speak and chat. This is more than any other aspect of the role of learning mentors as perceived by the mentees. Such frequent reference to a specific activity is a strong indication of the mentees perception that the learning mentors could be approached if they needed to have a conversation about any issues whatsoever.

Primary school aged children cannot be expected to be able to coherently and systematically discuss matters related to their psychological or mental issues with another person. As Punch (2002) argued, research with children is potentially different from research with adults not only because of their perceptions about children but also, children are inherently different particularly in how they respond and interact. There is also the possibility that they were unable to express them verbally. However, this should not lead to a conclusion that these children did not recognise their feelings or concerns – only that they may not be able to express them as systematically and clearly as an adult (Wolfelt, 2013; Cristina, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2013). Therefore, while discussing the listening aspect of the role of the learning mentors, it is important to underline the fact that all conversation with the children may not necessarily be verbal. To recall the argument of Punch (2002), children could find certain methods of communication easier than others. For example, when asked about the topic of their discussion, S2C1 said,

> "We talk or sort of write stuff down like feeling or like that, sort of, if you fall out with friends, you write about your feelings, about that and you write about how they were feeling and stuff like that".

Mentee S5C1 expressed similar opinion and said,

> "There was something bad that had happened, because usually I can just draw it instead of talking, because it is easier to draw".

This further emphasises the fact that children might enter into a conversation with the help of pictures or in writing and the learning mentors have been able to understand, initiate and continue the 'conversation' and as a result, they were able to provide support to the child in resolving the issues or organising the necessary help.

While discussing the learning mentors' role as listeners, the subject matter of their conversation assumes certain significance. Although it might appear that the learning mentors are there primarily to listen to problems, the fact of the matter is that casual encounters are as important as organised mentoring sessions. In fact it can be seen that the simple and casual conversation in the corridor or looking for a brief update about possible progress is as fulfilling to the mentee. For example, when asked about the subject of their talk, S2C2 said,

> *"Well, H (mentor) usually comes and talks to me every Friday and we just review the week".*

Although the respondent began accessing mentoring to help him with friendship issues, his response reveal that these problems are not the underlying reason for every conversation between the mentor and mentee. While referring to a particular mentoring programme for a group of children which included him, the same participant said,

> *"Yeah, you talk about all the other things, enjoy, relax, but don't talk about school work".*

They were encouraged to talk about positive things, about everything they were good at and encouraging them to celebrate their uniqueness by completely removing themselves from the world of academic achievements (or lack of it).

8. A. ii) Mentees' perception of the significance of the learning mentors listening to them.

Asked why it was so important to speak to the mentor, mentee S2C1 responded saying,

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"I like being able to talk to someone, if you are not really comfortable".

Further questioned, the mentee clarified that there was no particular reason for that response other than that she just liked to talk to someone. Mentee S4C1 said

"Because like, when I'm with her, I feel more better like, because I'm happy because anything goes on, I can just go and speak to her about it."

Children's lack of expertise in identifying and dealing with these issues in a systematic manner compared to an adult often means that they need more support in dealing with them. Also, the fact that often these issues are caused by factors beyond their control makes the context more complex. For example, the family environment or financial situation were not the decision or choice of the children and as such they could do very little to influence them. The significance of these aspects and issues which arise from them will be dealt with in detail in the discussion and conclusion section of this thesis.

Mentees perceived the learning mentors as active listeners in that they expected them to act upon the concerns which they raised. This made them see the learning mentors as more significant than other individuals in their lives including friends. For example, mentee S2C1 said,

"Cos they could do something about it. Otherwise, if you tell your friend, they don't always, they can't always do something. So, Ms. L helps me".

Significantly, this child also recognised and accepted the learning mentor as somebody who will be able to help her even with her difficulties associated with the family. There were other instances where children clearly recognised the positive results of having somebody who will listen to them, ultimately producing a result. Mentee S2C2 said,

"If someone is giving me a hard time on the playground, he will stop it"

This statement indicated that the mentee was confident of a solution. In addition, the mentees also recognised other positive results of mentoring. For example, mentee S4C1 said,

> "If I speak to S. (mentor), I just get it out and then I can go and get al.ong with, like, with my lessons and stuff and it makes me really feel better".

In summary, the evidence from the data provides a strong indication of the fact that mentees identified two important aspects of the role of the learning mentors as listeners. Firstly, they indicated their perception of the learning mentor as somebody within the school whose primary concern was listening to matters related to their wellbeing. As mentee S2C2 said,

> "But if it is, say a serious problem, I've got that door" and "I've got a card so I can come through the school so that no one has to ask me why I am in".

Again, Mentee S4C1 said,

> "I have people there for me like S (the learning mentor) and that is pretty much it".

Secondly, the mentees recognised the learning mentor as someone who was not only willing to listen, but had the time and resources to conduct that conversation at the pupils' own level of understanding, language and pace. There were a number of statements which the mentees made to this effect. Given below are some of the statements which the mentees made in this regard.

> "We usually do talking and drawing", "we usually just talk about my family" (Mentee S5C1)

> "We just sit and chat" (Mentee S1C1)

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"I like being able to talk to someone". (Mentee S2C1)

"I tell him any problems that I've had", "we have a chat and stuff" and "I come down and talk to Ms. F. (learning mentor)", "we talk to them, I talk to them". (Mentee S2C2).

The scrutiny of the statements of the mentees regarding the role of the learning mentors indicated that they recognised and appreciated the presence of the learning mentors as adults who would listen to them and take their view into account.

8. B) The learning mentors' own perception of their role.

The previous section examined how the mentees perceived the role of the learning mentors as listeners to be of considerable significance. It was seen that the mentees attached such enormous importance to the role because they were perceived as being available and approachable according to the needs of the mentees. It is important to examine how far this perception concurred with that of the learning mentors. A comparison between the perceptions of the learning mentors and mentees would provide the opportunity to determine how far they share a sense of common purpose. Clearly, if there are significant similarities, it would strengthen the idea about the role of the learning mentor as a potential force for good within primary schools. On the other hand, if there are major differences, it could raise questions about the role and impact of the learning mentor. From the research point of view, this comparative analysis will serve the purpose of a form of triangulation which will allow verification of the findings from multiple sources. In order to achieve this goal, statements made by a number of learning mentors are examined in detail.

Certain factors to be aware of.

At this stage, it is important to recall some of the similarities in the way in which the interview data obtained from the learning mentors and the mentees is used. The same statements by the mentees were referred to in different parts of this thesis to illustrate different aspects of mentoring such as role, disposition and outcome. The reason for such repetition was that the statements were a combination of different aspects of the

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role and could be interpreted to represent these various aspects. In a similar way, some of the statements of learning mentors have also been used on multiple occasions for the same reason and hence this is not accidental.

8. B. i) Learning mentors' own perception of their role of listening to the mentees.

The previous section indicated that according to the mentees' perception, the learning mentors' role as listeners was the most significant. Learning mentors' statements suggest a similar perception. It is important to note that every participating learning mentor indicated that most mentees identified them as someone who would listen to them. The following statements suggest that this perception was shared by the learning mentors.

> "the keys are, children, the opportunity to come and chat to me about anything at all that they could be worried about" (S1M1).
> "What do I do? Mostly listen to the child. That's what I mostly do" (S2M1).

> "So, it is basically the time to listen to them, give them attention and time to express what they need to" (S2M1).

Some learning mentors attached special emphasis to the fact that their role as listeners did not end when the mentee no longer needed regular mentoring. Learning mentor S2M2 said,

> "So, if you've been mentored for a little while, it's trying to ease them out and getting them back is, they don't have to come on a weekly basis, but they know they can come, should they have any worries or need to talk".

In response to the question about the most important qualities of an effective learning mentor, S2M3 said,

> "Being available and listening, not judging".

When asked about the most important part of mentoring activities undertaken with mentees, mentor S4M1 said,

> *"That is just giving them the opportunity to talk or you know, anything like that really..."*

When asked about what attracted children to the learning mentors, mentor S5M1 said,

> *"Most, most children like the opportunity to have one to one and someone to talk to. And I think they value the fact that they have the opportunity to do that".*

Mentor S4M2 highlighted the perception that listening is very important part of mentoring as a whole saying,

> *"We sit down and listen and that is the same with the parents as well, not just with the children as well".*

Another mentor specifically pointed out that the role of learning mentors as listeners made their role distinctive from other professionals within the school environment by saying,

> *"I think they need, they don't get a chance in class to talk to say what they want to say. Teachers are too busy and for them to just be able to have someone to talk to is, is just what they need. The parents haven't got time to listen to them, the teachers haven't got time. Just for someone to sit and listen to... (S2M1). ".*

It is very important to note that the listening role of the learning mentor is not restricted to mentees but extends to parents and various other professionals a finding that will be examined in detail further on in this chapter.

A significant aspect of the role of the learning mentor as highlighted by the mentees was that it did not involve their regular presence in the classroom for significant periods of time. Learning mentors visited classrooms only to support a child who had specific issues related to working in the classroom. This view was shared by the learning mentors too but there were no statements to indicate that the learning mentors engaged in mentoring through listening or any other activities within the classroom. This aspect will be further examined in detail in order to establish the difference between the role of the learning mentors and other professionals in the school in the discussion and conclusion section.

8. B. ii) Learning mentors' perception of their role of listening to individuals other than mentees.

The foregoing discussion indicated the perception of mentees and mentors that the learning mentors' role as listeners has great significance. However, analysis of the data also indicated that while the mentee referred to their interaction with the learning mentor almost exclusively, the learning mentor often referred to listening in relation to individuals other than mentees such as parents, teachers and other service professionals in the process of their mentoring a pupil. Mentor S1M1 said,

> "But all of our parents did know that if they want to come and talk to me about the reasons for me to work with their children, they are more than welcome".

Referring to other professionals, mentor S2M2 said,

> "Even teaching assistants speak to us about children as well".

Mentor S2M3 said,

> "I always send a letter home inviting parents to meet with me".

In a similar way, mentor S4M1 said,

"And I tend to be in the reception first thing in the morning. So, obviously I've got a lot parents stopping and asking things that way which might not be a full-blown intervention, but it's just a bit of support or a phone call or something like that".

Mentor S4M2 expressed a similar opinion and said,

"We sit down and listen and that is the same with the parents as well, not just with the children as well", while S5M1 said, "I've got very good communication with the staff, or they would probably then say what is happening with so-and-so. I've got my own office and they will come in and have a chat.

There was also some indication that parents in particular found it easier to speak to the learning mentor compared to teachers, teaching assistants or other professionals within the school. Mentor S6M1 provided a comparative view saying,

"Yeah, probably people talk to me more and come to me more than they probably would have as just to a support assistant".

Referring to their interaction and listening to the parents in different ways, mentor S6M1 said,

"They just come or they ring up, they ring and then they come and D (another staff member) finds me and I go and speak to them on the phone... I think they find it easier to talk to me than go to the class teacher who has got 30 other children".

8. C) Parents' perception of the role of the learning mentors.

The previous sections looked at the specific aspect of the role of the learning mentors from the perspectives of mentees themselves and the learning mentors. The following section strives to develop this further by evaluating the role of the learning mentors from another perspective – that of the parents thereby providing an opportunity to

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consider the subject from individuals who have a different set of needs and may be perceived as slightly more removed from most of the direct interventions provided by mentors.

Stevenson & Baker (1987), Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997), Hughes *et al.* (1994) and many others have argued that parents play a critical role in their children's education by instilling motivation and positive attitudes in them, which in turn is governed by their own beliefs, perceptions and behaviours (Davis-Kean 2005). Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) and Patrikakou & Weissberg (2000) were of the opinion that parents in interpreting the opportunities and invitations presented involvement as an indicator of the degree to which the school wanted them to be part of their children's learning and school life. Thus, ideally speaking, the more opportunities available was perceived as better involvement. Because their children receive additional support from a learning mentor, parents of mentees had potentially more opportunities to interact with the school compared to children who are not being mentored. Although they were not professional experts in the field of mentoring or direct beneficiaries of mentoring, some of the parents who participated in the study reported that they had the opportunity to be involved in the learning mentors' efforts and activities to support their children. Therefore, their view will be of significant value in understanding and evaluating the role of the learning mentors. However, it must be acknowledged that a universal assumption that all parents are genuinely interested in and actively participate in their children's education is unsustainable because that is not factually true. Dingwal *et al.* (2014) reported that in their research they came across a large number of children who were neglected by the family. Several researchers like Gillham *et al.* (1998) and Slack *et al.* (2004) established the relationship between social and economic deprivation and neglect/abuse of children, Cawson *et al.* (2000), Radford *et al.* (2011) and many others reported various instances of parents' lack of interest in the welfare and development of their children.

8. C. i) Parents' perception of the learning mentors' role as listeners.

In the previous sections we have seen how the learning mentors and the mentees considered the role of the learning mentors as listeners as being very important. Having identified these perceptions, the following section will examine parents'

perceptions of the role of the learning mentor with particular attention to their views regarding the listening aspect of the role. It has been seen that the mentees' statements mostly referred to and were in the context of their interaction with the learning mentors only. On the other hand, the learning mentors spoke about listening as part of their interaction not only with the mentees but also a number of other individuals such as professionals and parents thus providing multiple contexts of interaction. The following section will also examine whether the parents' perception was similar to any of those of other groups within the research sample.

8. C. ii) Parents' perception of how the learning mentors listen to them.

The previous sections indicated that both learning mentors and their mentees regarded their role as listeners important. Responses from parents can also provide insights into the importance of learning mentors listening to their children. However, before considering this it is necessary to ascertain the importance which they attached to learning mentors as listeners to themselves in order to address their children's needs.

Parents reported that irrespective of the degree of importance of the matter they wished to discuss or the convenience of the method of communication, the learning mentors were there to listen to them. They found it comforting to know that there was someone at the school to listen to them, to reassure them, whatever issue they faced, as S2P3 said,

> "It was great knowing that there is somebody there who would take that issue, however minor, however silly it might seem to somebody and help you and help your child with it because you know, there are instances when I have, maybe had to speak to the teachers not professionally and it's just, sometimes it's just, you wonder if they have got time for you whereas you know, with the learning mentors, you feel as though they take me, they take it seriously, they listen, and they want to do the best for your child."

Similarly, parent S4P2 said,

"If I want to speak directly about things that I think E. and S. (the learning mentors) can help me with, then I would speak directly to them. That is not a problem".

According to parent S1P1, the listening role of the learning mentors was not restricted to negative issues and problems which the parents brought to them, but also general point of contact on behalf of the school, in order to keep track of progress, contact information or a programme of intervention. The parent said,

"She [the learning mentor] was always in constant contact with me and every now and then she would say how to get, like today for example, how are things going, you know, when I drop the other two boys off, I often see her and she says, how are things going with J, you know, she is always interested, you know, did you get on, did you get on with the Red Cross".

As suggested in the above response, the parents perceived the learning mentors as listening to them to be part of the process of providing them guidance in a number of things, particularly in providing support to the mentees as well as about the mentee's progress. Patents' perception of this role of the learning mentor as with whom they had a distinctive relationship was reflected in the response of parent S1P1 who said,

"Being able to pick up the phone and say to A. (the learning mentor), I'm going to pre-warn you, he's in a bit of a wobbler today, can you please see what's happened, cos he wasn't able to tell me".

Statements from a number of parents reflected this perception. For example, parent S2P1 said,

"I think we met, as in a sit down wise, we actually sat down probably a couple of months ago, but we talk quite a lot, on the playground, at home time or whatever and discuss a few things and then carry in on through the next week"

"I can speak to M. (the learning mentor) whenever I want, you know, like if there is a problem then...."

Parent S4P1 shared the same view saying,

"I would call up Ms. F. (the learning mentor). So I got to the point where I was like, constantly in the school like three or four times a week speaking to her (the learning mentor) about my children".

Parents found it comforting to know that there was someone at the school to listen to them as well as their children, to reassure them whatever issue they faced as parent S2P3 said,

"It was great knowing that there is somebody there who would take that issue, however minor, however silly it might seem to somebody and help you and help your child with it because you know, there are instances when I have, maybe had to speak to the teachers not professionally and it's just, sometimes it's just, you wonder if they have got time for you whereas you know, with the learning mentors, you feel as though they take me, they take it seriously, they listen, and they want to do the best for your child."

The above statements provide a range of examples which suggest that parents were comfortable in the knowledge that the learning mentor would listen to what they had to say in a range of situations.

8. C. iii) Parents' perception of the role of the learning mentors as listening to mentees.

Parents' perception of the role of the learning mentors as listeners to their children supported the views of the learning mentors. For example, parent S2P3 said,

"I think they are just able to talk to, I think sometimes it is just being able to talk because obviously in a classroom situation it is difficult for children to talk about anything really."

Parent S2P2 said,

> "Well, I just think it is quite amazing for the children really because they do tend to have more of a one on one with them as well".

Similarly, when asked to state why they thought the role was important in school, parent S4P1 said,

> "I just think that the child can, she has got anything on her mind, or that is distressing her or worrying her, whatever, she can feel that she can come here and speak to them and feel safe... They know they can come here and talk to them"

Expressing similar opinion, parent S3P1 said,

> "Because it has a knock on effect on their learning abilities, so, to be, L. (the learning mentor) listens to the children".

Parent S4P1 echoed similar perception saying,

> "I just think that the child can, she has got anything on her mind, or that is distressing her or worrying her, whatever, she can feel that she can come here and speak to them and feel safe and you know, they obviously can get whatever coming back of them. They just feel a lot better. For them, they know they can come here and talk to them and it is not like, sometimes it is better isn't it, for it to not go outside the family".

Another important factor indicated by the statements of the parents is their perception that mentees appreciated the role of the learning mentors in discussing matters which they felt uncomfortable to discuss at home. For example, parent S3P1 said,

"For children, domestic violence in the past, my kids are very protective and at times there have been issues that the children have felt that they didn't want to speak to me about. That's done, they had an impact on their school life because they have been, their heads have been messed up and what have you, they know that they can go to L. (the learning mentor)".

These examples indicate that parents perceived the role as being important for the mentees to be able to solve their problems which sometimes included issues which they found difficult to discuss at home or with family members.

8. D) Teachers' perception of the role of the learning mentor.

So far this chapter has examined various statements made by different individuals and professionals such as mentees, learning mentors and parents and the purpose of this analysis was to obtain a clear understanding of their perception of the role of the learning mentors. Certain common elements associated with the role of the learning mentors have emerged as described in the foregoing sections. The following section moves further in this direction and examines the response of teachers in order to obtain a comparative view of the perceptions of different participants. The significance of teacher's perceptions and opinions in the current enquiry is an essential component of this study for several reasons. Firstly, their perception has a significant influence by virtue of their being colleagues and collaborators of the learning mentors in addressing the problems and needs of disaffected pupils. Secondly, teachers have the advantage in terms of interaction with the pupils in school, and often, they are the first point of contact where most pupils are identified as being in need of any form of support including that of the learning mentor. Therefore, it is important to understand how they perceived the role, as this could have influenced their decision to entrust their pupils to the learning mentors. Thirdly, as teachers are considered the primary agents who steer, administer and supervise the academic and social development of the pupils, it is necessary to examine how the role is perceived within the professional and hierarchical dynamics of the school.

Analysis of data has indicated that compared to other participants, teachers have made a relatively limited number of comments about the role of the learning mentor. The

main content of their response has been the different barriers that mentees faces and the support provided by the learning mentors in removing them. This will be also be reflected in the respective sections dealing with these aspects.

8. D. i) Teachers' perception of the role of the learning mentors - listening to mentees.

As so far reported in this thesis, analysis of the data has indicated that the participants in the research perceived the listening role of the learning mentors as being most significant for various reasons. Initial scrutiny of teachers' response have indicated that they shared a similar perception but in varying degrees as detailed below.

While explaining the exceptional nature of the role of the learning mentors, teacher S2T2 said,

> "If it is something that is already a concern, then I would speak to either of the learning mentors and they would come in and perhaps have a chat with them ..... like, with some of them, they have had learning mentor since year three and they are perhaps in year four now. They have seen that person on a regular basis, on a one to one that they can freely chat whereas in the classroom, there is always somebody about."

Similarly, teacher S2T1 stated,

> "They're always available and they can also be very confidential as well so, I think that put the kids at ease. And we were talking about it this morning at PSHE and they said, we all feel very comfortable and very relaxing and able to come and talk to them (learning mentors). So, is not going that teacher pupil relationship, it's more of a kind of a friend, somebody who will listen but not make any judgements and things as well."

While referring to the an almost exceptional skill of the learning mentors to listen and acquire the trust of the mentee, Teacher S2T2 said,

"Children that have got that, come, a couple of them wouldn't offload in front of anybody. They have got special bond with the learning mentors here and they really rely on them and trust them".

The above statements illustrated the teachers' perception of the role based on the feedback they received from their pupils. It is to be noted that compared to the other participants such as mentees, none of the participating teachers provided a clear indication of whether according to their own personal view, listening to the mentees was an important part the learning mentors' role. The meaning and implications of this important aspect will be analysed in detail later on in the discussion section.

8. D. ii) Teachers' perception of the role of learning mentors listening to others.
Participant responses revealed that teachers often recognised that they were able to discuss issues affecting their pupils with the learning mentors who listened to them. For example, Teacher S2T1 said,

"Even initially, I can go and speak to the learning mentors and say I'm just concerned about this child before we go down the route of looking at everything".

This teacher also said,

"I will appraise S. (learning mentor) by just having a chat with her possibly in the staff room or I would catch her in the morning as she comes out of her room."

There were a number of other statements which indicated that the learning mentors did listen to or engage in a conversation with the teachers or other adults. Some of these statements are reproduced below.

"I would speak to either of the learning mentors and they would come in and perhaps have a chat with them (pupils). (S2T2)

"We have, we have our every child matters form that every teacher would fill out and that gets looked at in a formal meeting and then we'll have lots of informal discussions to do different, lots of different situations". (S2T2).

"Well, I say, could you come along, can you take them out, would you talk to them?" (S2T3).

"We put, we invited mum in to talk to us and dad. We talked to them together." (S2T3).

It can be seen that while the first three statements indicate a conversation – which involves listening – between the learning mentors and the teachers, the final statement suggested the teachers' awareness that the learning mentors were engaged in a listening conversation with the parents of the mentees too.

While some of the participants explicitly referred to the significance of the role of the learning mentors as someone who listens, others have mentioned it either less frequently or spoke of the listening role while referring to their own involvement in the process of mentoring such as identifying pupils and their own interaction with the learning mentors.

It can be seen from the above statements that teachers considered listening as an important part of the role of the learning mentors. However, the response also indicated varying degree of importance assigned to the role of listening by the other participants, compared to the teachers. Possible reasons for this variation will be discussed later on in the thesis.

CHAPTER 9

FINDINGS PART II: PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTION OF THE DISPOSITION OF THE LEARNING MENTORS.

As discussed in chapter 8, the perception of mentees, learning mentors, parents and teachers indicated that listening to the concerns of children was the most significant role performed by the learning mentors in primary schools. Furthermore, the previous chapter examined how the participants perceived, that such listening paved the way for further assistance in removing barriers to learning and inclusion in a numbers of ways. These included, identifying and recognising specific, individual issues to be addressed devising appropriate strategies to address anxieties as well as supporting them in implementing these strategies to overcome challenges in an effective manner. While recognising their perception of the listening role of the learning mentors, it is important to examine whether there are any specific factors which encouraged them to arrive at their interpretation of these. The initial section of this chapter therefore examines various dispositions of the learning mentors to see how they influenced the perception of the participants and their impact on mentoring outcomes. This will also inform a discussion related to a comparative view of the role of the learning mentors and other professionals within the school, which will be carried out in the discussion section of this thesis.

In this section, a number of characteristics or dispositions as identified by mentees, learning mentors, parents and teachers will be examined. For the purpose of the context of this study, disposition may be described as an inherent quality, habit, tendency or frame of mind of an individual. It can also be described as a state of readiness or a tendency to act in a particular manner (Collins, 2006). Scrutiny of the data indicated that there are three distinctive dispositions highlighted by the participants in varying degrees of importance, these being the disposition of availability, the disposition of trust and the disposition of impartiality. Each of these

are seen as significant factors in the lives of the child and will be discussed in some detail here.

9. A) Mentees' perception of the learning mentors' disposition of availability.

The disposition of availability was a recurring theme with all the mentees who were interviewed. It is therefore appropriate to consider how and why mentees attached such importance to their mentors being available. Mentees' responses appear to indicate that in their view, the learning mentors' availability can be of two kinds, these being defined as availability according to a predetermined timetable and that which is in response to a sudden turn of events which affects the pupils. The first instance occurs where there are regular meetings as part of a continuous programme or interaction between the learning mentor and the mentee, in order to address a particular issue or barrier to learning. For example, mentee S2C2 said,

> *"Well, (the learning mentor) usually comes and talks to me every Friday".*

In a similar way, during the interview speaking about the frequency and subject matter of their meetings, mentee S4C1 pointed towards a regular, agreed schedule saying,

> *"Like before we used, we've did this thing about being safe and stuff and like, feelings and everything, we did it and we had that every Monday"*

Another area where the mentees indicated the learning mentors' availability was in response to any unexpected event where a mentee required help and support. For example, mentee S4C1 said,

> *"Because anything goes on, I can just go and speak to her about it".*

Mentee S4C2 had a similar perception and said,

> *"If I'm upset, then I come down and talk to (the learning mentor)".*

It also appeared that this form of availability is of primary importance to the mentees because they perceived it as facilitating a direct and immediate way of addressing their issues. For example, mentee S4C1 said,

"I can talk to people. I have people there for me like S. (the learning mentor)" and *"I can just go and speak to her about it".*

Similarly, mentee S5C1 said,

"So, if you feel upset, I can just go in there and tell Ms. D. (the learning mentor)".

Another mentee, S3C1 said,

"L. (the learning mentor) comes and helps me when I'm upset"

In the words of mentee S4C2,

"If I'm upset, then I come down and talk to Ms. F. (the learning mentor)".

At this point, it is important to point out a number of significant findings. Firstly, mentees' statements such as the ones above appear to indicate a general awareness about the learning mentors' identity, the location of their designated work place within the school but at the same time suggested they believed that the learning mentors would be there if they were in need. Secondly, a number of statements from the mentees appear to imply characteristics such as accessibility and approachability - both physical and psychological, as essential components of successful mentoring. However, it has not been possible to categorically assign a particular meaning to the mentees' responses. The terms approachability, accessibility and availability were not familiar to the young children interviewed and it was therefore necessary to make my own interpretation from the language which they used. This could have the potential for misinterpretation, though safeguards associated with triangulation of data makes this process more secure. For example, the terms accessibility and

availability may not strictly have the same meaning in different contexts but the mentees' statements might be interpreted as being indicative of both characteristics. For example, S4C1 said,

> "I can talk to people. I have people there for me like S. (the learning mentor)"

And mentee S4C2 said,

> "If I'm upset, then I come down and talk to Ms. F. (the learning mentor)".

As far as availability was concerned, mentees made several statements which appear to suggest that in their perception, they could approach the learning mentors even if they were not being confronted by any problems, or even as a preventive step to avoid getting into trouble. For example, mentee S5C1 said,

> "Because I went to lunch club where she is like, we are going to the ICT suite at lunchtimes and breakfast club where you don't go into playground, you go into year three spare classroom, but you go in much earlier".

While the last statement indicated preventive measures, other statements did not portray attempts to address a particular issue. For example, mentee S1C1 said,

> "I think I just have a better laugh, you know. Otherwise, it's been, it's, it's really great fun you know, to see (name of the mentor) is nice".

Again, mentee S2C1 said,

> "Yeah, she sometimes calls me and asks me what days are like, so, sometimes, mostly we do it on a Thursday"

The above statements indicated practices of random interaction as well as those based on an agreed schedule. This informal and random manner of mentor-mentee interaction was commented upon by mentee S2C2 who said,

"Sometimes we come in here, we just sit down, we have a chat and stuff, once we had a meeting, I was sitting there and another boy sitting there and I didn't have anything to do on the play... on the break"

And according to mentee S4C1,

"Like, if I'm upset or I don't want to go outside, like, she's got colouring clubs and everything and she would let us go to it" or *"she just says, don't worry and everything will be ok".*

Here, it is important to point out that terms such as availability or others highlighted earlier are not limited only to being physically present within the school premises, or even having a designated work area with which the pupils are familiar and to which they have easy access, but also to indicate that the learning mentor was taking the initiative to interact with the pupils. For example, mentee S1C1 said,

"When we see each other in the corridor, she asks how it is, how everything is going and all that just because she still cares about me and all things that I do".

Here, it must be pointed out that mentee S1C1 who participated in the study had exited the regular, scheduled mentoring activities. This statement also indicated the fact that the pupil does not have to be in a designated location such as the mentoring room to be able to avail the learning mentors' support. The significance which mentees attach to the mentors' pro-active nature is further seen in other statements of mentees. For example, mentee S2C1 said,

"Ms. M. (learning mentor) comes to me, just pop in because we used to never knock on the door because we were scared, so she comes to me, most of the time to see how I was". Whether such activities served to enhance the approachability of the learning mentor and whether it had any influence on mentoring outcomes will be examined in the discussions chapter.

The above discussion indicated mentees' perceptions of various aspects associated with the learning mentors' disposition of availability. An important element of this discussion to be explored further is the combined and interchangeable use of various terms, such as availability, approachability and accessibility as perceived by mentees in relation to their interaction with the learning mentors. There are indications that they valued not only the organised and predetermined interactions which targeted particular barriers to learning experienced by the mentees, but also the availability of support in the event of any unstructured, unexpected occurrences which impacted upon their learning and well-being, particularly within the school environment.

9. B) Mentees' perception of the learning mentor's disposition of trust.

The disposition of trust appeared to emerge as an important element within the mentor – mentee relationship. According to Larzelere & Huston (1980), trust is an integral feature of any close human relationships. Mentoring essentially involves human relationship and as such the element of trust is vital to these relationships between the learning mentor and the mentee. Moreover, trust is a significant factor which influences children's formation, learning and all round development (Bernath & Feshbach, 1996; Koenig and Harris, 2005). There are three areas where mentees appeared to have indicated their trust in the learning mentors and they are discussed in the following section.

It should be noted that this section relies extensively on mentees' statements which may not necessarily contain direct references to the term trust. In chapter 8, Section A(i), the perceived limitations of young children's ability to communicate about complex subjects such as mentoring were discussed. In view of those difficulties it must be pointed out that in this section of the chapter, the participants' responses have been interpreted and their implications examined. It is therefore important to consider this section through a lens which takes into consideration the researcher's experience of the reactions and expressions of the participants during the interview, and their implications with regards to the interpretation of their response. In the researcher's opinion, such analysis of the element of trust is also essential in carrying out a

comparative evaluation of various roles within the school, particularly when examining the impact of mentoring.

9. B. i) Mentees' trust in the availability of the learning mentor.

The disposition of availability of the learning mentors as perceived by the mentees was discussed at the beginning of this chapter. However, mentees' responses seemed to indicate another feature associated with the disposition of availability namely, the disposition of *trust in such availability*. The difference between the two is that while the former is the knowledge or information that the facility existed, the latter indicated a belief and confidence that the mentors will actually be available when they are needed. For example, mentee S4C1 said,

> *"I have people there for me like (the learning mentor)"*

Mentee S2C2 said,

> *"But if it is a serious problem, I've got that door there".*

These statements indicated a degree of trust which goes beyond simply being aware of this support mechanism. The same feature of trust appeared to be perceptible in various other statements made by mentees. For example, mentee S2C2 said,

> *"He'll chase you up very quickly" and "just knock on the door to come in".*

Such statements were a reflection of the mentee's trust that the learning mentor will be there to support him in case the need arose. This opinion was voiced by mentee S2C1 who said,

> *"And then she will come later in the afternoon and talk to me".*

There were other similar statements by participants. For example, mentee S2C1 said,

"Cos, (the learning mentor) tries her best"

Mentee S5C1 said,

> *"She, if I'm upset will calm me down, she might take me out just for a few minutes and then I'll go back in. If I felt okay, I'll stay in, but if I got upset, I just go back out"*

These statements were indicative of the mentees' trust and confidence in the learning mentors' availability, ability and willingness to help the mentees, and do whatever it takes to remove the barriers to learning.

The disposition of trust can be sub-divided into a number of categories which provide some insight into the ways in which mentees perceived the role of their learning mentor

9. B. ii) Mentees trusted the learning mentors with respect to sensitive personal information.

Jobe and Gorin (2013) were of the view that children tend to seek help only from those adults whom they trust. On the other hand, Daniels and Jenkins (2010) reported the story of a 14 year old girl who regretted seeking help because it had only brought upon her anguish of a worse nature. This example highlighted the possible reluctance on the part of the children to divulge sensitive information and the element of trust involved when they chose so to do. Mentees' responses indicated that the element of trust did not appear to be restricted to their expectation and belief that the learning mentors will be there to assist them but seemed to have influenced their interaction with the mentees which in turn encouraged the mentee to share sensitive information with an adult even though it might have been of a negative nature.

As suggested by the mentees' responses, they found it relatively easy to trust the learning mentors with such information. There were several statements made by the mentees in this regard. For example, in response to a question about who the mentee shared sensitive information with, mentee S2C2 said,

"No, I don't really tell, the only person I do usually tell is (the learning mentor)".

Similarly, mentee S5C1 said,

"We usually talk about my family"

and mentee S4C2 said,

"Because that had happened at home when mum's home, that's what we tell".

At the same time, responses from some mentees highlighted the degree of trust that the mentees placed in learning mentors. Asked why they did not talk to their family members, teachers or other adults in school, including counsellors, about the issues, mentee S4C1 said,

"The teachers, I used to get on with the teachers, but I didn't really like to talk to them".

But on being asked about the learning mentor, the same mentee said,

"Because, like, when I'm with her, I feel more better like, because I'm happy, because anything goes on, I can just go and speak to her about it".

9. B. iii) Mentees trusted the learning mentors to communicate with the family / others on their behalf.

The mentees' responses indicated that they felt that learning mentors provided an important channel of communication between themselves and parents or teachers. The mentees' responses collated during this study suggest that they not only trusted the learning mentors with sensitive information, such as the situation at home, but also trusted them to convey their message, especially to their parents in an effective

manner. It can also be seen that the mentees trusted the learning mentors to keep them safe. For example, S2C1 said,

> "Cos Ms. (the learning mentor) sometimes tells mum so mum knows what's happening".

Similarly, in another instance it was found that when the mentees had to communicate sensitive information to the parents, they found it easier to do this through the learning mentors as mentee S2C1 said,

> "Well, don't want to tell mum that, but I think Ms (the learning mentor) tells mum. So, I don't have to tell talk to her myself".

What is indicated here is the mentees' perception of the mentor as a trustworthy communicator and protector, possibly from negative reaction or repercussions from parents.

Some statements of the mentees indicated their trust in the learning mentor's judgement with regard to the termination of the process as well as their continued support and their understanding that the learning mentor support was not necessarily associated with regular interactions. Such trust ultimately enabled the mentee to make the positive decision to end the regular mentor mentee meetings and gradually leave the process. Mentee S1C1 said,

> "Well, Me and (the learning mentor) have stopped because I mean, (the learning mentor) thought it would be the, the pair of us thought it would be the best idea because we've, we discussed all the situations...".

Yet it does not appear from the above statement that the mentee is making this decision in despair or frustration – on the contrary, the mentee has the trust and confidence that the mentor would be there as a constant companion and support when necessary and this trust is reflected in the statement,

"we've discussed all the situation on how to, you do it and how to calm myself down and all that and (mentor) does, when we see each other in the corridor she asks how it is, how everything is going and all that just because she still cares about me and all the things that I do" (S1C1).

9. B. iv) Mentees' perception of the learning mentors' disposition of impartiality.

Impartiality is generally understood as being behaviour that can be seen as unbiased, true or independent (Collins, 2006). Although the learning mentors are part of the school system, mentees statements clearly suggest that they perceive learning mentors as in some way different from teachers. While mentee S4C1 alluded to some difficulty in getting along with certain staff members at school saying

"I don't really get al.ong with some of the staff".

However, the same mentee came out with a number of statements indicating that there was a trusting relationship with the learning mentor. Some of the statements from this mentee (S4C1) are,

"like, with my mom, like, stuff has went on for years and then, like if I feel a bit upset, I'll talk to her (mentor)"

and

"The teachers, I used to get on with the teachers but I didn't really like to talk to them"

and finally,

"Because like, when I'm with her, I feel more better like, because I'm happy, because anything goes on, I can just go and speak to her (mentor) about it".

These statements, as well as those made by mentees while discussing the role of learning mentors as agents of communication, can be seen as their way of suggesting

that they find the learning mentors as more impartial and non-judgemental compared to teachers parents or other adults.

9. C) Learning mentors' own perception of their dispositions.

The following section examines the learning mentors' perceptions of their own dispositions. This section also investigates whether there are any similarities or differences between the perceptions of the mentees and the learning mentors regarding their dispositions.

9. C. i) Learning mentors' perception of their disposition of availability.

Learning mentors' responses have indicated that in their view, the disposition of availability was very important in mentoring. One of the main features that have emerged is that the qualifying characteristics, categories or patterns which identified pupils as being eligible to receive the learning mentors support, or to engage in a meeting / conversation with the learning mentor, was irrelevant. Therefore, whatever the issue that was bothering them, learning mentors were available to help them deal with it. With the exception of pre-arranged meetings, which were part of a regular mentoring programme, as mutually agreed by the mentor, mentee and the teacher, the same principle of availability prevailed even while deciding the time and duration of mentor-pupil interaction. For example, mentor S1M1 said,

> "They know exactly what day we meet and then look forward to that day.
> They know exactly what time I go into the class to collect them".

This ideal combination of pre-arranged meetings and flexibility as explained in the above paragraph can be found in mentor S2M2's statement in which she said,

> "Throughout the week, throughout the week I would see as many of them
> children as I can on a weekly basis. And then there is some that are on a
> fortnightly basis and some are just running a drop in now. So, if you've
> been mentored for a little while, it's trying to ease them out and getting

them back is, there a, don't have to come on a weekly basis but they know they can come, should they have any worries or need to talk".

Apart from the time factor, the mentor's statements clearly suggest that it was for the mentees to decide if they felt they needed to speak to the learning mentor. For example, the last part of the above statement was indicative of such freedom.
In a similar fashion, mentor S1M1 stated,

"The keys are children have the opportunity to come and chat to me about anything at all that they could be worried about"

This statement indicated the mentee's prerogative in making that decision about when to seek the learning mentor's help and support. Interviews with different learning mentors contained several other statements which indicated this perception regarding the mentee's freedom of choice. For example, mentor S1M1 said,

"I think, from the children's point of view, sometimes children just need someone to come and talk to"

Mentor S4M2 said,

"And the children themselves know, real booster, that communication with the children to know that there is somebody there for them to talk to"

While mentor S2M2 said,

"Children know that we are there to talk to them, no matter what" and *"we will talk about any issues that they have".*

All these statements indicated that none of the discussions with the learning mentor was expected to be only about a particular subject matter, or that it should be conducted in a certain format – it was to be based on the need of the pupil. However, there were no indications that any of these meetings or interactions were purely trivial in nature. For example, S2M3 said,

"They need to know that I am non-judgemental and that they are free to talk to me and use whatever language it is when they are talking with me"

Mentor S2M2 said,

"So, it is about looking at all angles of the behaviours and seeing how they can turn it around and improve. What is the next step, where do I go from here?"

On the other hand, mentor S4M2 indicated that a specific reason was not always mandatory for the mentee to speak to the mentor and said,

"It is just, just nice to speak to somebody".

9. C. ii) Learning mentors' perception of their disposition of impartiality.

In section 9.B. (iv), it was found that mentees considered impartiality and non-judgemental attitudes as important qualities in their learning mentors. These qualities were considered important by the learning mentors as well. There were several statements made by the learning mentors which emphasised the importance of trust and confidentiality. For example, according to mentor S2M3 the most important characteristic of a learning mentor was,

"Being available and listening. Not judging".

This learning mentor (S2M3) highlighted the importance of trust and confidentiality saying,

"They need to know that I am non-judgemental, and that they are free to talk to me and use whatever language it is when they are talking with me and to know that unless they are in dangerous situation, what they say stays with me".

A similar view was echoed by Mentor S2M2 who said,

> "I think we have to be very careful what we say because obviously when the child comes to us, the first thing we have to say to them is about confidentiality......if we break that confidentiality, the child wouldn't tell us anything. So we have to be very careful what we say to the teacher and how we say back to the teacher".

The above discussion indicated how the learning mentors' perception of their role is in broad agreement with the perception of the mentees. However, there are also obvious differences such as the learning mentors' perception of the importance of their role in listening to a number of other individuals along with the mentee, as well as the need to honour and respect the trust and confidentiality placed in them by the mentees. Having looked at the perception of two parties who are most closely associated with mentoring, the next section of this chapter will consider the perception of the role of learning mentors according to parents and teachers of the mentees, in order to obtain a more independent and comparative understanding of the role of the learning mentors.

9. D) Parents' perception of the dispositions of availability and approachability of learning mentors towards them.

The following section examines two major positive dispositions of learning mentors as identified by the parents, namely availability and approachability. It may be recalled that the mentees and the learning mentors used these two terms interchangeably and at times indicated their similar characteristics. It is necessary to acknowledge that some of the statements referred to in this section might have been previously referred to in other sections because of the presence of more than one theme in the same statement.

Parents' perceptions of learning mentors' disposition of availability were associated with time, location and the method of communication. For example, a number of statements by the parents indicated that it was possible for them to contact the learning mentor over the telephone, rather than through a personal visit to the school

for a meeting held within the learning mentor's designated official work area. At the same time, the learning mentors could be contacted as and when the parents were in need. Some examples of these statements are reproduced below.

"Being able to pick up the phone and say to A. (the learning mentor) I'm going to pre-warn you, he's in a bit of a wobbler today, can you please see what's happened 'cos he wasn't able to tell me". (S1P1)

"Well, they either phone me up or I come and speak to them in person, yeah, they are very good". "I could, I phone normally and obviously if they are busy, I have to make appointment but if they are not busy, then yeah, they would invite me to at the school". (S4P1).

"I mean, I will phone up the school and explain that he is having another one of his tantrums and that he will be in a bit late and they understand that". (S3P1)

"And we discussed, I think on the Friday, so it was, it was very quick really after probably a week after the incident really that we started getting involved with her and that she starts, originally I just stopped him going into school because it was easier and then I spoke to her (the learning mentor) on the phone because obviously I didn't know what to do and then she, we started the meetings from then on and I went into school with him". (S5P1).

"So, and there was any issues, then I would probably phone Ms. D. (the learning mentor) on Thursday because obviously I've had the day off and it would probably be better to phone her". "I just speak to her, she knows me now. So I think that the, no, I just phone up and they put me through really or they get me, or they get her (the learning mentor) to phone me back if she is not available". (S5P1)

Similarly, these interactions or conversations were not confined to the office of the learning mentor as S2P1 said,

> "I think we met, as in a sit down wise, we actually sat down probably a couple of months ago, but we talk quite a lot, on the playground, at home time or whatever and discuss a few things and then carry in on through the next week"

And parent S1P1 said,

> "She [the learning mentor] was always in constant contact with me and every now and then she would say how to get, like today for example, how are things going, you know, when I drop the other two boys off, I often see her and she says, how are things going with J, you know, she is always interested, you know, did you get on, did you get on with the Red Cross".

The above statements suggested that parents' has a perception that the learning mentors' disposition of availability was not confined to their official work area within the school.

Parents' statements also indicated their perception that the accessibility and availability of the learning mentor was not restricted by complex formalities and lengthy procedures as parent S2P2 said,

> "I can just, whenever there is a problem which I have, I have been in a couple times. So yeah, he's brilliant".

The above statements are indicative of parents' perception that the learning mentors' availability did not commence only once the child was physically within the school gates, but that they supported them even before the children arrive at the school, or at home-time. The disposition of approachability of the learning mentors was reflected in the existence of both formal and informal ways in which the learning mentors were able to listen to the parents

9. D. i) Parents' perception of the availability of the learning mentor for mentees.

More significantly, the parents perceived the learning mentors as being not only available according to their convenience, the learning mentors were also considered approachable in instances where other professionals, like teachers were considered otherwise. Attention now needs to move to an examination of the perception of other professionals with regard to the role of the learning mentors. In order to achieve this, the next part of this chapter will look at the perception of teachers with regard to the role of learning mentors.

9. E) Teachers' perception of the disposition of availability of the learning mentors.

In the previous sections, data indicated that the respondents attached particular significance to the dispositions of the learning mentors, such as availability and approachability. Interviews with the teachers have shown a similar perception. Teachers were of the view that this availability and approachability was not restricted to teachers but the pupils too were aware that they could approach the learning mentors whenever they were in need of their support. For example, teacher S2T1 said,

> *"I think we have a fantastic system and the doors are always open not just to us as teachers but also to the children. So, even when it is not their turn to go and see the learning mentors, they know that if they need to see a learning mentor, they can come down and their doors are open to them. They're always available and they can also be very confidential as well so I think that put the kids at ease."*

Referring to the approachability of the learning mentors, particularly for the pupils, when compared to approaching other professionals in the school, the same teacher said,

> *"So, is not going that teacher pupil relationship, it's more of a kind of a friend, somebody who will listen but not make any judgement and things as well."*

Participants made a number of other statements which appeared to suggest an understanding and appreciation of the availability and approachability of the learning mentors. For example, teacher S2T1 said,

> "I will appraise S (learning mentor) by just having a chat with her possibly in the staff room or I would catch her in the morning she comes out of her room."

Teacher S2T2 said,

> "If there is something that is already a concern, then I would speak to either of the learning mentors and they would come in and perhaps have a chat with them."

Teacher S2T3 said,

> "If for example today just have a child hat came in and I knew he was very unhappy, something had happened at home. All I have to do is catch A or C or S (learning mentors) and say, I've got an issue here…".

Use of the phrase 'either of the mentors' clearly indicated that it was possible for anyone in need to approach whichever learning mentor was available at the time. All the above statements are indicative of the significance which teachers attached to the disposition of availability and approachability of the learning mentors.

9. E. i) Teachers' perception of the learning mentors' disposition of trust.

It is also possible to interpret such statements regarding availability and approachability of the learning mentor as a reflection of the teachers' trust in them. However, teachers have also made some significant statements about the extent to which the children trust the learning mentors. In section 9.B of this chapter, it was seen that the mentees attached a great deal of importance to the aspects of trust and confidentiality. Teachers' comments appear to mirror the mentees perception in this regard. For example, teacher S2T2 said,

"Children that have got that come, a couple of them wouldn't offload in front of anybody. They have got special bond with the learning mentors here and they really rely on them and trust them."

Some of the other statements do not contain the term trust and yet they are indicative of the trust placed in them by the mentees, as well as other professionals. For example, teacher S2T1 said,

"Even initially I can go and speak to the learning mentors and say I'm just concerned about this child, before we go down the route of looking at everything".

The teachers commented that they felt comfortable discussing their issues with the learning mentors. This again suggested a great degree of trust placed on them by the mentees as well as teachers and other professionals.

While it remains a fact that the participants perceived the most important role of the learning mentors to be listeners, the aim of this chapter was to examine those factors and qualities which, according to the respondents were the distinctive characteristics which prompted such perceptions. Participants identified a number of dispositions such as availability, approachability, impartiality and trustworthiness which made the role of the learning mentor unique. It has become evident that it is not a single disposition but a combination of various dispositions which make the role of the learning mentors significant in their view. This is important because it suggests that all learning mentors, to be successful, must develop and promote these dispositions in themselves.

Another important finding is that these are common threads within the perceptions of the mentees, parents, teachers and the learning mentors themselves. Such commonalities not only highlight their importance, but underpin the significance of these dispositions in defining the role of a learning mentor within a primary school context.

Having found these common threads in the participant's perceptions on the dispositions of the learning mentors, it is important to evaluate whether, and to what extent these have been able to influence the participant's interactions with the learning mentors. This evaluation will be presented in the discussion section of this thesis. This will provide a comparative view of these dispositions within mentors and other professionals, such as teachers and counsellors. Meanwhile, the next chapter examines the impact of mentoring on the academic attainment and wellbeing of pupils in primary school.

CHAPTER 10

FINDINGS PART III: MENTEES PERCEPTION OF THE NOTION OF 'SUPPORT' ASSOCIATED WITH THE ROLE OF THE LEARNING MENTORS.

The stated remit of the learning mentors and the purpose of mentoring in schools were and still remain the removal of barriers to learning which prevent pupils from accessing learning (Cruddas, 2005; Rose and Doveston, 2008). The first part of this chapter examined the perception of various participants with regard to the role of learning mentors. Data suggested that the most prevalent perception, particularly according to the mentees was that the learning mentors' primary role was to be listeners. The focus of the second part of the chapter was their perception about various dispositions of learning mentors such as availability, approachability, trust, and impartiality and how it influenced the effective performance of the role by the learning mentor. However the important question is how does the role and dispositions of the learning mentor achieve the removal of barriers? The following section will examine the mentees' perspective on the various ways in which they are supported by the learning mentors. This will not only provide a clear understanding of the areas and avenues where the mentees perceived experienced the supportive nature of the learning mentors' work but is essential to identify different ways in which the learning mentors supported the mentees in order to be able to carry out a reasonable and effective evaluation of their impact in a primary school context.

Key themes emerging from the analysis of data suggested that there were three areas where the mentees perceived the learning mentors as providing support in addressing and removing barriers to learning. These have been identified as issues (barriers to learning), planning (devising appropriate strategies) and the process (implementation of the strategy). At this stage, it is important to keep in mind the fact that mentoring and removing barriers to learning is to be understood as a process or programme of intervention which consist of various stages.
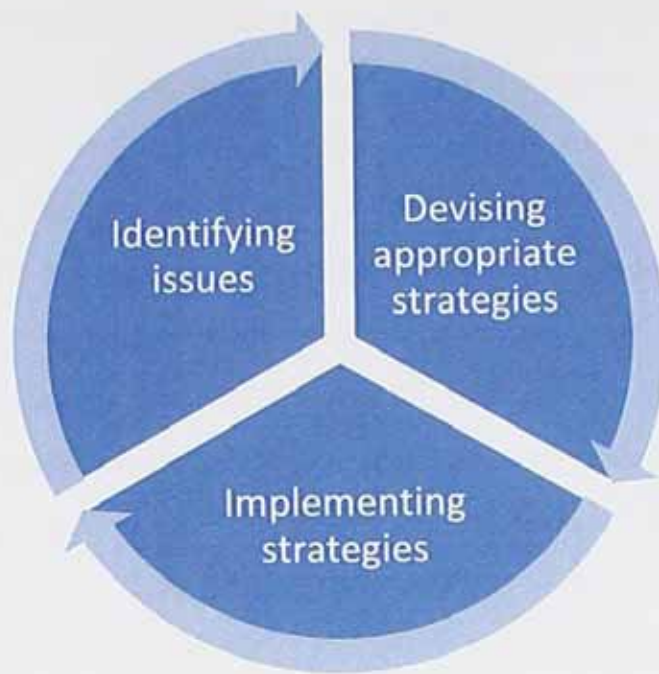
Figure 10.1

As depicted in figure 10.1 where the circle represents the process of mentoring in its entirety, the contents are identified as sequential events or activities which are essential components of the process of mentoring. Although they might not take place at the same time, without any of these sections, the process would not be complete. At the same time, there is alsos a sequential nature to the process. The following section examines the three components in detail which in turn will help explain the sequential nature of the process.

10. A) The notion of support.

Semantically, the term support has been described to mean providing help, assistance, comfort or encouragement, to be actively interested in and concerned for the success of someone or something. (Collins, 2006; Hornby, 2005). The notion of support permeates the entire process in varying degree and a detailed examination of the mentees' perception of how the notion of support affects and impacts upon the removal of barriers to learning is carried out in this section by examining various statements by the mentees.

It is important to point out that the mentees have not compartmentalised their perception of the concept of support as isolated instances where learning mentors helped them to understand the issues, plan appropriate strategies or implement them. Similarly, some of their statements do not specifically contain the term 'support' but the context in which the mentees have made the statement indicate that they perceived the learning mentor to be providing support. It is also equally important to bear in mind the fact that there are certain general difficulties associated with research involving young children particularly interpretive research where it is often difficult for children to express their views in a systematic and coherent manner in response to abstract questions which seek to measure or analyse concepts such as mentoring. There are also many difficulties associated with interpreting expressions and statements of individuals by the researchers. The following sections contain a detailed consideration of the mentees' perception of the learning mentor's support in identification of barriers to learning, devising appropriate strategies and implementing them.

10. B) Mentees' perception of support provided by the mentors in identifying barriers to learning (issues).

In order to be able to remove a barrier to learning, first and foremost, the mentees needed to identify the barriers, recognise its effects and understand how it influences his/her learning outcomes. A scrutiny of the mentees' responses has indicated some awareness of support provided by the learning mentors in this regard. There were mainly three aspects where the mentees perceived themselves as being supported by the learning mentors namely, academic issues, emotional issues and social skills issues. However, in most cases, prior to the intervention of the learning mentors, they had not been able to establish any interconnection between different barriers/difficulties. It is in this context that the mentees perceived the role of the learning mentors as supporting them. For example, mentee S1C1 said,

> "it was my brother, was here as well cos, me and my brother didn't really
> get on... cos, me and J... my brother are kind of like the same height".

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In this statement, mentee S1C1 has acknowledged an ongoing discord with his sibling, but the statement does not indicate any understanding or analysis on his part whether and to what extent this turbulent relationship was affecting his academic attainment. Also, other statements of the mentees revealed that the effect of deficiency in his social skills was not restricted to sibling relationship. He stated,

> "Mrs. (the learning mentor) has helped me deal with the problems that I faced during break times and lunch times".

This is clearly indicative of the fact that issue affected pupils other than his sibling and also various locations such as the playground and school dinner hall. Other statements made by the mentee reflected his awareness of certain difficulties and deficiencies associated with his academic performance. For example, he said,

> "well, whenever you, like we do test, I'm almost the first one to finish and I've, I don't get a lot of marks for it because it's dodgy, it's got bad handwriting or something. As I explained, I struggle to concentrate on a certain piece of work for a certain amount of time".

However, just as with his statements regarding sibling and friendship issues, there is no suggestion here that he was able to or would have been able to establish a logical connection between these difficulties and his academic grades.

As previously mentioned in sections 4 D, 8 A and 8 B, the mentees did not always find it easy to use precise words to the effect that the learning mentor had undertaken an extensive psychological evaluation or other associated activities which enabled him to gain significant knowledge regarding barriers to learning that affected him. On the other hand, the mentee's statements did not suggest that he was merely 'informed or told about' issues that were affecting him in a diagnostic manner as would be done by a medical practitioner for example. On the other hand, his statements reflect a recognition that his academic work does not produce the desired results and an understanding of the reason for the same. He stated,

"I don't get a lot of marks for it because it's dodgy, it's got bad handwriting or something. As I explained, I struggle to concentrate on a certain piece of work for a certain amount of time".

Similarly, the mentee reported that he sometimes reacted in a way which he was not expected to but at the same time showed an understanding of the reason for such reactions. He said,

"Sometimes I get a bit frustrated a bit hot and sweaty ahm... and then you know I start swinging, I get frustrated and start swinging on my chair, and do things that I am not supposed to be doing".

A similar understanding of a various issues that acted as barrier was reflected in his statements. For example he said,

"Well, mostly friendship problems, cos, I had a lot of friendship problems back last year and then we started because I got upset and people got upset. So, we started to come to Miss. L (the learning mentor". and *"if i get really like upset in maths and can't do something, then I come or if I fall out with a friend or something like that".*

The question is whether it can be argued that the mentee achieved this with the help and support of the learning mentor? Here, it is to be pointed out that the mentee was at the same school for some time but he reached this realisation and understanding only after the intervention of the learning mentor. Hence, it can be argued that if this was not the case, the mentee would have been able to address the issue much earlier and would not have required the intervention of the learning mentor in the first place. The above examples therefore indicate that the mentee perceived the learning mentor as someone who provided support in recognising the key areas which he needed to focus to achieve better outcomes.

However, recognising and understanding the barriers alone would not automatically remove them. In particular social skills and emotional development require

appropriate strategies and interventions. Learning mentors supported mentees in devising and organising such strategies. The following section looks at this particular aspect of support provided by the learning mentors in removing barriers to learning.

10. C) Mentees' perception of learning mentors' support in devising strategies to remove barriers to learning.

The second theme that has come to the fore in these interviews is the planning of strategies. Data suggested that the mentees benefited from consistent strategies in order to address barriers to learning. Mentees' statements indicated that they perceived that as well as helping the mentees to recognise the barriers and key target to focus their attention on, learning mentors provided support either by devising the strategies for them or by helped the mentees to devise appropriate strategies themselves. In comparison, the latter has been found to be less frequent. A consideration of the kinds of barriers to learning faced by primary school children and the intensity and complications associated with them such as family environment or economic factors revealed the wisdom of neither expecting nor leaving a young child to formulate their own strategies to address barriers to learning. In fact that the study did not come across any instance where the mentees had on their own accord devised a strategy to remove the barriers. This is further examined in this section.

Data has revealed several instances where the mentee reported that the mentor had devised separate strategies depending on the nature and severity of the barriers they faced. For mentee S1C1, the learning mentor put in place certain practical exercises to improve sibling relationship. The mentee stated

> "Mrs. (the learning mentor) tried some trust exercise with me and my brother to try and get us to trust each other and you know, just be civil to each other".

This statement indicated mentee's perception of the learning mentors' help and support in devising the concept and process of the trust exercise they practised in order to remove the barriers he faced, namely lack of cordial relationship with his brother. At the same time, this was not the only difficulty which confronted this particular pupil because he reported difficulties in his peer relationship as well as

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difficulties in focusing on the quality of his academic work rather than speed with which it was completed. To address various aspects of his social skills with regard to his peer relationship, the learning mentor put in place practical opportunities for different age groups to interact with each other in a supportive environment in order to improve their social skills and friendship particularly during break times. He said,

> "just the chance that at break times and at lunchtimes ahm... year threes, year fours, year fives and year sixes can be around playground and we can mix in and it is best chance you know, we can get to know each other if they're new from school and introduce ourselves and if they are new in our classrooms, we can introduce them to our friends and all that, because we are outside".

Through this statement the mentee acknowledged the support of the learning mentor in devising such strategies which neither the mentees themselves, nor any other professionals or adults who interacted with the mentees had considered earlier. As another example, mentee S5C1 had experienced certain unpleasant incidents which in turn made interaction with other pupils particularly in the playground and during lunch times very difficult. As part of the strategy to address the issue, the learning mentor suggested that the mentee use an alternative location for lunch and at a different time than others. The mentee said,

> "Because I went to lunch club where she is like, we go into the ICT suit at lunchtimes and breakfast club where you don't go into playground, you go into year three spare classroom but you go in much earlier. So, if you feel upset, I can just go in there".

According to the mentees, the learning mentors support in devising strategies was not restricted to certain mentees or particular barriers. In fact, they also put in place opportunities in general for the benefit of any pupil who might find themselves in a difficult situation. For example, mentee S2C2 reported a number of clubs devised by the learning mentor and this benefitted a number of pupils who had found it difficult to spend the break times and lunch times in a prescribed manner. One other important information revealed by the mentee was the fact that the mentees did not take part in

these clubs in a routine manner as part of a specific programme of mentoring but as and when they felt the need for it. Speaking of various strategies such as different clubs and allied activities, mentee S4C1 said,

"like, if I'm upset or I don't want to go outside, like, she's got colouring clubs and everything and she would let us go to it".

This statement indicated the mentees awareness that the learning mentor had devised the club as part of a strategy for to address different barriers they experienced. Although the above statement and other similar ones suggested that it enabled the pupils to recognise such situations and make the judgement to adopt them, the more important fact which is relevant to the topic of discussion is that it was the learning mentors who devised these strategies.

In order to support a pupil who did not have the supportive opportunity and environment at home to learn one of the learning mentors devised a strategy whereby the mentee was able to go into the learning mentor's office to do homework so that it could be finished on time. He said,

"If I do homework and I want to do it before the weekend, I will go in with him (the learning mentor) and do the homework".

Another example where the mentees perceived the support of the learning mentor in devising strategies was reported by mentee S4C1 while talking about the golden time strategy. This strategy was aimed at providing the mentees with an opportunity to engage in their favourite activities such as drawing which were not necessarily part of their academic curriculum. The mentee said,

"Golden time is something where we have like 20 minutes, like just playing with your friends and stuff like or if you want to colour in, to play with them things in your classroom you can do it".

As suggested by the mentee's response, the learning mentor discharged the role of a planner who thought out appropriate measures to address issues which the mentees

encountered. They conceived the strategy and programme of action but it was for the mentee to put the plan into action as the mentee stated,

> "We have to earn it. We have a chart in our classroom and it goes from, from 0 to 15 and you can get 15 minutes".

So far, analysis of the interview has revealed the mentees perception of the support provided by the learning mentors in understanding and recognising the barriers and issues as well as devising appropriate strategies to address them. However, according to the mentees, the support provided by the learning mentors does not end with merely making mentees aware of barriers and merely directing them to a remedial measure they have put in place. On the contrary, the learning mentors were closely involved in the practical aspects of implementing those strategies along with the mentees. The following section examines mentees' perception of the support which the learning mentors provided in implementing the strategies.

10. D) Mentees' perception of how the learning mentor helped with implementing strategies

The previous section examined the mentees perception of the learning mentor's supporting role with regard to planning and preparing strategies to address the barriers which they had helped the mentees to recognise and understand. A number of statements by the mentees suggested that rather than plan strategies and point the mentees in the direction of their implementation on their own like a doctor prescribing medicine and leaving the patient to continue the treatment on their own, the learning mentors worked alongside the mentees to implement the strategies. This practical aspect of support as perceived by the mentees is the focus of this section.

Mentee S4C2 had difficulty communicating with her mother but reported that she found it easier to communicate with her mother through the learning mentor. She said,

> "She (the learning mentor) just says, don't worry and everything will be okay. And then she phones mum and then mum talks to us"

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In this case, if the strategy was to speak to mum over the phone from school, the learning mentor was there with the mentee. In fact, the learning mentor reassured the mentee, spoke to the mother and then the mentee spoke to her mother. This is a clear indication of the learning mentor's active participation in dealing with the situation and implementing the strategy. Similarly, in the example of the golden time programme, the mentee said,

"Golden time is something where we have like 20 minutes, like just playing with your friends and stuff like or if you want to colour in, to play with them things in your classroom you can do it".

In this instance, the mentee had devised a programme where the mentees had the opportunity to engage in their favourite non-curricular activities by producing better result in their curricular activities. From the mentee's statement, it can be inferred that the learning mentor not only planned the scheme and opportunities for the reward of non-curricular activities, but also provided supported the mentees in such activities through supervision and their personal presence. This is based on the principle that all activities of primary school children within the school premises are supervised by an appropriate adult. Hence, it is possible to infer from the example of various clubs facilitated by the learning mentors, that they were physically present to provide and monitor the opportunities and activities of the mentee. Additionally, the opportunity to participate in competitions was another method of encouraging the children to work harder in their academic activities. Although some might argue that 'being there' does not mean helping the children to implement the strategy, being there does a great deal to reassure and encourage the pupils. I would compare this to the pupils being provided with homework and doing the same activity in the classroom. Although the pupils have been taught to solve similar problems and were deemed capable of doing so independently at home, the level of comfort they perceive in doing the same activity in the presence of the teacher who has taught them how to do it would be comparatively higher.

The learning mentor does not just devise strategies, clubs or other activities and leave the mentees to implement them on their own or wih another adult. They are always available to perform the activity with the mentees or be with the mentees while they implemented the programme. For example, mentee S4C2 said,

> "Well, if, if the colouring club goes on, we can come down here do colouring and if there was a competition of colouring, that could help us do that and colour better".

Similarly, mentee S5C1 said,

> "If I'm upset, she will calm me down. If, she cheers me up by just playing a game or something. She might take me out just for a few minutes and then I'll go back in, if I felt okay, I'll stay in but if I got upset, I just go back out".

The mentee is aware of the strategy which was devised by the learning mentor i.e. to leave the classroom when it became impossible to cope and return when the stress level was reduced. But is important here is the practical support provided by the learning mentor's presence throughout the process, not being left to do it on their own, but doing it with them when they are doing it.

At this point, it is important to point out that the personal presence aspect of the support provided by the learning mentors as perceived by the mentees was not necessarily confined to particular issues or barriers. Several statements by the mentees revealed their perception that the mentors' role involved providing general support or encouragement in a personal way even after barriers were removed. For example, mentee S1C1 perceived this support and encouragement in the form of a pleasant greeting on his arrival at the school which reassured him and supported him in feeling more comfortable at school even after the formal programme of mentoring had been completed successfully. The mentee said,

"Yeah, Mrs. M (the mentor) has helped me in various different ways" and
"... Mrs. M does, when we see each other in the corridor, she asks how it
is, how everything is going and all that .... it's made my like, I like coming
to school because Mrs. M. has helped me".

In conclusion it can be said that the mentees perceived the support of the learning mentors in a number of ways from discovering or recognising the difficulty or barrier which they experienced to devising suitable and appropriate strategies to remove them as well as being with them during the implementation of the strategies in a supportive, supervisory role. As indicated by the responses of the mentees, this was either general support where the learning mentor created a warm and welcoming environment with a positive greeting at the beginning of the day or devising systematic strategies which targeted particular barriers to learning whether they were within the school environment or outside or accompanying the mentees during the practical activities such as clubs, lunchtimes or playgrounds. The significance of various forms of support provided by learning mentors will be further examined later on in the discussion and conclusion section of this thesis.

CHAPTER 11

FINDINGS PART IV: THE IMPACT OF LEARNING MENTOR INTERVENTION ON PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS.

- The focus of this chapter is the impact of mentoring on pupils' lives.
- In keeping with the format in chapter 8 which deals with the perception of the role of the learning mentor, this chapter examines the perceptions of mentees, parents, teachers and learning mentors regarding the impact of mentoring.
- Focal themes of this chapter are the attitude/outlook of mentees, their social/relationship skills and behaviour.
- These factors are interrelated and have significant influence on the learning outcomes of children.

Scrutiny of policy documents and other literature suggested that the main focus of mentoring intervention in primary schools was to enable children to access learning and improve their learning outcomes. There were no indications that the learning mentors were expected to provide direct academic support to pupils as would be expected of a teaching assistant or learning support assistant. Accordingly, the following analysis would endeavour to determine whether the role has been successful in its core aim and will examine any evidence available in this regard. The process would follow a pattern similar to the previous chapter and will be comprised of an examination of the perception of various participants such as mentees, learning mentors, teachers and parents. The chapter has been divided into two sections based on the key areas which it sought to address. The first part examines the social or the non-academic aspect which is further devised into three key themes namely attitude/outlook, behaviour and relationship. The second part investigates the impact of mentoring on the academic performance of the pupils.

Before commencing the discussion on the impact of mentoring, it is important and appropriate to clarify that data indicated that there is a close relationship between the pupils' home/family environment, their attitude, behaviour and learning outcome. Factors such as family background of the mentee (for example, living in care),

financial and economic condition of the family can have huge influence on the learning outcome of pupils. According to several researchers (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Books-Gunn, Duncan & Maritato, 1997; McLoyd, 1998; Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; Yeung *et al.*, 2002; Freiberg *et al.*, 2014) by virtue of their dependence on adults, children either avoid or suffer from poverty based on the family's economic circumstances. Besides negative physical impacts, (Hanson *et al.*, 2013), family income and economic status has significant influence on children's ability and attainment (Duncan and Magnuson, 2013). In addition, changes in the manner and timing of family formation such as consecutive separation and re-partnering create a web of complex relationship formations which affect the children mentally and psychologically (Amato, 2005; Bradshaw, 2011). Data showed that the adults, particularly learning mentors were aware of the influence of family circumstances and situations on the learning and attainment of children. A few examples of participant statements are reproduced below.

"Some children are brought up in a lot of negativity and negativity comes with them to the school" (S2T2)

"Often the children can come from mixed backgrounds, hey might not be living with their parents full-time and they might be part time with step parents and things, may have older brothers and sisters, may have had experience outside of school whereby somebody may been injured, somebody may have lost a parent" (S2T1).

"Perhaps, they have had a really rough life so far, some children are care, some children live with extended family – they are a mix" (S2T2).

"Problems from outside of school you know, well, parents splitting up, just had an example of that today.... They are clearly thinking about what is happening at home more than what is happening at school" (S2T3).

The following discussion on the impact of learning mentors' intervention is held with these factors in mind.

11. A) Participants' perception of the impact of mentoring.

Various sections of chapter 8 examined the role of the learning mentors from the participants' perspective and it emerged that being a listener was the most significant role which in turn led to various kinds of support. Furthermore, it was also discovered that such perceptions were very strongly influenced by certain dispositions of the learning mentors such as availability, approachability and trust which the participants considered as distinctive characteristics of learning mentors. This chapter focuses attention on the research question about the impact of learning mentors and analyses the findings of the study to determine whether the learning mentors' listening and support has enhanced the social and academic achievements of primary school pupils.

11. B) Mentees' perception of the impact of mentoring.

Analysis of the data suggested that the mentees recognised a number of ways in which mentoring had an impact on them and identified these with the above mentioned categories namely, attitude/outlook, behaviour and relationship. It is important to emphasise that although discussed under separate sections, these categories should not be considered in a strictly compartmentalised manner because their influence is overlapping and interconnected rather than being mutually exclusive.

11. B. i) Mentees' perception of the impact of mentoring on their attitude/outlook.

Attitude or outlook referred to the mentees' attitude in general as well as their attitude towards school and learning activities. For example, mentee S1C1 reported a significant change in attitude towards school life without identifying any specific aspect of it. In one of his statements, the mentee appeared to not only suggest a change in his attitude, but also attributed that change to the help and support he received from the learning mentor. The mentee said,

> *"I spent most of my time very happy because Mrs. M. (the learning mentor) has helped me"*

Demonstrating various efforts on the learning mentor's part to address general attitude and feelings of the mentees and at the same time highlighting the resulting change in confidence, comfort and trust, mentee S4C1 said,

"Last, like before we used, we've did this thing about being safe and stuff and like feelings and everything, we did it and we had that every Monday."

"Because, like, when I'm with her, I feel more better, like, because I am happy, because anything goes on, I can just go and speak to her about it".

However, another statement by the same mentee (S1C1) contained some reference to the change in his attitude towards school, particularly attendance. The mentee said,

"Mrs. M has helped me in various different ways, all calming myself down, its made my, like, I like coming to school because Mrs. M has helped me".

Mentee S5C1 appeared to have a similar opinion about the impact of mentoring on attitude towards school and in particular attendance. It was reported that anxiety was one of the factors which influenced his attendance and indicated that mentoring had increased his confidence and generated a positive outlook about school. The mentee said,

"It has probably helped my anxiety coming to school, that is probably it" and *" its like helped me going into school with confidence and saying I like it".*

Mentees' response also suggested growing confidence and positive outlook which came about as a result of mentoring, particularly confidence in independently dealing with any issues after exiting regular mentoring programme. As a result, the mentee seems confident of exiting regular mentoring meetings and structured support by the learning mentor. The mentee said,

"Well, me and Mrs. M (the learning mentor) have stopped (regular meeting) because I mean, Mrs. M thought it would be the, the pair of us thought it would be the best idea because we've, we discussed all the situation on how do you do it and how to calm myself down and all that."

When asked about mentoring activities, response of mentee S2C2 indicated a positive impact on the attitude towards academic and school related activities. The mentee said,

"Yeah, you talk about all the other things, enjoy, relax but don't talk about school work."

This was an indication that the mentees were able to be in school and yet be not excessively worried about their school or academic work.

Now, there is a possibility that this statement is interpreted as indicative of a negative attitude or avoidance but in fact it demonstrated an improvement in the mentee's confidence level as well as the positive attitude towards school by not associating it with the pressures of academic performance and the learning mentors' contribution towards this achievement.

11. B. ii) Mentees' perception of the impact of mentoring on their behaviour.
Another important area which the mentees believed as being positively affected by mentoring was their behaviour. For example, mentee S1C1 referred to the impact of mentoring on behaviour both within and outside the school saying,

"Well, its helped me to get better behaving and its stopped me from getting into trouble outside the school as well".

Although mentee S1C1 did speak about issues during lunch times and break times, it was not explained whether it was behavioural problems or associated with relationship and friendship. However, it is possible to draw some link between his

behaviour and these issues as later on in the interview, he made some reference to behavioural issues.

Similarly, mentee S2C2 was another respondent who suggested a relationship between mentoring and improved behaviour saying,

> " Well, at the start of the year, I wasn't the best behaved child, but now, he said to me on the way down that I should be proud and that the teacher was saying that they saw a big improvement".

Apart from providing a comparative view of the behaviour both before and after mentoring intervention, the mentee also proceeded to present evidence of the same. According to the mentee, the severity of the behaviour was reflected in the number of phone calls the school made to the parents as well as the number of times the mentee had to go to the facility which they called 'reflection room' where they were encouraged to reflect on the cause and effect of their behaviour. The mentee reported a significant reduction in the number of times he had to go through these measures. As he said,

> "Usually, I would get phone calls from home and stuff and I haven't' had one yet" "And there is another thing called reflection that we go in there if we did something, misbehaved, go in we just sit down and do nothing"

In response to further enquiries he said,

> "I've been there once and it used to be about six per month or something" "no, no, one time in reflection. Haven't had any phone call".

11. B. iii) Mentees' perception of the impact of mentoring on their relationships.

Closely associated with behaviour and with more frequent references by the mentees were various aspects of the mentees' relationship - with their peers, members of staff at school and family members. Mentee S1C1 alluded to difficulties which he faced during lunchtimes and break which could be considered as being associated with or resulting from peer relationship issues. At the same time mentee S1C1 specifically mentioned difficulties in sibling relationship as he said,

> "It was my brother was here as well cos me and my brother didn't really get on".

In comparison, mentee S2C1 made several references to relationship issues which were addressed through mentoring. When asked about the reason for participating in mentoring, the mentee said,

> "Sometimes, it is a bit like, if you're upset about friends or something". "Well mostly friendship problems cos, I had a lot of friendship problems back last year. Then we started mentoring because I got upset and people got upset. So we started to come to Ms. L then". "If I fall out with a friend or something like that".

On another occasion when asked about various activities they undertook as part of the mentoring meetings, mentee S2C1 said,

> "Sort of, if you fall out with friends, you write about your feelings, about that and you write about how they were feeling and stuff like that".

Further, on being asked about why they spoke to the learning mentors about these issues rather than to their friends, indicating a strong belief that the learning mentors made a difference and changed the situation for the better, the mentee said,

> "Cos, they could do something about it, otherwise if you tell your friend, they don't always, they can't always do something. So, Ms. L (the learning mentor), she helps you"

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Mentee S2C2 also referred to the impact of mentoring on peer relationship where the difficulty was not associated with attitude or activities of the mentee but by other pupils. In such cases, the learning mentor's intervention prevented such incidents. The mentee said,

> "Well, there are some particular boys that are not the pleasantest... he does this to all the children he mentors, if he, if someone is giving me a hard time on the playground, he will stop it".

Mentee S4C1 indicated relationship issues associated with staff members at the school. For example, the mentee said,

> "I don't really get al.ong with some of the staff". "The teachers, I used to get on with the teachers, but I didn't really like to talk to them".

11. C) Teachers' perception of the impact of mentoring.

As indicated by the foregoing discussion, mentees' understanding of the impact of mentoring was broadly associated with their attitude, behaviour as well as their relationship with others. Data also revealed that while teachers appeared to have a similar perception of the impact of mentoring, in their view, the above factors had a deeper interconnection. This aspect is examined in detail in the following section.

11. C. i) Teachers' perception of the impact of mentoring on the attitude of the mentees.

In the above section, scrutiny of mentees' responses suggested that mentoring had a positive influence on their attitude, both in general and towards school and educational matters in particular. This becomes all the more significant in the light of the number and gravity of the difficulties which they believe are faced by some of the pupils in primary schools. For example, teacher S2T2 not only suggested that children come to school with negative attitude but also its influence on their ability to learn. The teacher said,

"Some children come to school with so much baggage. But then, how can they be expected to learn?"

Teacher S2T1 reported that the mentoring intervention successfully addressed such issues and baggage and improved the pupil's attendance. The teacher said,

"One of my boys earlier on in the year that was mentored had an issue with getting into school on time and I worked on that and he has been on time now. And he feels better for being on time because he's not missing what is happening"

The term baggage in this instance could be interpreted to include both negative home environment in which the child is situated as well as negative attitude or emotions of the pupils and teacher S2T1 referred to this aspect several times during the interview. The data also showed that the teacher drew attention to several factors which created such negative attitude. For example, teacher S2T1 said,

"Obviously, in a school like ours, we have got children coming from a variety of backgrounds. ... (Locality where the study was conducted) is quite an unusual demography and often the children can come from a mixed family backgrounds. They might not be living with their parents full time and they might be part time with step parents and things .... May have had experience outside of the school whereby somebody may have been injured, somebody may have lost a parent. And so, obviously that all comes into the school".

Teacher S2T1 indicated similar perception regarding the influence of such emotions and attitudes on the learning activities and outcomes of the child saying,

"There would be, if they are bringing a lot of emotional baggage into the school before the lessons start, some of that baggage you may not be aware of and obviously if you're asking your child to sit down and write an essay ... that is quite a tall order to ask any child to be able to do".

On the other hand, teacher S2T1 reported the example of a mentee whom they observed as lacking in confidence and was in the habit of blaming himself for everything that went wrong. However, working with the learning mentor helped him to address this particular issue. The teacher said,

> "Oh yeah, I think it is 100% successful, absolutely. One of the boys in my class, he had big issues at the beginning of the year. It was always his fault if anything went wrong, it was his fault, he was always going to be held responsible. But he has worked with (the learning mentor) all year and he's just been great and he's calmed down."

Referring to the impact of such personal attention as part of mentoring activities on such children and the subsequent change in their attitude, teacher S2T2 said,

> "And they feel special. They are made to feel special."

There were a number of other instances which the teachers pointed out as examples of the impact of mentoring. One of the mentees was affected by emotional issues associated with the demise of a parent and its impact on attitude towards school life. The teacher reported that the learning mentor was instrumental in not only personally helping the pupil but also organised different programmes to assist her. The teacher said,

> "Last year, one of my children really sadly lost her dad and she needed a lot of care in coping with. Her dad died suddenly and the learning mentors were fantastic with her and found different programmes to help her get through, through that suffering and helped her through to the other side".

There was another example of a single father trying to bring up a daughter but impact it was having on the child's emotional state and its impact on the school life of the child. The teacher said,

> *"For example, one of my girls, she lives with her dad, doesn't have her hair done like, its very typical, like a mum would do, fancy plaps and, and nails and things like that to make her feel girly. And the learning mentor, the female learning mentors here will do her hair and things like a mum would do".*

According to teacher S2T1, attitude and emotional issues were not the only areas that were positively influenced by the learning mentor. The teacher provided the example of the child whose physical wellbeing was having a significant impact on school life. The teacher said,

> *"I mean, it is not just children's behaviour. I have a child that is quite poorly in my class at the moment who sometimes it is quite a lot to be in the class all morning. She is finding it quite hard to cope with her illness and has some ups and downs and it's just a place where she can go and just collect herself before she closes off".*

The above statement provided an indication of the role of mentoring interventions in reducing the impact of physical wellbeing on the child's life at school. The teacher (S2T2) also reported that confidential nature of mentoring and the very fact that they were able to access it had the effect of putting the children at ease. She said,

> *"They're always available and they can also be very confidential as well so, I think that put the kids at ease"*

The impacts or benefits of ensuring the trust and confidence of the children and the need to reassure them to ensure best possible outcome for them will be discussed in the discussion section.

Whether impact of mentoring as observed and reported by the teachers particularly the mentees feeling more confident, comfortable or feeling special has any impact on their attitude towards school or academic activities will be discussed in the section which examines various perceptions on the academic impact of mentoring.

11. C. ii) Teachers' perception of the impact of mentoring on the behaviour of the mentees.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, it was found that relationship was one of the areas where the mentees had positive impact of mentoring. Although it is important to examine this aspect from the teacher's perspective, it must be pointed out that teacher's responses contained only a limited number of references to behaviour of the mentees and these were not always associated with any particular aspect of mentee's behaviour. For example, teacher S2T1 spoke on one pupil saying,

> "He spoke to the whole class about the boorish behaviour and things and given him strategies to help him. And occasionally he still has a wobble but he has picked up and helps with that as well".

This statement dealt with behaviour of the pupil but did not provide any details as to which part of his behaviour was boorish and the reason or occasion.

This teacher also reported that the boy's behaviour had witnessed some improvement by way of being less disruptive in the lesson.

> "Well, the lessons are not so disruptive, so for example, one of the boys and he doesn't, he doesn't disrupt the lessons as much now because he's got those strategies".

This has a positive impact on the learning activities of not only the mentee but the entire class as well as the teaching experience of the teacher.

11. C. iii) Teachers' perception of the impact of mentoring on the social and relationship skills of the mentees.

Just as reported by the mentees earlier, social skills and relationship appeared to be another important area which was influenced by mentoring interventions. For

example, teacher S2T1 referred to the example of some of her pupils who had friendship issues. The teacher said,

> *"I had two or three who had friendship issues on the playground. So falling out and not wanting other people to play with them and they had sort of six weeks sort of bloc. But then they have solved their problems and they haven't had to do it quite so regularly although the door is always open they can pop back at any time".*

Teacher S2T1 also spoke about the impact of mentoring as recognising he issues faced by a child who was reluctant to admit that he had any relationship issues but his activities indicated otherwise.

> *"And with the other lad who's been going out with (the learning mentor), he kind of doesn't feel that he has got any problems but he does actually have some major issues with friendship, not really having anyone to play with, not wanting to work with anybody which is our concern".*

Describing the impact of mentoring on social skills (or lack of) of the pupils and aspects of classroom behaviour arising out of such issues, teacher S2T1 said,

> *"Yes, it certainly improved for him and the whole class because if you've got a child who constantly shouts out or got constant issues after playtime, that absorbs sort of 10-15 minutes of your lesson."*

Therefore, the above discussion revealed that the according to the teachers' view, mentoring has had a positive impact on the attitude, behaviour and social skills of pupils. Having examined the perceptions of the mentees as well as the teachers, it would be worthwhile to examine whether the parents share the same view in this regard.

11. D) Parents' perception of the impact of mentoring.

Scrutiny of interview data suggested that parents of mentees perceived mentoring as having significant impact. As in the above two sections, focus of the analysis of parents' perception will be the three main aspects of attitude, behaviour and social/relationship skills.

11. D. i) Parents' perception of the impact of mentoring on the attitude of the mentees.

Although parents were of the belief that their wards' attitude had been positively influenced by mentoring intervention, during the interview, they did not make frequent references to the mentees' attitude and when they did, they referred to the general attitude of pupils rather than any particular aspect. For example, parent S2P2 described the impact of mentoring on his child merely by saying,

> "... and when it came to (the learning mentor), almost straight away, and to be honest, since he's intervened, its just been, its completely different world".

In contrast however, parent S2P2 was more specific in his response. The parent said,

> "I think its like, its given him more confidence I think, especially, sort of at school and he loves (the learning mentor) as well, so its nice that he's got that where he knows he can come and see (the learning mentor) f he's got a problem. He tends to talk to (the learning mentor) above everyone else, even me...... but its been quite a turn around since he came here because he is getting help and he knows."

Parent S2P3 had a similar response and mentioned certain specific aspects of the pupil's attitude which were addressed by learning mentors. The parent said,

> "(The pupil) was very reluctant to come to school. He would start with being really upset and then kind of fake illnesses. "I don't want to go" or we would be walking, then it would be "on my leg is hurting" or just kind

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of those things and initially I spoke to his teacher and then that was
referred to (the learning mentor) who then I had a chat with (the learning
mentor) and then she just picked it up from there really."

Further explaining the impact of mentoring, the parent said that it had made a huge difference and changed the child's attitude from 'I don't really want to go to school' by engaging the child in a conversation and helping him explore the issues that were creating such attitude. According to the parent, this was a great help in addressing the issue.

In the case of parent S4P1, the issue was her children feeling unsafe particularly in their own house because of family violence. The parent was careful to clarify that the children were not victims of abuse, but witnessing someone in the family being victimised had huge negative impact on them. According to the parent, the learning mentor was able to help the children successfully address this issue. The parent said,

"... my children have settled a lot since they have had (the learning
mentor) and like, openly talking to them."

According to parent S4P2, her child began interacting with the learning mentor for an entirely different reason. It was more of an emotional factor than attitude and was caused by the death of a close relative. The parent said,

"But (mentee), very attached to his grandfather, it was difficult for him
and he received a lot of help through school".

Parent S5P1 reported a totally different episode where the pupil's attitude had changed leading to the intervention of the learning mentor. Unlike other examples mentioned above, the said pupil was not affected by similar issues but a particular incident which although did not break any rules, yet was considered to be too embarrassing by the pupil and therefore refused to go to school. According to the parent, it was the learning mentor who was instrumental in changing the attitude of the pupil and enabled him to attend school regularly. The parent said,

"Well, for the start, for my son, it is that he can go to school and he doesn't feel as anxious, he knew he need to go to school and I think it has helped him become more confident and he is definitely more talkative because he is more open with me and discuss ...... because of the learning mentor, she gets him to talk, she gets him to open up a bit more and it has helped our relationship as well really".

While discussing parents' perception of change in attitude, it is useful to note that in the opinion of parent S2P1, the learning mentor was instrumental in changing the attitude and outlook of not only the pupils but also the parents themselves. In the words of the parent,

"We've been, that is, he's had difficulty when we moved to this school 18 months ago .... The reason it was so long in doing anything was probably mine and my wife's fault because were kind of not admitting that our son needed help, if that makes sense".

11. D. ii) Parents' perception of the impact of mentoring on the behaviour of the mentees.

Parents have expressed their belief that mentoring had a positive impact on their children's behaviour. In fact, for one parent, it was behavioural issues which led to the intervention of the learning mentor. As parent S1P1 said,

"And some of his behaviours prior to (the learning mentor) being involved tended to be at home rather than at school and then when it started to escalate at school, that's when (the learning mentor) approached me and said, "you know, how do you feel about me".

The parent disclosed further details about the negative behaviour of the pupil saying,

"... it was the fact that I spotted his behaviour was really escalating to the point where he was getting into fights and excluded for a couple of days".

The parent described the method of intervention and the impact it had on the pupil's behaviour and said,

"Because I think, without the calming techniques and the ideas that (the pupil) has been taught by (the learning mentor)'s work, he would not be as successful as he is".

The data also contained some instances where the learning mentor organised special programmes to prevent negative behaviour of pupils who were not assessed and identified as having special needs, although their behaviour was influenced by their environment. As parent S2P1 said,

"... he gets, obviously he is not violent, but he can be aggressive and so (the learning mentor) and the head teachers have come up with bringing him out 5 minutes before and it worked and it is a lot more, we've seen a lot more, me and my wife have seen a lot more of him changing"

The above mentioned system was put in place because the pupil was uncomfortable in crowded and busy environment and this helped the pupil from reacting aggressively to others. Similarly, asked whether mentoring has made any significant difference in their child's life, parent S2P2 said,

"Well, it was a mixing and like sort of socialising with people and you know and he gets quite angry as well, ... but he is yeah, he is really quite anxious as well, he is really anxious child... I think yeah, yeah, I do think they have made a lot of difference"

In general, as seen in the forgoing discussion, parents perceived mentoring as having a positive effect on the attitude and behaviour of the pupils. In some instances as in the case of parent S2P2 above, behavioural issues that were being addressed through

mentoring included some aspects of social skills and relationships. Therefore, this aspect is considered in further details below.

11. D. iii) Parents' perception of the impact of mentoring on the social and relationship skills of the mentees.

Chapter 8 while discussing the role of the learning mentor and section 11 A of this chapter which dealt with the mentees' perception of the impact of mentoring indicated that social skills and relationship issues had been the focus of a number of mentoring interventions. In a similar manner, parents' responses contained several references to improvement in pupils' social skills as a result of mentoring interventions. For example, parent S1P1 suggested that mentoring had improved friendship and group activities such as games for her child. She said,

> "Yeah, I think at home, when he is allowed to play out with friends who live on our street, there was a time when he just used to come in and he would be absolutely raging because they weren't doing what he wanted them to do and he wouldn't just go out. He would slam the door or whatever. And I think he has certainly got on better."

Parent S2P1 had a similar story to tell. Had earlier reported that his child was uncomfortable being in a group and sometimes this led to him becoming aggressive. This parent spoke of noticeable improvement in the social interaction of the child. The parent said,

> "... but there is other example, I mean, its just that he is out there playing tennis is a big plus for me as well .... Yeah, I mean, his interaction out of school, in school he is making friends, not necessarily making friends, he is starting to interact with children with playing because he doesn't have any friends outside of school, even his own cousins and nephews that I have he doesn't want and he says it himself. " "Yeah, he just, he spent the day with her (child's aunt), he spent, cos obviously he was playing with his cousins, he'd spent the night at hers, he came up and he gave her a cuddle".

In parent's opinion, this was a huge improvement as far as the child social interactions were concerned because he had never stayed out and would not go with anyone except the parents. Although it might appear from these statements that making friends and the ability to engage with others were the only issues addressed through mentoring, in fact, the opposite i.e. overfamiliarity was also the focus of mentoring for some pupils. For example, parent S1P1 said,

> "I think its, he was always quite sociable and still is quite sociable but sometimes he, he would be pulled on the line for being a little bit of being overfamiliar with people that he knew. And I, and there have been times in the past where I've had to pull him up for that and he has said, 'oh yeah, (the learning mentor) told me shouldn't do that, could've remembered that".

Having considered the above statements and examples, it is possible to infer that all the participants had similar perceptions with the regard to the main areas which were influenced by mentoring namely attitude, in general as well as towards school life, behaviour and social skills and relationship issues. Another very significant feature of all the responses is the absence of direct reference to academic activities and performance except occasional mention of some minor difficulty by the mentees. The adults, particularly parents were less concerned about the academic achievement of their wards compared to their wellbeing and comfortable school life. In contrast, the learning mentors appear to have made a reasonably balanced mention of the two aspects and the following discussion will explain this further.

11. E) Learning mentors' perception of the impact of mentoring.

Semi-structured interviews with the learning mentors were one of the most important data source for this research and their statements contained various references, although not exceptionally detailed or frequent. However, some of the statements at times appeared to reflect the difficulty they faced in providing measurable evidence of the impact of mentoring. For example, one of the statements reflected the learning mentor's belief that it was not the measurement of the impact that mattered but the

fact that the mentee was seen to be feeling comfortable, safe and happy to be in school. For example, mentor S2M3 said,

> "Well, I never go asking anybody if they think I'm doing a good job. I do my job, that's it. I judge my work by watching my children smile, by watching them coming in to school. For some kids that we have worked with, coming into school is progress and if I see them coming into school, I don't need anyone to tell me I'm doing a good job because they are in"

Rather than consider this as an attempt to avoid providing evidence, the above statement must be considered with great care as it identifies the significance of the impact of mentoring which might appear trivial to those familiar with the pupil's background and the effort that has gone into achieving this success. I have examined the learning mentors' perceptions about the impact of mentoring at the end of this chapter for a specific reason. Unlike the other participants, the learning mentors were able to provide some concrete evidence of the impact of mentoring not only with regard to the three themes which were discussed above but also their academic achievement. This was because among all the participants, learning mentors were the only ones who had access to specific, information and academic details about pupils who were being mentored. First part of the following section examines the impact of mentoring on the non-academic aspects of pupils lives and the second part will examine the impact on academic attainment.

11. E. i) Improvement in the non-academic achievements of mentees as a result of mentoring interventions.

Among various documentary evidences provided by one of the learning mentors to demonstrate the non-academic achievements of pupils was the 'Boxall profile' assessment of a group of pupils. Boxall profiles were introduced by Marjorie Baxal in the 1970s (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998) and are used as a framework not only to identify those areas which need improvement but also to determine the progress made at various stages of the intervention. Identification of child's strengths and weaknesses allows staff working with them to focus on areas where additional support is most needed. This activity is carried out in the first of the two sections and

analyses developmental strands using two clusters comprising of five columns each for assessing the child's organisation of learning experiences and internalisation of controls. The second section uses three clusters to identify and describe behaviours that inhibit or interfere with the child's learning and involvement in the school.

A summary of the four profiles provided by the learning mentor is presented in the table below. A copy of the Boxall profiles is provided in appendix 5.

	Developmental Strands						Improvement in score
Pupil	Organisation of Experience		Internalisation of Controls		Total Score		
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	
A	69	69	61	63	130	132	2
B	37	52	22	43	59	95	36
C	57	64	44	56	101	120	19
D	51	54	52	56	103	110	7

Table 11.1

	Diagnostic Profile								Improvement in Score
Pupil	Self-limiting		Undeveloped Behaviour		Unsupported Development		Total Score		
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	
A	0	0	8	3	5	2	13	5	8
B	11	6	15	7	50	26	76	39	37
C	9	5	10	5	29	15	48	25	23
D	7	3	10	7	16	11	33	21	12

Table 11.2

Table 11.1 describes the developmental strands which indicated the development made so far and highlighted the area where more focus was required. In the table, Mentee B for example has shown a substantial improvement in the total score from 59

before mentoring intervention to 95 at the end of the mentoring process which achieved an overall increase of 36 points a significant increase in organisation of experience from 37 to 52. Mentee C on the other hand showed an increase of 12 points in the area of internalisation of controls from 44 before mentoring to 56 after the intervention. This indicated that the areas which required special attention had been significantly reduced.

Table 11.2 which describes the diagnostic profile shows a reduction in those overall score for every mentee but Mentee B in particular had a substantial reduction of 37 points over all. Unsupported development cluster could suggest absence of care or even abuse (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998). Among the various individual aspects of the profile, mentee B showed the most improvement where the unsupported development score moved from 50 before mentoring to 26 after mentoring while mentee showed a 14 point reduction from 29 to 15. Self-limiting feature is an indication of difficulty in engaging with the others due to a number of reasons such as deep depression or severe emotional neglect sometimes from birth (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998). All participants showed improvement, but Mentee B showed most improvement in in this category where the score moved from 11 to 6 while Mentees C and D showed a decrease of 4 points each.

11. E. ii) Improvement in the attendance levels of the mentees as a result of mentoring interventions.

Another area where mentoring appeared to have made noticeable difference was attendance. All participating mentors emphasised the fact that for some children regular attendance was a matter of concern and for these children to be able to be physically present in school was considered a positive outcome. School records pointed towards very poor attendance level for some of these pupils at the time of commencement of mentoring. Records after the mentoring interventions had carried on for some time have shown substantial reduction in the number of absences and late comings of these mentees. Attendance records of two pupils prior to mentoring as well as at the end of the year when they were mentored are reproduced below.

Figure 11.1

2012-2013

w/b					
27/08/2012					
03/09/2012	♦♦	♦♦	/\	/\	/\
10/09/2012	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
17/09/2012	L\	/\	/\	/\	/\
24/09/2012	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
01/10/2012	L\	L\	/\	/\	/\
08/10/2012	L\	/\	/\	L\	/\
15/10/2012	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
22/10/2012	/\	L\	L\	/\	/\
29/10/2012	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
05/11/2012	L\	/\	L\	/\	O\
12/11/2012	L\	L\	L\	L\	/\
19/11/2012	L\	O\	/\	L\	/\
26/11/2012	L\	/\	/\	/\	II
03/12/2012	II	/\	L\	/\	/\
10/12/2012	L\	/\	L\	/\	/\
17/12/2012	L\	L\	L\	♦♦	♦♦
24/12/2012	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
31/12/2012	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
07/01/2013	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
14/01/2013	II	II	II	II	II
21/01/2013	L\	L\	L\	/\	L\
28/01/2013	/\	/\	/\	II	/\
04/02/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	L\
11/02/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
18/02/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
25/02/2013	/\	II	/\	/\	/\
04/03/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
11/03/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
18/03/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	II

Summary 01/09/2012 AM - 26/07/2013 PM	Sessions	%
Attendances	355	93.92
Authorised absences	21	5.56
Unauthorised absences	2	0.53
Possible Attendances	378	
Including		
Approved Ed. Activity	0	0.00
Lates before reg closed	40	10.58
Lates after reg closed	0	0.00
Unexplained absences	0	0.00

Key to Codes	
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration (attending other establishments)
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)
H	Annual family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (not med/dental appointments)
J	Interview
L	Late (before reg closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised abs (not covered by other code)

Figure 11.1

Figure 11.2

2013-2014

w/b					
26/08/2013					
02/09/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	/\	/\
09/09/2013	L\	/\	L\	/\	/\
16/09/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
23/09/2013	II	L\	/\	/\	/\
30/09/2013	/\	YY	L\	/\	/\
07/10/2013	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
14/10/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
21/10/2013	/\	/\	L\	/\	/\
28/10/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
04/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
11/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
18/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	L\
25/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
02/12/2013	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
09/12/2013	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
16/12/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
23/12/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
30/12/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
06/01/2014	♦♦	/\	/\	/\	/\
13/01/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
20/01/2014	/\	/\	L\	/\	/\
27/01/2014	/\	/\	O\	O\	/\
03/02/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
10/02/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
17/02/2014	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
24/02/2014	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
03/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
10/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
17/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\

Summary 01/09/2013 AM - 27/06/2014 PM	Sessions	%
Attendances	336	98.25
Authorised absences	4	1.17
Unauthorised absences	2	0.58
Possible Attendances	342	
Including		
Approved Ed. Activity	1	0.29
Lates before reg closed	14	4.09
Lates after reg closed	0	0.00
Unexplained absences	0	0.00

Key to Codes	
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration (attending other establishments)
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)
H	Annual family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (not med/dental appointments)
J	Interview
L	Late (before reg closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised abs (not covered by other code)

Figure 11.2

For example, as seen in figure 11.1, before being mentored, in academic year 2012-13 pupil X had 93.92% attendance with 40 lates before register closed, 21 authorised absences and 2 unauthorised absences. However, as shown in figure 11.2, in academic

year 2013-14 when the pupil was mentored, the pupils attendance level rose to 98.25% while lates before register closed fell to 14, 4 authorised absences and 2 unauthorised absences.

Registration Certificate

2012-2013		Summary 01/09/2012 AM - 28/06/2013 PM	Sessions	%
w/b		Attendances	318	92.44
27/08/2012		Authorised absences	21	6.10
03/09/2012	♦♦ ♦♦ /\ /\ /\	Unauthorised absences	5	1.45
10/09/2012	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	Possible Attendances	344	
17/09/2012	/\ /\ L\ L\ /\	Including	·	
24/09/2012	L\ L\ /\ L\ /\	Approved Ed. Activity	0	0.00
01/10/2012	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	Lates before reg closed	32	9.30
08/10/2012	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	Lates after reg closed	3	0.87
15/10/2012	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	Unexplained absences	0	0.00
22/10/2012	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\			
29/10/2012	♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦			
05/11/2012	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\		Key to Codes	
12/11/2012	/\ L\ /\ /\ /\			
19/11/2012	/\ /\ /\ L\ /\	/	Present (AM)	
26/11/2012	II /\ /\ /\ /\	\	Present (PM)	
03/12/2012	L\ L\ /\ /\ /\	B	Educated off site (not Dual Reg)	
10/12/2012	/\ L\ /\ /\ /\	C	Other authorised circumstances	
17/12/2012	/\ /\ L\ ♦♦ ♦♦	D	Dual registration	
24/12/2012	♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦	E	Excluded	
31/12/2012	♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦	F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	
07/01/2013	L\ /\ L\ /\ /\	G	Family holiday (not agreed)	
14/01/2013	/\ /\ L\ /\ /\	H ·	Family holiday (agreed)	
21/01/2013	L\ L\ L\ /\ /\	I	Illness	
28/01/2013	/\ II L\ /\ /\	J	Interview	
04/02/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	L	Late (before registers closed)	
11/02/2013	♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦			
18/02/2013	II /\ /\ /\ L\			
25/02/2013	/\ /\ L\ /\ U\			
04/03/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /C			

Figure 11.3

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2013-2014		Summary 01/09/2013 AM - 27/06/2014 PM	Sessions	%
		Attendances	334	97.66
w/b		Authorised absences	8	2.34
26/08/2013		Unauthorised absences	0	0.00
02/09/2013	▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮ /\ /\	Possible Attendances	342	
09/09/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\			
16/09/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	Including		
23/09/2013	/\ /\ L\ /\ /\	Approved Ed. Activity	1	0.29
30/09/2013	/\ YY /\ /\ /\	Lates before reg closed	3	0.88
07/10/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	Lates after reg closed	0	0.00
14/10/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	Unexplained absences	0	0.00
21/10/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\			
28/10/2013	▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮			
04/11/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\			

2013-2014 continued		Key to Codes	
11/11/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	/	Present (AM)
18/11/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	\	Present (PM)
25/11/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)
02/12/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	C	Other authorised circumstances
09/12/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	D	Dual registration (attending other establishments)
16/12/2013	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	E	Excluded (no alternative provision made
23/12/2013	▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮	G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)
30/12/2013	▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮	H	Annual family holiday (agreed)
06/01/2014	▮▮ /\ /\ /\ /\	I	Illness (not med/dental appointments)
13/01/2014	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	J	Interview
20/01/2014	L\ /\ /\ /\ /\	L	Late (before reg closed)
27/01/2014	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	M	Medical/Dental appointments
03/02/2014	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	N	No reason yet provided for absence
10/02/2014	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\	O	Unauthorised abs (not covered by other code)
17/02/2014	▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮		
24/02/2014	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\		
03/03/2014	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\		
10/03/2014	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\		
17/03/2014	/\ /\ /\ /\ /\		

Figure 11.4

Another pupil whom I shall call Y had 92.44% attendance with 21 authorised absences, 5 unauthorised absences and 32 lates before the register closed (figure 11.3). With the learning mentors support, this pupil's attendance level rose to 97.66% with only 8 authorised absences, no unauthorised absences and only 3 lates before register closed (figure 11.4) which is a a noteworthy improvement. Copies of these attendance records with the details are reproduced in appendix 3. Apart from individual attendance levels, whole school attendance level had witnessed improvement too. As shown in the figure below, the attendance monitoring record showed a consistent improvement in attendance levels.

Attendance monitoring
September 2013-2014

	5th Sep-Sep	Sep-Oct	Just Oct	Sep-Nov	Just Nov	Sep-Dec	Just Dec	Sep-Jan	Just Jan	Sep-Feb	Just Feb	Sep-March	Just March	Sep-April	Just April	Sep-May	Just May	Sep-June	Just June	Sep-July	Just July
2013-2014 R-Y6	96.5	95.3	94	95.6	96.1	95.5	95.2	95.8	95.6	95.6	94.6	95.6	95.8	95.7	96.6	95.8	96.7	95.8	95.5		
2012-2013 R-Y6	93.4	94.4	95.2	94.8	95.2	94.3	94	93.6	91	93.9	95.4	94	94.8	94.2	96.2	94.3	94.9	94.2	92.6	94.2	91.2
Excluding under 5s	93.5	94.8	95.2	94.4	94.4	94.3	93.9	93.6	91.1	93.9	95.4	94	94.7	94.2	96.2	94.5	94.9	94.1	92.4	94.1	91.0
2011-2012 R-Y6	94	94.1	94.2	93.5	92.6	93.3	92	92.8	91.5	92.5	91.1	92.3	91.5	92.5	93.6	92.4	92.2	92.4	92	92.1	88.9
Excluding under 5s	93.8	94.1	94.3	94.4	92.9	93.3	92.3	92.9	91.7	92.7	91.6	92.6	91.9	92.4	93.6	93	91.4	92.6	92.1	92.3	88.9
2010-2011 R-Y6	93.3	94.1	95	93.9	93.4	92.2	85.5	92.6	93.8	92.8	94	92.8	93.2	92.7	91.4	92.8	92.1	92.8	92.6	92.5	89.5
Excluding under 5s	93.5	94.4	95.4	93.6	93.2	93.1	87.8	93.3	93.8	93.1	94	93.4	93.7	92.9	91.4	93.1	93.7	93.3	93.2	93.1	90.4

September 2013 – Usual illnesses. Year 6 child – school refuser with 0% attendance.

October 2013 – We have had the usual illnesses that come with starting back after the summer holidays. Also a child in Reception had two whole weeks off for suspected food poisoning. A family of three had an unauthorised holiday. A year 5 child had a week off after having an operation. We still have a year 6 child on roll who is a school refuser.

30/06/2014

Figure 11.5

11. E. iii) Improvement in the academic achievements of the mentees as a result of mentoring.

Overall, a scrutiny of the profiles of these mentees showed vast improvements in their non-academic achievements. While the developmental strands and attendance levels showed significant increase, the diagnostic profile too showed substantial change. At the same time, the academic attainments of the mentees too indicated remarkable improvement. The evidences of academic attainment which were provided by the learning mentors are examined in the following section.

Growing Optimism

The children in current year 6
Where they were prior to intervention of GO and progress following intervention.
This is with levels given at end of Autumn term in year 5 to Feb in Year 6

In green is where there is an increase of 6 points or more in 1 year.

Reading	Writing	Maths	Reading	Writing	Maths
2H	2C	2A	4C	3C	4C
3H	2B	3C	4B	3C	4H
2C	1C	2A	3C	3C	3A
2C	2C	1C	3H	3C	3C
4A	2A	3A	5B	4H	3A
4B	2C	3A	5B	5C	5C
4B	2C	1A	4A	3H	3A
4A	1C	3H	5B	5H	3C
2C	2C	3C	3C	3C	3A
3H	2H	3C	4A	3B	4C
4C	2A	3A	4B	4C	4A
4C	2H	1C	4B	5H	4C
43	3A	3C	4A	4B	4C
4C	2B	2A	4A	3B	3B
4C	1C	1B	4A	4H	4H
2H	2H	1H	3A	3B	3H
1C	1C	2A	2A	3C	3B
4B	2A	4C	4A	4H	4A
1A	1B	1H	2C	2H	2A

Figure 11.6

Documentary evidence obtained from schools showed that academic performance of pupils who were being mentored showed significant improvement. According to the data, literacy and numeracy levels of all the mentees were seen to have improved, in

some cases several fold. For example as seen figure 11.6, in one of the schools where the learning mentor introduced a specific mentoring intervention named 'growing optimism', for a group of students, each participant showed substantial improvement in their levels of reading, writing and numeracy. More significantly, more than 42% of participating pupils showed an increase of at least six points in reading, while almost 90% showed such level of improvement in writing and more than 79% in numeracy. It was not only indicative of the fact that every pupil has made improvement in all three core subjects but to achieve a six point increase is very remarkable.

Similar results were seen in another set of pupils who were mentored by a different learning mentor. The changes in their levels are shown in figure 11.7 below. Within this group, there were pupils whose writing level had increased from level 1 to level 3A while in science, their level increased from 1 to 3B. Within the same group, one pupil's reading level moved from 3 to 5C while the science level moved from 2 to 4A.

LEVELS

	S & L	Reading	Writing	Maths	Science	
lerbach	2	2A	2B	2A	2	KS1
	3C	3B	2A	3C	3B	Summer 2014
	2	2B	1	2B	1	KS1
	3B	3A	3A	3B	3B	Summer 2014
	3	3	2A	3	2	KS1
	5C	5C	4A	5C	4A	Summer 2014
sh	1	2A	2C	2B	2	KS1
	4B	4C	3A	3A	5C	Summer 2014

Figure 11.7

As seen in figure 11.7, every child within the group had shown varying degree of improvement in their core subject levels which in turn suggested a positive impact of mentoring. There were other documentary evidence obtained from schools with regard to the improvement in pupils' attainment levels. These are shown in appendix 4.

It must be pointed out here that these improvements were not a result of direct academic support provided by the learning mentors but by allowing pupils to understand and recognise those issues which prevented them from learning and by devising and implementing strategies to remove various barriers, thereby making it easier for pupils to participate in learning. For example, Mentee S2C1 was aware that he rushed with his work in class and although he finished quicker than others, his grades were poor. He was also aware that his handwriting was poor. However, the main reaction of the mentee was to panic, get frustrated and these feelings of panic and frustration manifested through sweat, and swinging on the chair. The learning mentor helped the mentee recognise this association between his attitude and the learning outcomes which in turn brought about positive change. In another instance, it was the learning mentor's support which helped the mentee establish the impact of negative relationship with a sibling on his academic activities and subsequently amend the behaviour which in turn produced better learning outcomes.

However, as mentioned by Mentor S2M3 above, it was not possible to apportion or measure the impact of mentoring on pupils who were supported by multiple support mechanisms including learning mentors. The implications of this issue in evaluating the impact of the learning mentor initiative on pupils will be considered further in the discussions section of the thesis.

So far, the discussion on the impact of mentoring has been focussed on the learning outcomes of the mentees, both academic and non-academic. However, data has indicated that there are several other important influences of mentoring which indirectly impact upon the learning activities of pupils. Chief among such impacts as pointed out by the participants was more efficient use of time. The learning mentors support enabled teachers and senior leadership team to devote their time to teaching

rather than pastoral care or dealing with behavioural issues such as arguments between pupils or other events that affected the social and emotional wellbeing of the pupils. For example, learning Mentor S4M1 said,

"I think it takes the crisis if you like, away from the leadership team and things. They have got people that are competent in doing what they do and it frees up other people's time"

Teacher S2T1 had a similar view and said,

"... if you've got a child who constantly shout out or got constant issues after playtime, that absorbs sort of 10 or 15 minutes of your lesson. It's not just that child, it's the whole class. So if you can actually address that issue, they you're able to get going for the whole class straightaway".

Referring to the learning mentors' support in time management, Teacher S2T3 said,

"Well, it just frees me up to be able to teach you know, ant not having to worry about, I wouldn't have been able to deal with it because, because I wouldn't just have the time"

Depending on the teacher to deal with such issues every time would take up valuable time while those pupils who are not involved would have to wait for the teacher to sort out the problem.

Another important benefit of mentoring as pointed out by the parents in particular is that it easier for parents to access and liaise with other support agencies and organisations such as social services in order to facilitate appropriate, timely support for those children who require such support. For example, Parent S1P1 said,

"She signposted me to the British Red Cross... and she said, I will give them a ring for you X (parent)".

Similarly, Parent S3P1 said,

> "(Learning mentor) is quite involved actually both inside school and with certain things that have gone on outside of school that she is fully aware of. I mean, she came to the doctors with me on one occasion to speak to the doctor about my eldest daughter who was having mental health issues and she was being mentored by (learning mentor)".

It was discovered that the learning mentor support was not limited to dealing with mental or emotional support. For example, Mentor S4M2 had supported a parent with housing issues as part of her efforts to remove barriers which affected some pupils. The learning mentor said,

> "You know, we've got people that we filled in housing applications with and that has made a difference to that family, their life. So it is not just they have got an extra bedroom, it has changed things, the family dynamics. But they haven't been able to fill that form themselves".

In summary, it can be observed that according to the data available, learning mentor initiative has been able to identify areas where pupils require additional support to enable them to effectively address the issues. The learning mentors' efforts involve working with mentees, parents, teachers and other professionals in order to remove barriers to learning, the result of which is ultimately reflected in the academic and non-academic achievements of the mentees. The next chapter discusses the implications of the findings of the current research on the perception, understanding and performance of the role of the learning mentor in a primary school setting and will eventually lead to possible conclusions and recommendations for further development of the role.

CHAPTER 12

DISCUSSION I: THE ROLE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNING MENTOR.

The purpose of this research project was to explore perceptions about the role of the learning mentors in primary schools in England and to evaluate the impact of mentoring intervention on the learning outcomes of the pupils. It was proposed that the most appropriate method of attaining this goal was by answering three key research questions which were formed at the initial stages of the study. These research questions were as follows:

1 How do service users and service providers in primary schools in England perceive the role of the learning mentor?

2 How is the work of the learning mentors developed and monitored?

3 What are the perceived impacts of learning mentor intervention upon the social and educational outcomes of pupils?

This chapter examines how the first research question pertaining to the role of the learning mentor has been answered through a comparative evaluation of the research findings and literature. The following two chapters will consider how the other research questions have been answered using a similar approach.

12. 1) How do service users and service providers in primary schools in England perceive the role of the learning mentors?

Services providers in this context comprise individuals (learning mentors) as well as various institutions and organisations (schools, excellence clusters and learning partnerships) who are engaged in providing learning mentor service. Service as defined within this study include anyone who avails the learning mentor programme, mainly primary school pupils but may also often include parents/carers because they are either affected by or are associated with mentoring intervention targeting their child. Parents become service users in those instances where the barrier faced by the mentee may be associated with family related issues such as poverty or lack of motivation, or relationship issues such as domestic violence or abuse and the potential

for removal of such barriers requires parents' close involvement and participation. Mentees' statements collated from the research data clearly showed that in their view, the most important benefit of the provision of a learning mentoring was to have someone who would listen to them. The importance of listening skills was emphasised by the range of complex issues which the mentees brought to their mentoring sessions particularly regarding their feelings, relationships as well as learning. Irrespective of what they discussed with the learning mentors, the mentees' responses showed that they considered it important that the learning mentors were there to listen to them. Given below are some of the statements.

> *"But I just like talking to them"* and *".... I tell Ms. L. If I get upset"* (Mentee S2C1).
> *"If I feel a bit upset, I'll talk to (the learning mentor)"* (Mentee S4C1).
> *"I tell him any problems that I've had"*, and *"... Stuff like feelings or like that"* (Mentee S2C2).

> *"... just put over the worries to a side and you can talk..."* (Mentee S1C1).

These statements highlighted the role of the learning mentors as effective/active listeners. Active listening involves not only expressing interest in the speakers message (McNaughton *et al.*, 2008), without a judgemental attitude (Garland, 1981) and encouraging the speaker to elaborate further (Paukert *et al.*, 2004), effectively communicating empathy and building trust (Weger *et al.*, 2014). Another aspect of active listening as highlighted by Davie & Galloway (2013) is where a child's opinion is taken into account in deciding suitable ways in which issues are resolved or addressed.

It is also important to note that although the learning mentors were not directly involved in the classroom based academic activities of the mentees, their role as listeners was not confined to those issues associated with relationships, behavioural or emotional dispositions of pupils as mentioned above. On the contrary, learning mentors listened to the mentees when academic difficulties became barriers to

learning and they needed support, though not necessarily the support that might have been provided by a teacher or teaching assistant. For example, Mentee S2C1 said,

> "I struggle with numbers and it gets all mixed up. I tell Ms. L. If I get upset when I am in maths".

A scrutiny of the entire interview data set revealed that the concept of 'conversation' with a mentor about an issue which troubled them was mentioned more than 30 times between participating mentees, using different terms such as 'talk', 'speak' and 'chat'. This frequency of reference is high compared to other aspects of the role of the learning mentors which were reported by the mentees, and therefore shows the importance which the mentees attached to the learning mentors' role as listeners. These 'conversations' where for the majority of the time mentees reported being able to talk with confidence to their mentor, invariably meant that there was some form of listening activity taking place on the part of the learning mentors as we shall see.

Findings of the study as discussed in chapter 8 further revealed that it was not just mentees who perceived listening as the most important role of the learning mentors. In fact, data showed that each of the different groups of participants from whom data were obtained, were aware of the fact that the learning mentors' role included listening to all of them. For example, mentees reported their perception that besides themselves, the learning mentors also listened to teachers and parents. Similarly, parents' statements showed their awareness that the learning mentors listened to mentees and teachers as part of their role. Following statements by some of the participants are examples of this perception and awareness of the role of the learning mentors.

> "The keys are, children, the opportunity to come and chat to me about anything at all that they could be worried about" (Mentor S1M1).

> "What do I do? Mostly listen to the child. That's what I mostly do" (Mentor S2M1).

"So, it is basically the time to listen to them, give them attention and time to express what they need to" (Mentor S2M1).

While the statements above confirm what the mentees reported about the learning mentors listening to them, in the following statements the learning mentors confirm that they listened to parents as well as mentees. The learning mentors said,

"We sit down and listen and that is the same with the parents as well, not just with the children as well" (S4M2).

"Even teaching assistants speak to us about children as well" (S2M2).

"I've got very good communication with the staff, or they would probably then say what is happening with so-and-so. I've got my own office and they will come in and have a chat" (S5M1).

As mentioned in section 6.5, a questionnaire survey was used to compare the learning mentors' response to specific questions during the interview and after a certain period of time before the end of the study. Scrutiny of the survey results (appendix 9) did not reveal any significant variation in the learning mentors' two responses regarding the role of the primary school learning mentor. Besides reinforcing the trustworthiness of the data obtained for the study, this also pointed towards a consistent and clear perception that the participants had regarding the role of the learning mentor.

Similarly, statements of participating parents confirmed what was stated by the learning mentors about their role as listening to the parents of the mentees and the following statements are examples of this.

"If I want to speak directly about things that I think E. and S. (the learning mentors) can help me with, then I would speak directly to them. That is not a problem" (Parent S4P2).

*"I can speak to M. (the learning mentor) whenever I want, you know, like
if there is a problem then...."* (Parent S2P1).

*"I just think that the child can, she has got anything on her mind, or that is
distressing her or worrying her, whatever, she can feel that she can come
here and speak to them and feel safe... They know they can come here and
talk to them"* (Parent S4P1).

12. 2) What does existing literature say about the role of the primary school learning mentors as listeners?

Given the particular emphasis which the participants placed on the role of the learning mentor as a listener, it is appropriate to consider how far this is reflected in the existing literature about their role, together with how far this makes them similar or different to the roles played by those engaged in other forms of mentoring.

This will also make it possible to examine whether, and to what extent a consistent definition of the learning mentor role in a primary school context is viable. However, a major challenge of this research was the limited discussion which had taken place prior to this study about the nature and role of the primary school learning mentors. The literature, much of which is based upon government sponsored small scale or case study reports about learning mentors in primary schools, has not gone beyond describing them as professionals who endeavoured to remove barriers which prevented pupils from accessing learning. For example, Hayward (2001) in the DfES sponsored document *Good practice guidelines for learning mentors* said,

*"The Learning Mentor strand is primarily to support schools in raising
standards. Specifically in raising pupils' attainment, improving attendance
and reducing permanent and fixed term exclusions".* (Hayward, 2001,
p.22)

Descriptions such as this might appear to convey the perception that although striving to raise standards of pupils, learning mentors have the more immediate responsibility of providing additional support to the teachers and other school staff. In fact, this

definition closely resembles Brown & Devecchi's (2012) description of teaching assistants as additional adults deployed to support children and teachers.

As pointed out earlier, relevant literature providing information about learning mentor profession is limited and the alternative source of information is the electronic media, in particular, the internet. An examination of online information revealed the absence of an accurate description of the role but also a significant lack of organisation and systematic approach to this profession. For example, there are several organisations other than universities and colleges which appear to be providing learning mentor training. Some of these organisations are 'Circle-time' (Jenny Mosely Consultancies, 2014), and 'School Mentor' (www.schoolmentor.net) – the last one engaged in provision of online training. Similarly, Prospects, (www.prospects.ac.uk) a leading provider of information on training programmes for learning mentors described them as 'providing a complementary service to teachers and other staff, addressing the needs of learners who require assistance in overcoming barriers to learning' (Prospects, 2014).

This means that it is important to establish whether the learning mentors' mandate and primary goal is to support the pupils or to assist teachers and other school staff. Besides, due to the common understanding about teaching assistants' role which is often perceived as academic in nature (Cable, 2014) and complementing the work of the teacher, the use of the term 'complementary' without highlighting the non-academic nature of the learning mentors' role has the potential to cause misunderstanding. In particular, it could be seen as closely allied to that of the teaching assistant or special needs assistant and fail to identify the distinctive nature of the mentoring process. Added to this is the common perception that the key role of 'non-teaching staff' was to support teachers (Warhurst et al., 2014). Being a 'non-teaching' role, such descriptions and comparisons of mentoring on the lines of teaching assistants appear to hint at the possibility of the danger of the learning mentors becoming another pair of hands to help out the teachers who, in addition to their classroom responsibilities, are overburdened with the responsibility of developing whole school policies, school development planning and management of the allocated budget within their departments (Busher & Saran, 2013; Grigg, 2014).

Therefore it was important to clearly and precisely spell out their role specifically within the primary school context.

Clearly mentoring is well established in a range of contexts, particularly in settings that are concerned with professional development and training of adults. It remains to be seen how far definitions of mentors in these contexts can be applied to learning mentors working with children. At this point, it is useful to consider both similarities and differences between the two in order to ascertain the distinctive qualities of the primary school learning mentor.

In order to achieve this, the current study began with an examination of mentoring in a range of professional adult contexts such as business and entrepreneurial settings, nursing and health care professions and initial teacher training. These settings and professions were selected because they had the advantage of well-established, though sometimes poorly defined mentoring practices and profiles which were often a crucial part of the formally established process of professional development and were generally incorporated into their training programmes.

It is also interesting to note how in majority of cases, the focus has been on defining who mentors are rather than defining the concept of mentoring. In fact, the description of the concept of mentoring has been drawn from these definitions of mentors. For example, Phillips-Jones' (1982) definition stated that mentors were influential people who significantly helped protégés reach their goals in life. In Fagan and Walter's (1982) definition, the focus was on the mentor's experience, expertise and willingness to guide another individual who had much less experience or expertise. Daloz (1983) on the other hand laid emphasis on the notion of the mentor as someone who points the way, offers support and also challenges someone on a journey. Anderson's (1987) description of mentoring combined the difference in the expertise of the mentor and mentee with other components of mentoring pointed out by Fagan & Walter, (1982), Walter, (1983) and Daloz (1983). It can therefore be seen that the focus is mainly on the expertise of the mentor as well as the mentee's lack of this (Carruthers, 1993). Consequently, the principal purpose of mentoring in a

professional adult context was understood to be training and promotion of the mentee in their chosen profession in which the mentor was already an expert.

12. 3) How far did the findings distinguish the learning mentor working with children from mentors who worked with adults in professional settings?

Section 1 of this chapter described how the findings of the study established listening as the main role and activity of the learning mentor while in section 2 we saw how definitions of mentors were focused on the professional growth and development of the mentee as the main purpose of mentoring. However, care should be taken to avoid interpreting this to mean that mentoring in adult settings was devoid of all listening and conversations or that mentors were not interested in or did not listen to the mentees as part of their role. Of course, any professional development and occupational training of the mentee would involve some element of conversation and discussion which involve listening by both mentors and mentees. However, listening in both settings was influenced by the issue of balance of power which is discussed in further detail in section 12.4 below. Listening in primary school mentoring further differs from adult mentoring in that within the latter, mentors engaged in conversation, discussion and listened to their mentees largely about matters related to their professional development or performance of their duty. In contrast, learning mentors engaged in listening and conversation as their primary role.

Mentors working in adult settings endeavour to improve the professional capability and performance of the mentees whereas the findings of this study have demonstrated that primary school mentoring primarily seeks to address the social, emotional and behavioural barriers which prevent mentees from participating in learning. The academic ability and expertise of the mentees is not always the primary target or focus of mentoring; it is about addressing and removing barriers which prevent participation which in turn impacts on learning outcomes. Therefore, although improved academic performance is undoubtedly one of the expected ultimate outcomes of learning mentoring, it is not the primary direct target of the learning

mentors. Their endeavour is to enable the pupil to engage in those activities which will eventually lead to improved learning outcome. In contrast, the adult mentor strives to directly influence and improve the professional performance of the mentee.

In the adult context, the impact of mentoring is judged in terms of the professional ability and performance of the mentee. However, the applicability of this method of assessing the impact of mentoring to the primary school setting is problematic. Although the learning mentor might successfully remove the barriers and enable the mentee to engage in learning activities, the learning outcomes and academic performance of the mentee are not solely the result of learning mentor intervention. It could also be influenced by other contributing factors such as the academic ability of the child, quality of teaching and availability of additional support to mitigate academic weaknesses of the child if any. Therefore, gauging the impact of mentoring in primary schools in terms of academic outcomes alone will not provide the full picture. Assessing and evaluating the impact of mentoring in primary schools must be more broadly conceptualised than in adult mentoring situations.

The above discussion leads to the conclusion that to import an unedited version of the concept of mentoring as described and practiced in adult settings is inappropriate for the primary school settings for several reasons. First of all, as indicated by various definitions examined earlier in this chapter, professional development being the primary goal of mentoring in adult settings, personal development constitutes part of the focus in so far it contributes to the mentee's professional development. The principal purpose of mentoring in primary school on the other hand is to change the attitude and outlook of the participants, particularly mentees, whether it is about themselves, other individuals such as parents and teachers or their attitude towards school and learning in general, in order to enable them to participate in learning which will eventually be reflected in their social and academic attainment. Secondly, as explained in chapter 1, section 5 the mentor mentee relationship has a significant impact on mentoring outcomes, but there are fundamental differences between the nature and importance of this relationship with respect to learning mentors when compared to those working with adults. As mentioned in section 1 of this chapter, in the adult context, mentoring is described as an expert-novice relationship where often

both are engaged in the same profession (Phillips-Jones 1982; Daloz, 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Megginson *et al.*, 2006; Eby *et al.*, 2014) and the mentees might become mentors themselves in the future. Learning mentors on the other hand are not engaged in training novices to be professionals but striving to support children's emotional and behavioural needs which could act as barriers to their learning. Similarly, learning mentors and their mentees are not engaged in the same profession which removes the expert-novice relationship. Thirdly, in adult, professional mentoring the interaction takes place between two adults with extensive knowledge, often in the same field - for example sports or nursing profession - and with the ability and power to make independent decisions on different matters depending on their level of authority and responsibility. For example, a trainee teacher has the same level of responsibility and freedom to make decisions associated with the teaching and the conduct of her class as a mentor teacher. However, in a primary school context, it is invariably an adult-child relationship which immediately brings the issue of balance of power into the equation. More often than not, the balance of power tilts in favour of the adult whom the child perceives as someone with authority, more extensive knowledge and expertise, entrusted with maintaining discipline (Lang *et al.*, 2013; Hajdukova *et al.*, 2014; Knightsmith *et al.*, 2014). Besides, compared to adult mentees, the child mentees' ability to make independent decisions is often limited and the very fact that they have been assessed as requiring additional support may further highlight adult perceptions of their inability to make independent decisions. This is particularly important where the family settings and relationship network of the children become barriers to learning and are often beyond the control of the child. For example, in an unfavourable or abusive family setting, it would require a huge effort to make an independent decision on how to rectify the situation and it is highly unlikely that primary school pupils will be capable of making such decisions. Furthermore they are often seen to be reluctant to seek help outside the family (Jobe & Gorin, 2013; Figley & Kiser, 2013; Fox *et al.*, 2014). For all these reasons, it is not possible to carry out an exact replication of mentoring from an adult setting into the primary school setting.

12. 4) How far do the findings of the study distinguish the role of the learning mentors from teachers and teaching assistants working in the primary classroom?

It is generally understood and accepted that a number of professionals including head teachers, class/subject teachers, teaching assistants and SENCOs operate within primary schools to support pupils in their learning. Their role was briefly discussed in chapter 3. Abry *et al.*, (2013) pointed out the fact that children spend a significant part of their time in schools under the care of teachers and therefore, among various professionals interacting with them. Teachers are considered the most visible and closely associated adults to the pupils. Lawn (1987), Vogt (2002) described the teacher as a guide, counsellor and instructor of the young whereas Woods *et al.*, (1997) had a specific focus on developing their competencies, subject expertise, collaboration, management and supervision. Emmer *et al.*, (2013) and Cremin & Arthur (2014) held that the teacher's role in the classroom has several components such as developing a caring and supportive relationship with and among students, organising and implementing academic instruction in a way that encourage children's participation, devising and implementing programmes and interventions that promote students' social skills and self-regulation but at the same time as helping them to address behaviour problems (Grigg, 2014). Woods (2013) stated that there are certain elements of friendship which exist between teachers and pupils. Therefore, it has been argued that the classroom activity of a teacher is not limited to mere academic instruction; rather it involves creating an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning (Emmer *et al.*, 2013; Hamre *et al.*, 2014). The teacher's role is to facilitate the holistic development of each pupil - academic, social, moral, mental, physical and psychological development (Vogt, 2002) particularly in the context of constructive pedagogies where the pupil's knowledge is seen as being created and discovered by themselves rather than provided or transferred from teacher to pupil (Goodlad, 1990; Sockett, 1993; Edwards, 1998; Holt-Reynolds, 2000). Even in the case of physical proximity, we know from experience as students, teachers or parents that pupils spend a majority of their time whilst at the school with the teachers.

Teaching assistants have prominent presence in modern classrooms (Kerry, 2005; Cable, 2014). Although traditionally teaching assistants have been associated with special needs education, more recently, they have been contributing to the learning and development of all children. It has been contended that the role of the teaching assistant has gained considerable significance, to the extent that at times there is a degree of overlap in the roles of the teacher and teaching assistant (Balshaw, 2013; Webster *et al.*, 2013; Cable, 2014). In contrast, learning mentors are associated with those pupils who face barriers to learning. Besides, they have limited involvement in the classroom and they are not directly involved in the academic activities of the mentees.

There is no denying that various activities associated with classroom teaching as well as other interactions between the teacher, teaching assistant and the pupils, whether academic, social or moral, involve a considerable percentage of conversation and listening (Noddings, 1994; Cazden, 2001). Yet, the participants in this research, particularly the mentees highlighted their perception of the learning mentors as the ones who listened to them unconditionally. Although there were no suggestions that the other professionals were poor listeners, the reasons for mentees' emphasis on the listening role of the learning mentors needed to be investigated further.

At this stage, it is useful point out that the concept of listening referred to by the mentees in chapter 8 is a form of active listening which was explained in section 1 of this chapter and as a result of this active listening, the learning mentors were able to bring about substantial changes in the social and academic achievements of mentees. They achieved this by providing continuous support to the mentees. Some of the statements of the mentees clearly showed their belief that the learning mentors not only listened but were able to remove the barrier or address the issues under consideration. For example, clearly indicating the benefit of talking to the learning mentor compare to a friend, in terms of finding a solution or removing a barrier, mentee S2C1 said,

> "Cos they could do something about it. Otherwise, if you tell your friend, they don't always, they can't always do something."

Therefore, the answer to the above question is not the presence or absence of the ability or willingness on the part of other professionals to listen, but a combination of various dispositions and the availability of time which influences the learning mentors' role as listeners. Key dispositions of the learning mentors as highlighted by the participants were discussed in chapter 9. In order to answer the above questions more fully, it is essential to examine the implications of these dispositions.

The findings indicated that the availability of the learning mentor in meeting a child's needs was considered an important disposition and in this context, availability was not confined to mere physical presence within the school premises. On the contrary, as pointed out in chapter 9, section B, their emphasis was more on the availability of learning mentors in response to their needs. As such, according to mentees' perception, availability indicated being able to support the pupils in their efforts, as part of a continuous programme to remove a particular barrier which has already been identified as explained in the case of mentee S2C2 or S1C1 in chapter 8, section A. It could also be in response to an unexpected development which neither the pupil, nor the learning mentor or other adults could have foreseen or predicted. This type of availability has also been identified by mentees in chapter 9, section B. In both of the above instances, the physical availability of the learning mentor is essential. But could this be considered the essence of availability as suggested by participating mentees? If so, it would mean that the learning mentors needed to be merely physically present within the school premises but evidently, that would not in itself remove the barriers which require interaction/working together. Based on this understanding of interaction, it can be concluded that the term availability means not only being physically present but also the learning mentor being able to be with the mentee when needed or as mentee S1C1 pointed out, just randomly being in the corridor to provide reassurance and positive attitude. It also requires that the pupils feel free to approach the learning mentor when they feel their help is needed without facing unnecessary hurdles and restrictions.

Although other professionals were physically present in the study schools, their availability was somewhat restricted by the specific nature of their particular role

compared to that of the learning mentor. The important determining factor is their availability in response to the needs of the mentee as and when they occur. For example, the teacher is present and available within the school, but when a child is in need of individual, one-to-one support which requires both confidentiality and privacy, it is not the easiest of tasks for a teacher who has to consider the interests and care of all the other children in the classroom (Goldstein, 1998; Weinstein, 1998; Nias, 1999; Vogt, 2002; Dreikurs *et al.*, 2013; Long, 2013; Pepin, 2013; Tomlinson, 2014;). This is particularly relevant in view of the level of workload and stress and even illnesses (Brown & Ralph, 2002) which are associated with primary school teaching (Chaplain 1995; Brember, Brown, & Ralph, 2002; Peters, 2013; Capel, 2013: Friedman-Krauss *et al.*, 2014).

On the other hand, irrespective of the severity of the issue/barrier affecting the him/her, it is unfair to expect the child to engage in a detailed honest discussion with the teacher in front of other pupils or even in front of other staff members or parents, particularly if it involves any of them and the child was affected by a balance of power or child-parent relationship issues (Bugental & Happaney, 2000). Availability in the context of mentoring is also to be understood in this sense – that the learning mentor is able to support the pupils when the pupil needs it along with all the securities of privacy, confidentiality and trustworthiness. These aspects in turn take into account the other features of availability and approachability such as an accessible location with which the mentees/parents are familiar and the opportunity to approach them in case of an urgent need.

Availability can be considered from another viewpoint. Mentee S1C1 reported that the learning mentor sometimes greeted and interacted with him in the corridors in the morning. As the mentee said,

> "When we see each other in the corridor she asks how it is, how everything
> is going and all that just because she still cares about me and all the things
> that I do."

This is another method of being available – being seen by pupils outside the formal setting – so that a child who needs their support but is hesitant to seek help because of formalities, has the opportunity to seek the learning mentors' help. Such statements indicated that the learning mentors' availability was not only for the benefit of pupils who were already receiving support but for any pupil who might be in need of help and support but not yet identified as such.

However, the question is whether characteristics which were discussed above are sufficient reason to conclude that learning mentors were always available? Analysis of the data showed that the disposition of availability alone was not sufficient to assign the degree of importance attributed to the learning mentors' listening role. Service users, particularly the mentees and parents found them not only available but also approachable. Approachability in this instance is twofold – accessible in physical terms and accessible in terms of the personal attitudes and demeanour of the learning mentors. As for the physical terms, the learning mentors were generally located in the school, in a specific location which was familiar and easily accessible to students, parents and teachers. These locations also took into account the requirements of privacy and the confidentiality of the participants which would not normally be available in a classroom, the staff room or other such generally more accessed places. Another aspect of accessibility is the degree and quantity of formalities. As explained in the above example where the school had created the identification card, a number of schools had put in place simple but reasonable formalities because excessive formality could potentially dissuade pupils from seeking help. Another feature of accessibility as identified by some of the participants was that it was not confined to a specific location. For example in School 1 (S1), learning mentors were present at the school entrance in the morning as well as at home time so that parents could interact with them outside the formal settings of the learning mentors' office. For example, parent S2P1 said,

"I think we met, as in a sit down wise, we actually sat down probably a couple of months ago, but we talk quite a lot, on the playground, at home time or whatever and discuss a few things and then carry in on through the next week"

Such measures allowed parents to freely interact with the learning mentors. As in the case of any profession, the personal attitude and outlook of the learning mentor can have significant impact on the disposition of approachability (Hirsch, Mickus & Boerger, 2002; Darling *et al.*, 2006; Eller *et al.*, 2014; Buzzanell & D'Enbaeu, 2014). However, the fact that they are not always perceived primarily as adults imposing rules or being concerned only with the academic attainment of their pupils placed them in a more approachable position compared to teachers. In other words, approachability and accessibility is much more than physical preferences and involves mental and psychological aspects as displayed in their attitude and outlook.

In chapter 1 section 5 the researcher discussed the mentor mentee relationship and its impact on mentoring outcomes. The findings of the study showed that the element of trust was of huge significance. The mentee trusted the learning mentors to be there when they were needed, they trusted them with sensitive personal information, some of which they were expressly reluctant to discuss with the parents or teachers, and they trusted the learning mentor to be a communication link between themselves and their parents especially when matters of upsetting nature were to be conveyed to the parents/family. Mentees made a number of statements in this regard. Some of their statements are given below.

> *"No, I don't really tell, the only person I do usually tell is (the learning mentor"* (Mentee S2C2).

> *"Well, don't want to tell mum that, but I think Ms (the learning mentor) tells mum. So, I don't have to tell talk to her myself"* (Mentee S2C1).

Although it may be acknowledged that trust is an integral part of human relationships (Larzeere & Huston, 1980) and it has considerable influence on the growth and development of children (Bernath & Feshbach, 1996; Koenig & Harris, 2005), how does it become a defining characteristic of the role of the learning mentors? For reasons which must be further explored in detail, mentees and parents appeared to trust the learning mentor compare to other professionals in the school. For example,

none of the participants expressed their trust and belief that the teachers would be there whenever they needed them, and as mentees S2C2 and S5C1 reported, they were not very keen on discussing sensitive matters with anyone other than the learning mentor, not even the teachers. Mentee S2C1 used the learning mentor as a buffer and communicated with the family through the learning mentor when certain issues needed to be conveyed, whether out of fear of being reprimanded or sanctions being imposed. On such occasions, they did not approach or seek the support of teachers or teaching assistants but exclusively that of the learning mentors. In fact, some of the mentees claimed that they trusted the learning mentors more than other professionals within the school and even some of their own family members. The possible main reason for this could be the combined influence of the various dispositions of the learning mentors.

Another important disposition of the learning mentors which emerged was that of impartiality or non-judgemental attitude. The mentees' relationship with the staff members, particularly teachers was not always smooth and easy. As mentee S4C1 reported, some children found it very difficult to 'get al.ong' with teachers. Others who 'got along' with the teachers or other staff members were not able to have an open discussion with them about difficult issues. As in the case of other dispositions, the question is how does it affect mentoring and how does it become a defining characteristic of the learning mentors when teachers and other staff members are expected to be impartial and non-judgemental themselves?

This should not lead to a general conclusion that the mentees mistrusted their teachers or other members of staff but only that the degree of trust was different. The reasons for such variation could be similar to those mentioned in the case of accessibility and approachability i.e. a combination of the nature of teachers' roles and responsibilities and to a certain extent the personal attitude and demeanour. For example, the teacher's role essentially involves assessing and judging children's performance both social and academic, imposing rules and regulations and maintaining discipline and good behaviour. This essential element of judging and assessing could potentially persuade the pupil to assume that even a discussion regarding personal difficulties or barriers to learning would be perceived in that sense. Therefore, the pupil feels less

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inclined to approach and trust the teacher or other members of staff whereas the learning mentor by being dissociated from the classroom activities in general, such as those involving assessment of the pupil's work and responsibility for their behaviour is probably seen as much more non-judgemental and therefore makes the learning mentor more approachable.

An important question here is, if the dispositions discussed above are not entirely alien to other professionals working with children in primary schools what factors are responsible for prompting the perceptions of the role of the mentor as discussed in chapter 8? It is in this context that the element of time becomes significant in this discussion about the role and dispositions of the learning mentors. Therefore, it is necessary to explore this element in explaining and analysing the role of the learning mentor.

Earlier in this chapter, the role of the teacher as being responsible for the learning and welfare of each pupil and as such had limited amount of time to deal with particular issues of individual pupils, especially when these pupils did not have a statement of special need. As S2M2 argued, it was not ideal to leave a child's problem unsolved however trivial it might appear to an adult because it will affect the learning activities of the child if he or she is unhappy and worried. This can have a negative impact on the learning outcomes of children (Patrick *et al.*, 1993; Zins *et al.*, 2007) However, the teacher is sometimes constrained in their ability to support the children as they have to adhere to strict guidelines of the curriculum along with various administrative responsibilities.

In comparison to those of other school based professionals, the dispositions of the learning mentors are potentially enhanced by the time factor. For example, if a particular need of the child requires paying a visit to the family, the teacher generally does not have the time and resources to do so without interfering with the learning of all of the other pupils in the class. It was reported by several learning mentors that as part of their efforts to improve attendance, there were instances when the learning mentors were knocking on the doors of identified children's homes in an effort to get them into school and on time. The teachers cannot be expected to be available to

perform such activities because of their commitments and responsibilities within the classroom. However, the learning mentors' role and job description stated that they are responsible for supporting the removal of barriers to learning but they are not required to strictly comply with the prescribed curricular activities or complete curriculum or classroom based programmes within a stipulated time. This means they have much more flexibility in allocating their time to individual children in accordance with their need. In addition, this further enhances the availability of the learning mentor to meet the needs of children whenever they arise.

As far as the learning mentors themselves were concerned, not only did they acknowledge their primary role as listeners, as mentors S1M1 and S2M2 stated, the learning mentors' perception of availability reflected the opinion of the mentees. As mentor S2M2 clarified, it was for the mentee to determine whether to seek the support of the learning mentor or not. While teachers shared this view that the learning mentors' doors were always open to children and adults alike, they also highlighted the accessibility and approachability of the learning mentors by comparing the mentor-mentee relationship to a kind of friendship rather than a pupil-teacher relationship. Similarly, the parents noted that the learning mentors were not only available, but were more accessible and approachable than teachers or other professionals.

Having discussed the uniqueness of the role of the learning mentors and how this is enhanced by various dispositions and the element of time, it is important to point out that these dispositions are not to be considered as separate entities or isolated characteristics but as qualifying features which together contribute towards and constitute the uniqueness of the role of the learning mentors.

CHAPTER 13.

DISCUSSION II. IMPACT OF MENTORING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL SETTING.

The purpose of the second research question was obtain a clear understanding of the impact of learning mentor intervention in primary schools. In order to be able to fully understand and appreciate learning mentor intervention within primary schools, it is necessary to understand its impact. Besides, as pointed out in chapter 12, 'impact' is one of the crucial factors distinguishing primary school learning mentors from adult mentors in various professions because mentee's professional development is the purpose of mentoring and it is the direct result of mentoring in the adult setting whereas in the primary school context, removing barriers to learning is the primary goal of mentoring and improvement in academic attainment is an indirect result of that primary goal. This is further explained in the following paragraph.

As a preliminary step towards assessing the impact, it is appropriate to revisit the topic of definition of the role and stated goal of learning mentoring. However, as explained in the literature review section, the role has not been adequately defined. According to various documents, the stated goal of mentoring intervention is to remove barriers to learning in order to facilitate better participation in learning process thereby enabling the mentees to realise their full potential. It is to be particularly noted that this description does not contain any suggestion that the learning mentor's mandate is to provide academic support to the learning activities of the mentee in the classroom or elsewhere. On the contrary, their mandate is to remove barriers which prevent the mentee from participating in learning and the academic activities are normally conducted and supported by other professionals such as teachers or teaching assistants. Similarly, examples of barriers to learning as listed in various documents such as training modules (Liverpool Excellence Cluster, 2005) or learning mentor information sheets prepared by various schools for the benefit of service users (appendix 6) did not consider academic weakness to be a barrier to learning. It can also be seen that during the interview with the mentees, none of the

participants provided any evidence to indicate that the learning mentors provided direct help with literacy or numeracy.

The impact of learning mentoring in primary school should ideally be evaluated based on the purpose and remit of the role as explained above. However, this alone may not provide a comprehensive view as ultimately, it is expected that by removing the barriers to learning, pupils will engage in learning more effectively and this will be reflected in their learning outcomes. Therefore, any evaluation of the role of the learning mentor intervention should take into consideration both their effectiveness in removing barriers to learning and the manner and extent to which this is reflected in the pupils' academic attainment. Any other method of evaluation would only provide a partial view of the impact of mentoring in primary school.

Many children can be underachieving due to social and emotional factors which act as barriers and over time as suggested by principles of Ecological Development Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) these issues can affect the child's development and can become internalised, eventually leading to low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence. These in turn affect children's relationship with others including adults and peers. This has the potential to spiral into unmanageable behaviours and feelings ultimately creating a negative cycle of events. All this could be the effect of several factors such as bereavement, family circumstances such as divorce and remarriage (Couchenour & Chrisman, 2013; Hetherington & Arasteh, 2014; Patterson & Vakili, 2014;) or even adapting to a new culture (RBKC, 2011), ultimately leading to the pupil's low learning outcomes.

13. 1) The impact of mentoring on the outlook/attitude of the mentees.

Chapter 11 examined the impact of mentoring from the perspective of mentees, parents, teachers and learning mentors themselves and it was found that according to the participants, the learning mentor intervention had primarily impacted on three main areas namely attitude/outlook of the mentees, their behaviour and relationship. Whether these have translated into better learning outcomes will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Attitude and outlook were terms used to refer to mentees general nature such as low self-esteem and low self-confidence as well as their attitude towards school and learning activities. For example, with the help of the learning mentor, mentee S1C1 experienced a change in attitude towards school and school times became mostly happy. This opinion has been reflected in various statements of mentee S1C1, such as,

"Because like, when I'm with her (the learning mentor), I feel more better, like because I am happy because anything goes on, I can just go and speak to her about it"

Mrs. (learning mentor) has helped me in various different ways, all calming myself down, its made my, like, I like coming to school because mrs. (learning mentor) has helped me".

In a similar way, Mentee S5C1 and Mentee S2C2 also stated that the learning mentor's support enabled them to reduce anxiety about coming to school and made it possible for them to come into school with confidence. Mentee S5C1 also spoke about how he was able to exit mentoring programme with enough confidence to deal with any issues he faced after exiting the programme.

Examination of the perception of participating adults such as teachers, parents and learning mentors, showed certain similarities. Those teachers who participated in the study did not consider academic ability (or lack of it) as a reason for pupils' disengagement. Rather they too highlighted various social and personal issues which acted as barriers to learning. This reflects Kenny, Ralph & Brown's (2000) view that learning process is influenced by the learner's experiences, beliefs and cultural histories. For example, Teachers S2T2 and S2T1 stressed the influence of personal and emotional baggage which children bring into school and in their view it is unfair to ask those children to engage in academic activities. Teacher S2T1 also pointed out that a number of children came from a variety of backgrounds where they might not be living full time with the parents or might be living with step parents, parents might be involved in substance abuse leading to violence, might have lost a parent or they come from a family setting where parents frequently change partners leading to

instability in the child's life. Another factor which the teacher and learning mentors pointed out was the typical lack of motivation within the larger community and dependence on public funds for survival in localities where majority of participating schools were established. Certain factors which might seem utterly insignificant to an adult might be the biggest barrier a child is facing. Teacher S2T2 provided an example where one of the female pupils was living with the male parent who could not do her hair like a mother would do – an inconsequential matter for an adult but a huge barrier for that particular pupil. The female learning mentors explained how they tried to do her hair to make her happier and as a result more comfortable in school which showed positive impact on her attainment. Teacher S2T1 recounted the example of another pupil who was physically poorly and how at times it was too overwhelming for her to be in the class all day. However, mentoring gave her the opportunity to go and collect herself before she closed off completely.

Parents' views were similar with regard to the impact of mentoring on mentees outlook. For example, Parent S2P2 said,

> "I think it's like, it's given him more confidence I think especially sort of at school".

Parent S4P1 explained how witnessing domestic violence had severely negative impact on the attitude of the pupils where their feeling of safety was compromised. Referring to the impact of mentoring on her children, Parent S4P1 said,

> "My children have settled a lot since they have had (the learning mentor) and like openly talking to them".

Parent S2P3 recounted the story of her child who had made it a habit to fake illness in order to avoid school. The parent stated that learning mentor intervention had changed the child's attitude toward school attendance. Parent S4P2 testified how passing away of grandfather had emotionally affected her son and that the school provided considerable support throughout the grieving process. She said,

"But (mentee) was very attached to his grandfather, it was difficult for him and he received a lot of help through school"

From the above discussion, it becomes evident that learning mentor intervention had considerable impact on the outlook/attitude of the mentees.

13. 2) The impact of mentoring on the behaviour of the mentees.

Behaviour is influenced by attitudes and emotions and therefore closely related to the topic of attitude/outlook as discussed above. As pointed out by a number of mentees such as Mentees S2C2 and S1C1, their behaviour had substantial improvement as a result of mentoring not only in the school but also outside the school as Mentee S1C1 said,

"Well, it's helped me to get better behaving and it's stopped me from getting into trouble".

Similarly, Mentee S2C2 said,

"Well, at the start of the year, I wasn't the best behaved child but now he said to me on the way down that I should be proud and that the teacher was saying that they saw a big improvement.

Mentee S2C2 further substantiated the improvement in his behaviour by providing details about the considerable reduction in the number of times he faced sanctions for misbehaviour after mentoring intervention.

In comparison, teachers statements about the impact of mentoring on the behaviour of mentees were both limited in number and did not relate to any particular nature or aspect of behaviour. For example, Teacher S2T1 reported one of the mentees as regretting 'boorish' behaviour which had changed as a result of mentoring but it was not clarified as to which part of the behaviour was 'boorish'. However, there were other more direct reference to the impact of mentoring on disruptive behaviour which had improved following strategies provided by the learning mentor.

Parents on the other hand were more vocal about the positive changed in their wards' behaviour as a result of mentoring. For example, Parent S1P1 said,

> "Because I think without the calming techniques and the ideas that (the mentee) has been taught by (the learning mentor)'s work, he would not be as successful as he is".

The above statement clearly demonstrates not only identifiable improvement in behaviour as confirmed by the parent, but also highlights the learning mentor's contribution in bringing about the change in behaviour. A similar opinion was reported by Parent S2P1 who acknowledged that it was the strategies devised by the learning mentor's which helped him address the behaviour of his child who was aggressive to the point of being violent. Again, for Parent S2P2, the learning mentor's support helped in a considerable difference in the behaviour of her child whose anxiety level led to angry reactions and other reactions.

In comparison, learning mentors' feedback on behaviour and its place in mentoring was limited. Mentor S5M1 was of the view that a lot of behavioural issues were caused by home/family situations in which the child was being brought up. Mentor S1M1 stated that one of the challenges of influencing children's behaviour was when the child refused to admit there was anything wrong with the way they behaved. However, Mentor S5M1 also stated that dealing with behaviour was a major part of mentoring. Mentor S4M1 referred to protective behaviour which sought to prevent children from being in each other's space which reduced instances of undesirable behaviour. However, in general, learning mentors did not make extensive statements about the ways in which they were able to impact mentee's behaviour.

13. 3) The impact of mentoring on the mentees' relationships.

The third area which witnessed notable impact of mentoring was the mentees' relationship – with peers and with adults including parents and teachers. For example, for Mentee S1C1, one of the barriers to learning was negative relationship with a sibling while for Mentee S2C1 the issue was friendship where the mentee either got upset because of friends or ended up upsetting friends which eventually led to the

intervention of the learning mentor. This impact on relationship also helped certain pupils by preventing them from being bullied by other pupils. As Mentee S2C2 claimed, the learning mentor would intervene in the event of any bullying. Further, as reported by Mentee S4C1, mentoring also helped them in their relationship with staff members at school. In effect, the mentees statements have shown how the learning mentors were successful in removing barriers associated with relationship.

Teachers' perception about the impact of mentoring on mentees relationship issues at times overlaps with behaviour. For example, Teacher S2T1 spoke of some pupils who regularly had friendship issues and as a result unfriendly behaviour particularly on the playground. As a result of mentoring over a six weeks period, they were able to solve their problems and improved relationships. The teacher also spoke of another child who did not have anybody to play with because of friendship issues and the disturbance in the classroom as it created issues constantly after play time. However, due to mentoring, the situation has seen a lot of improvement. The concern for the teacher was that a lot of time was sept resolving arguments after playtime which should ideally be used for learning.

Parents too made positive comments about the impact of mentoring on the social skills of mentees. According to Parent S1P1, her child had considerable difficulty in establishing and keeping friends particularly in the neighbourhood because he insisted on doing things his way. This resulted in violent expression of anger and frustration such as slamming the doors and shouting. However, according to the parent, since he began to take part in mentoring, things have got better. For Parent S2P1, the issue was the child's refusal to engage in any social relationship or activity, even within the immediate family or relatives. However, as a result of mentoring, the child has made considerable progress in this area by making friends and even spending time away from the family with relatives and engaging in various social activities. In contrast, Parent S1P1 also spoke how learning mentor had helped him to avoid being over familiar with people.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, an effective evaluation of learning mentor intervention should examine whether it has been translated into improved

learning outcomes for the mentees. First of all, it has been found that mentoring has enabled children to participate in the learning process by improving their attendance through various measures which included even early morning visit to the homes of the mentees by the learning mentors. Attendance records (appendix 4.) have shown significant increase in both individual attendance as well as at whole school level. Increase in attendance level from 93.92% to 98.25% is evidence of considerable improvement. Other attendance details are equally substantial. For example, the child who before mentoring had 93.92% attendance with 40 late arrivals before register closed, 21 authorised absences and 2 unauthorised absences succeeded in reducing these to 14 late arrivals, 4 authorised absences while unauthorised absences remained the same – with the help of the learning mentor. Statistical evidence of other mentees showed that this was not an isolated instance but a consistent occurrence. A scrutiny of whole school attendance record for 2013-2014 showed considerable improvement too. The learning mentors played a substantial role in achieving this by improving individual attendance of their mentees as well as other children in their capacity as staff in charge of school attendance.

The important issue here is whether these changes have brought about any improvement in their learning outcome. Scrutiny of academic performance of mentees showed substantial improvement. While all mentees showed improved literacy and numeracy levels, some of those who participated in specific mentoring programmes like 'growing optimism' showed extraordinary improvement where they achieved six point increase in their levels. Examination of a number of documents obtained from various schools and learning mentors which was carried out in chapter 11 provide more evidence of the impact of learning mentor intervention on the learning outcomes of pupils.

13. 4) Difficulties in measuring and establishing the impact of mentoring.

Establishing and measuring the impact of mentoring in primary school is not an easy task mainly for two reasons. Firstly, there may be different interventions and support mechanisms such as support of teaching assistant, counselling support etc. which are available to the same pupil. In such cases, it is not possible to assign or divide the impact proportionately between these interventions. Secondly, it is not always ideal to

consider academic attainment as the criteria for measuring the impact of mentoring. One of the reasons for this argument is that the learning mentors' primary target is to remove barriers to learning as opposed to providing academic support. Evaluating their performance based on something that is not part of their remit may not always be reassuring for the learning mentor as Mentor S2M3 said,

> "Well, I never go asking anybody if they think I'm doing a good job. I do my job, that's it. I judge my work by watching my children smile, by watching them coming in to school. For some kids that we have worked with, coming into school is progress and if I see them coming into school, I don't need anyone to tell me I'm doing a good job because they are in"

Furthermore, as expressed in the above statement, the learning mentor might be successful in helping the child to participate in learning but the outcomes may fall below expectations due deficiency in academic support or it might take longer to show result depending on the ability of the pupil. This can be particularly contentious because it is the teacher who provides most academic support, at times supported by the teaching/classroom assistant.

At the same time it must be pointed out that if not implemented in an efficient manner, learning mentors' role could have negative impact whereby they create barriers rather than remove them. For example, as Roberts and Constable (2013) illustrated, the pupils could end up misusing the provision to avoid lessons or teachers they dislike rather than find ways of changing their attitude.

CHAPTER 14.

DEVELOPMENT AND MONITORING OF THE ROLE OF THE LEARNING MENTOR.

In light of the significance attached to the role of the learning mentors by participants including mentees, parents and teachers and how they strive to remove different barriers to learning, this chapter looks at various provision and processes set up for the development and monitoring of the role. In addition, motivational aspects such as ongoing training and career progression will also be discussed.

The second research question was intended to assess the development and monitoring of the role of the learning mentor i.e. to examine how the learning mentors were selected, and the kind of initial and ongoing trainings which were provided and other motivational factors targeting primary school learning mentors. Unlike the other research questions about the role and impact of the learning mentor where the response of service users and service providers became the major source of data, this particular research question relied on the feedback received from the learning mentors regarding the training available as well as analysis of various documents.

14. 1) Training and development of the learning mentors as professionals.

The study revealed that an accurate understanding about the role of the learning mentor was limited even on a professional level. For example, when asked about her motivation for becoming a learning mentor, Mentor S1M1 who had worked in the same school as classroom assistant for nearly ten years before becoming a learning mentor said,

> "Well, to begin with, it was intrigue. I hadn't heard of learning mentors
> and did not have a clue what this position would entail".

Similarly, Mentor S2M1 said,

> *"Well, I was asked to go on the learning mentor course and I thought, 'Oh, that sounds interesting".*

Mentor S2M2 stated that her appointment as a learning mentor and subsequent training came as a surprise. She said,

> *"Well, actually I was just asked. The head who used to be here, (name of the head), he spoke to me one day because Mr X was already a learning mentor and he spoke to me and said, "I think you would be good at that" and I just laughed. And then, the next thing he says to me, "I booked a course for you". And I said what course? He says' learning mentor'".*

Morris (2005) in her forward to the learning mentor training modules stated that learning mentors come from a wide range of backgrounds. Hughes (2005) and Mintz (2010) have stated that this was in fact the case. For instance, Hughes (2005) gave the example of an individual who had obtained Higher National Diploma (HND) in business finance and was working as a cab driver but eventually became a learning mentor in a primary school. As clearly stated in the government websites (direct.gov.uk, 2014), there are no regulations which set out specific educational or professional qualification for becoming a learning mentor, other than 'a good standard of general education'. Besides, individual Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools have varying entry requirements (National Career Services, 2014). This is different from most other professions within a primary school which requires certain minimum qualifications. For example, since 1972, teaching has become a graduate only profession (Franks, 2013). Various teacher training programmes and institutions are regularly inspected, assessed and evaluated according to strict guidelines for quality assurance (Fehring & Davies, 2014). There are a number of guidelines such as 'Teachers' Standards' which came into effect from September 2012, which have been established to ensure that teachers attain certain level of efficiency and competence before they are considered eligible to enter the profession (DfE, 2011). Similarly, in order to become a SENCO, a person must be a full time teacher working in that school. Successful completion of the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) training course is essential for obtaining a HLTA status (The University of

Northampton, 2014). Despite concerns over existing training, Brown and Devecchi (2013) have pointed out the positive impact of appropriate training on the performance of teaching assistants. Teaching assistants work with and alongside teachers and the LEAs require the institutions employing them to provide for and organise induction and ongoing training to enable them to meet the needs of the pupils (Balshaw, 2013). However, this does not happen in the case of the learning mentors who are only required to complete the initial 5 days' 'national training' to be qualified as learning mentors and there are no guidelines on their need for on-going training.

This problem is further aggravated by the fact that private providers are engaged in training learning mentors. In fact, a search of the internet show that a large number of private establishments are offering learning mentor training courses. 'Circle-time' is an example of private organisations which are engaged in providing learning mentor training. Similarly, 'National Inspections' (2014) is another private enterprise providing learning mentor training which is supervised and assessed by an email tutor. Besides conveying an outlook that appears to dilute the importance of the role of the learning mentors, current provisions for training and development fails to attach sufficient weight to the barriers faced by children and the need to remove them. For example, circle-time, one of the training providers mentioned above stated that their course helps trainees to promote various aspects of learning such as attainment, inclusion, behaviour and attendance, SEAL, SEAD, ECaT, PSHE, Achievement for All, Healthy Schools, emotional health and well-being of pupils and adults. They also claimed that the training they provide can prepare trainee to deal with Challenging children, special needs, intergenerational work, children's centre, early years, primary, secondary". However, it is difficult to explain how such training can be provided within such a short period of time.

Although Morris (2005) argued that learning mentors' diverse personal background bring new and different perspective on working with children, it does not fill the gap left by the absence of minimum qualifying criteria, training or experience of working with young children. Furthermore, unlike the other professions such as teachers or teaching assistants where appropriate qualification and training was a prerequisite for

being considered for appointment or even an interview, the study revealed that in most instances, the learning mentor normally commenced training after being appointed to the job. As mentor S4M2 said,

> "Yeah, I've done that (the five day national training). As soon as I was employed, I did that. But before that, previous to that, nothing".

This method of training has two major implications. Firstly, it highlighted the absence of established criteria for determining whether the individual was appropriate for the role and this diluted the process from the beginning. Secondly, this meant that very few individuals were encouraged or engaged in learning mentor training because it was not necessary to be possess any qualification to become a learning mentor. In effect, such perception has the potential to undermine the value of the role by portraying it as not being very important. However, the findings of this study established learning mentor role as playing a significant part in removing barriers and helping children access learning. Besides, such portrayal will not be helpful in establishing mentoring as a meaningful and worthwhile profession among adults.

Mandatory training to be qualified as a learning mentor is merely five days and they have the flexibility to complete the rest of the modules on the job in schools. Whether such short training will prepare them to cope with and address the emotional and psychological needs of the pupils to be investigated further. Although it is possible to argue that no training can guarantee perfection or solution to any problem, the manner in which learning mentor training is organised at present in comparison to the work they do appear to trivialise the seriousness of the impact of barriers to learning on children's achievement and learning outcomes.

This is problematic because like teachers, teaching assistants or counsellors, learning mentors too are expected to interact with children to deal with issues that are hugely important for them and yet, there is a clear deficiency in establishing a structure, qualification requirement or selection procedure for the appointment of learning mentors. In the light of the gravity and multiplicity of issues and barriers faced by pupils and the complex nature of matters associated with child protection and

emotional wellbeing of children as well as other members of the family, letting the learning mentors loose with such brief training irrespective of their background and experience may not be the ideal proposition. Besides, the above discussion shows serious inconsistencies in the current approach towards training and preparation for different professions in primary school, despite the fact that all of them seek to support children and enable them to realise their full potential by participating in the learning process.

The situation is no different with regard to further role specific training which are limited. Besides, statements of the mentees who participated in the study showed that responsibility for finding suitable ongoing training has become the learning mentors' responsibility. Not only that, possibility of such provisions have become more difficult due to the recent financial crisis and resulting budget cuts which have affected almost all aspects of education. For example, mentor S4M2 said,

> "We are lucky that at the moment the head will pay for certain trainings as long as it is not too expensive. Any free training that comes our way, then we do do that like the parenting course, I am going on training in a couple of weeks for protective behaviours".

Consequently, learning mentors ongoing training has become hugely dependent on the financial condition of the school. For example, the learning mentors reported that the closure of the local excellence cluster due to lack of funding has in effect removed all opportunities of further training. The learning mentors reported that the disappearance of the cluster/partnership has removed their platform for sharing experiences and expertise which were helpful in improving their performance.

14. 2) Motivation and opportunities for career progression.

As stated in government guidelines (direct.gov.uk, 2014), full time learning mentors earn between £14000-17000 per year. However, there is no national pay scale and their salary is determined by individual employers who could also be private agencies, and this creates the possibility of exploitation. Besides, the learning mentor profession is also open to conditions such as term time only wages. Opportunities for

further career progression for learning mentors did not appear to be promising. Documents related to learning mentor training such as the training modules produced by the Liverpool Excellence Cluster (2005) and government's official websites (direct.gov.uk) do not contain information about further development and career progression. Other professionals in schools such as teaching assistants had the opportunity to progress into full-fledged teachers (Watkinson, 2014) whereas the learning mentors had limited scope of career progression. Job security was another major concern for the learning mentors as it was dependent on the school's ability to find the necessary funding to employ a learning mentor. Being the newest profession and not being associated with such systems as special needs statements, learning mentors felt they are the most vulnerable when it came to budget cuts and spending restrictions because they are not mandatory posts within a primary school. Remuneration can be a major factor influencing academic professions (Jopseph & Jackman, 2014). Although Brown and Devecchi (2013) reported limited impact of pay and remuneration on the level of personal satisfaction of teaching assistants and Griffin (2014) cited only limited impact of reward on performance, for example performance related pay which has been subject of renewed discussion within English educational scenario, the financial implications in the case of learning mentors are different. It is combined with low job security and additional responsibilities given to learning mentors. For example, Mentor S5M1 reported being asked to accept more responsibilities without any reciprocal change in remuneration. This prompted the mentor to create new role specification to secure adequate wages. Mentor S5M1 said,

"Another big responsibility, lots of other responsibilities were being given to me. So I then when pay and benefits came in to effect, effectively I would have had, to stay on the learning mentor role I would have lost quite a lot of money. So I asked to be changed to pastoral manager and obviously my job description already fitted that. I have actually, I would say for the last five years advocated the change of the job title. But it is only since we had a new head that he took that on board."

In light of the above discussion, it can be said that there is scope and need for further investigation which should lead to the development of training resources which will

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adequately prepare those seeking to enter the learning mentor profession. At the same time job security as well as financial implications of their employment must be sufficiently addressed in order to further develop the profession. Government authorities need to recognise not only the importance of addressing pupils' needs and issues in the early stages and that learning mentoring can be an effective tool in achieving this end. Such recognition should be translated into appropriate policies and schools provided adequate support to implement them.

CHAPTER 15

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main aim of this research was to examine the role of primary school learning mentors and the definition of the role, to enquire how it is developed and monitored and analyse its impact on the pupils' social and academic outcomes. This chapter, which is divided into three parts, seeks to draw together the findings which emerged from participants' responses to the research questions and the implications of these findings. The first part examines the research outcomes in light of the first research question, which explored the need for and the possibility of, an appropriate definition of the role of the primary school learning mentor while the second part analyses the development and monitoring of the role. The third section considers the perceived impact of the learning mentor intervention in primary schools. This chapter also contains recommendations aimed at facilitating a more realistic understanding of the role of the primary school learning mentor so that it may be given better structure and organisation, monitored appropriately and adequate training and development opportunities provided to this particular group of professionals. This will ultimately enable the learning mentors to support primary school pupils who are in need of support to achieve better learning outcomes.

Review of literature in chapters 1, 2 and 3 revealed the absence of a universally accepted definition of the concept of mentoring. This was a particular issue with regard to the primary school learning mentor role which was a more recently developed programme and much less researched. Having analysed the data and examined the perceptions of participating stakeholders, it can be concluded that it may still be difficult to arrive at a universal definition. This is because every pupil who receives learning mentor support is unique as are the barriers that prevent them from accessing learning. Therefore, identifying and associating the role of the learning mentor to a particular barrier or type of barriers may limit their remit. On

the other hand, the current study provided insights into key characteristics of their role.

These findings suggest that learning mentors had the following characteristics which enabled them to remove barriers to learning. The principle of removing barriers to learning was seemed to be more broadly defined than simply raising academic attainment. It was very closely associated with changing the pupil's attitude and outlook towards learning and school as well as their relationships – with their family members, peers and teachers. This required them to be active listeners who were able to support the pupils to identify issues, developing strategies to resolve them and providing constant support for their implementation. Their role as active listeners was facilitated by certain characteristics and professional dispositions which the participants identified as being unique to the learning mentors. They were easily accessible whenever the service users (mentees, parents or teachers) needed them. The findings suggested that the non-judgemental role they played with respect to the support to the mentee was an essential quality of the learning mentors. They were always available to constantly monitor and provide support pupils and typically had close links with the local community. This enabled them to focus on the needs of an individual child in a way that would be more difficult for a teacher who was responsible for the whole class.

However, it is also important to be mindful of the limitations of this study. This is a small-scale research project which is susceptible to various limitations which are typical of a PhD research. However, the rigour of the study has been maintained by adhering to recognised regulations which govern research within the university as well as educational research guidelines issued by organisations such as BERA. Another limitation of the study is that it was conducted within a single local authority and therefore with a limited sample. Although limited availability of time and resources made it difficult to organise a much wider sample, particularly in geographical terms, measures such as triangulation through the selection of multiple categories of participants from across several schools helped mitigate this issue. Thirdly, due to the limited time within which this study had to be conducted, it has not been possible to explore the impact of mentoring over a period of time. Despite these limitations, the findings of the study have shed light on various matters.

First of all, the study revealed that the main limitation affecting the topic of primary school learning mentors was the scarcity of empirical research. The Learning mentor programme is a key intervention which endeavours to support primary school children to realise their full potential. Implementation of such a vital initiative without adequate, practical guidelines based on empirical evidence indicates that although it was designed to meet the needs of the mentees, it did not provide the knowledge as to how the learning mentors could best meet these needs. The following details would put this in perspective. Despite more than a decade of implementation, the majority of information available about primary school learning mentors is based on a few reports (DfES, 2004; DfES 2005a). Furthermore, these reports were often sponsored by the government which devised these programmes of interventions and therefore reports of this nature are sometimes perceived as attempt to highlight the success of their policies. Due to such perceptions, these reports face the prospects of being approached with caution or even suspicion because of the general inclination to view the intentions and underpinning themes of such reports with some scepticism. For example, Watts (2001) raised the issue of the objectives of mentoring policies in the context of public and individual needs. There is a possibility of conflict when policy makers insist on certain results, while practitioners are torn between the need to satisfy policy makers and meeting the needs of the individuals targeted by the provisions of the policies. Colley (2003) suggested that control by policy makers has the potential to make effective practice of mentoring which protects the interests of the beneficiaries an extremely difficult task. For this reason, despite providing information on primary school learning mentors, government sponsored reports cannot provide an independent evaluation of the programme.

Consequently, this research used a different focus and approach and set out to understand the role and impact of learning mentoring from the perspective of individuals who were directly associated with the learning mentor programme. In this way, the study makes an original contribution to existing knowledge about the way primary school learning mentors are recruited, trained and deployed as well as their impact on the learning outcomes of mentees. This was not achieved without

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difficulties as there were considerable differences between the linguistic and cultural background of the research participants and the researcher. Recognising these issues, efforts were made to mitigate their influence by gathering prior information from professionals who were familiar with the life and culture of the research participants. Contacting the participants through the partnership and in particular contacting the mentees and their parents through their learning mentors helped reassure them about the nature and purpose of the study. This was supported by regular contact with the learning mentor partnership during the time which that much of the research was undertaken. Unfortunately, the partnership was disbanded before the research could be completed. However, having established contact with participants and securing the consent of schools to conduct the research in advance helped minimise the impact of these changes.

In order to determine the impact of the learning mentor initiative, this study had to deal with two issues – the scarcity of literature defining the role and the narrowly defined nature of studies assessing its impact. This study began with an initial exploration of the traditional understanding of mentoring particularly in the adult settings, ultimately arriving at a distinctive perception of the role as it is performed in primary schools based on data collected from research participants. The review of literature identified a number of issues. Firstly, it has been found that mentoring in primary school has been broadly based on the concept of mentoring in the adult context (Colley, 2003). However, as discussed in chapter 12, it is evident that despite having some common elements such as guiding, nurturing, supporting and encouraging, there are considerable differences between primary school mentoring and the traditional concept of mentoring. The most fundamental differences are associated with the purpose of mentoring, the mentor-mentee relationship and the actual process of mentoring. As found in chapter 12 section 3, while mentoring in the adult world strives for the professional growth and development of the mentee, primary school mentoring seeks to influence/change the attitude, outlook and environment of the mentee to enable their participation in the learning process which in turn influences their learning outcomes in a positive manner. Therefore, unlike the adult setting where mentoring produces direct performance outcomes, primary school mentoring has a vital but facilitating role in producing better

learning outcomes for the mentees. These significant differences provide strong evidence to suggest that it is not ideal to base the implementation of primary school mentoring on the concept of mentoring in an adult setting

The second important area of difference is the mentor mentee relationship. Firstly, the balance of power has considerable influence on primary school mentoring because the learning mentors are part of the school organisation and therefore mentees could perceive them as authority figures. On the contrary, in adult mentoring, generally, although relevant to some extent, it is less significant and as such mentors have less chance of being perceived as authority figures in the same degree as learning mentors are considered by their mentees. It must be pointed out here that an adult mentor might have considerable influence in determining the course of the mentee's future. What matters here is the mentee's perception rather than the actual authority exercised by the mentor. There are significant differences in the field of interest and expertise of the learning mentor and their mentee, the primary school pupil. Within adult settings on the other hand, the field of interest and expertise of the mentor and mentee are often similar as, for example, would be in the case of a newly qualified teacher and an experienced teacher who mentors them. Another significant difference, also discussed in section 5 chapter 1, is the age difference between the mentor and mentee. In adult settings, expertise in the field can allow a younger person to mentor an older person with lesser or no expertise whereas the possibility of such practice occurring in a primary school setting never occurs. Furthermore, in adult mentoring, the main participants are the mentor and the mentee and to some extent the organisation with which both are associated and which facilitates mentoring. Primary school mentoring on the other hand involves a holistic approach where parents, siblings, teachers and even external services are often part of the mentoring process.

This argument is further strengthened by the findings of the present study (chapter 8 and chapter 12) which show that according to the participants' perception, the role of the primary school learning mentor is different from the role of an adult mentor. It has been observed that while the primary school learning mentor's role as listener was the focal point of participants' responses, this is not the case within adult

mentoring as reported in the existing literature. For example, the literature reviews in chapters 1, 2 and 3 which examined mentoring in various adult settings did not find any evidence to suggest that the primary role of the mentor was to be a listener. Similarly, documents describing the roles and responsibilities of the primary school learning mentors appeared to focus more heavily on aspects of child protection and co-ordination with other agencies for that purpose. These descriptions failed to highlight the significance of not only providing a voice to the pupils but also failing to provide them with a listener who is interested in what they have to say and takes them seriously. This becomes further important in view of the significance attached to the voice of the child as well as dialogue and communication between the teacher and the taught as one of the most essential tools of teaching (Alexander, 2006). Recent literature (Flynn, 2013; Shevlin, Flynn & Lodge, 2012; de Róiste *et al.*, 2012) highlights the importance of the pupil's voice and the need to listen to them and yet, this appears to be less of a priority in the literature on learning mentors to date.

The above discussion leads to another important question as to why participants perceived the learning mentors primarily as listeners. As discussed in chapter 9, the participants' response indicated their perception of certain dispositions such as availability, approachability and trust as being associated with the learning mentors and which enabled them to support mentees in overcoming barriers to learning not only by helping them to identify and recognise them, but also by helping them to devise appropriate strategies to address them as well as assisting them in the implementation of those strategies. At the same time, these dispositions help distinguish the role of the learning mentors from other similar roles with common objectives such as guiding, supporting, challenging and encouraging. However, the existing literature and reports appear to overlook the true role of the learning mentors and therefore are unable to explain how the learning mentors are able to help primary school children to overcome barriers to learning.

This lack of clear understanding of the role has several negative implications. Any lack of clarity of understanding, description and definition has two major negative impacts. First, it creates a situation where the role of the learning mentor is

misunderstood as being similar to other supporting roles such as teaching assistants or special needs assistants, who are essentially engaged in providing academic support to pupils and normally operate under the supervision of the teacher. Primary school learning mentors on the other hand, provide no academic support as part of their role (although they would not turn away a child who asks for such support) and their activities are not subject to the supervision of the teachers. This study however found that the reality was further complicated by the learning mentors performing multiple roles. For example, during the first half of the working day, learning mentor S6M1 performed the role of the learning mentor and during the second half that of a teaching assistant. In another school, the learning mentor had moved on from being a learning mentor to supporting parents, while continuing to support some of the mentees without additional support or resources which could result in a negative impact on both of the roles. The negative impact of this is demonstrated from the fact that due to a shortage of time, learning mentor S6M1 was placing children who needed support on a waiting list. However, the school appeared not to take any measures to address this and neither the learning mentor nor the leadership team were able to provide valid reasons for the same.

This situation could potentially create confusion in the minds of the children as to what role their learning mentor was performing at a particular time with the result that they would hesitate to approach them for support. This undermines the importance of the principal characteristics of the primary school mentor namely, availability and approachability and the ability of the learning mentors to support the children whenever and wherever they needed the learning mentor's support.

Lack of any clearly identified role and remit could have a negative impact on the training, development and monitoring of the role of the learning mentor. The study found that the learning mentors in particular were aware of the difficulty associated with any accurate measurement of the impact of mentoring and some of their statements exhibited a certain frustration with the persistent demand to produce quantitative evidence of the impact of mentoring. As discussed in sections 11.D and 13.4 earlier, annoyance became more pronounced against the backdrop of a general expectation that the impact of the learning mentor intervention be demonstrated in

the form of numerical, quantitative data. In this connection, absence of a clear understanding of the role only serves to complicate matters further as without a clear idea of what is being assessed, it is not possible to arrive at any assessment that is accurate. Similarly, the absence of a clear understanding can divert the focus of training from the essential qualities of the learning mentors as well as dilute the quality of the training materials and threaten the entire training process and its duration. This in turn can have a negative impact on further development of the learning mentor role.

Research findings in chapter 14 indicated that the role of the learning mentor was adversely affected by various factors including the training of the learning mentors which is lacking in several aspects. The fact that the learning mentor is a professional who is expected to deal with a variety of complex emotional and behavioural issues affecting children, five days of mandatory training is insufficient and in effect dilutes the significance of the role of the learning mentors. In addition, this could potentially convey the perception that the impact of barriers to learning is insignificant and therefore does not require urgent, effective measures to remove them. Despite performing a very significant role, the learning mentors are not provided with the necessary in-service training opportunities and their performance and training is not monitored and assessed at a standard similar to other professions within primary schools such as teachers or teaching assistants. Although the learning mentor partnerships and excellence clusters were established to provide training and development support to the learning mentors, many of them have been disbanded due to financial pressures. Learning mentor partnerships in the area in which the study was carried out had been disbanded by the time the study was nearing completion and the learning mentors reported that whatever limited opportunities were provided by the cluster disappeared, thereby making it the learning mentor's responsibility to search for appropriate training opportunities as well as funding from their own schools or elsewhere. Apart from adversely affecting the training and preparation of the learning mentors, this could have a negative impact on their motivation and quality of performance.

As discussed in chapters 11 and 13, the learning mentor intervention has been successful in raising standards and improving pupils' learning outcomes by providing various forms of support at different stages as discussed in chapter 10. However, the initial catalyst for this process of change and removal of barriers to learning was the listening activity of the learning mentor which w facilitated by their various 'dispositions' as explained in chapter 9. Data obtained in the course of the study showed considerable improvement in pupils' confidence which led to positive change in their behaviour, attitude and outlook towards school and learning (Tables 11.1 & 11.2).The learning mentor support also showed substantial impact on school attendance (Figures 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, 11.5 & 11.6). Such improvement in attitude and attendance were reflected in the academic attainment of those children who were supported by the learning mentors (Figures 11.7 & 11.8). Although it is difficult to obtain an exact, quantitative measurement of the impact of mentoring, the above evidence strengthens the argument that the learning mentor who is expected to be the mentee's champion and refuge must be a good listener to be able to present an objective view of the situation but at the same time take into account the views and opinions of every agent in the child's environmental system so that the child receives the most appropriate form of support.

It can be concluded therefore that the manner in which the role of the primary school learning mentors has been presented so far appears to put the onus and responsibility on the learning mentors and other staff members to observe, identify and address the needs of those pupils who 'displayed' signs of neglect, abuse of any other issues. This is not ideal for two reasons. Firstly, this suggests that those children who may not 'display' signs despite facing barriers to learning will be side-lined or even overlooked until they begin to display signs, which could be too late. Secondly, children may not always display signs of barriers, particularly if they have the tendency to protect those such as parents or family members who may be responsible for creating such barriers. For example, one of the mentees who participated in the study revealed her reluctance to disclose things for fear of further upsetting a parent who was already a victim of domestic violence. In this instance, waiting for the child to display signs of domestic problems, and eventual assessment and intervention by the learning mentor could lead to much more

damage compared to the pupil's awareness of the presence of the learning mentor in the school as a non-judgemental, approachable and confidential listener who is available whenever they felt the need to talk to someone, irrespective of what they wanted to talk about.

The current study revealed that the main strength and advantage of the learning mentor support lies in its difference from other forms of support such as counselling and mental health services which require lengthy processes of observation, identification and assessment prior to help being made available to pupils. This can potentially lead to stigmatisation and labelling which in turn can inhibit children's ability to acknowledge and discuss barriers and seek help. The learning mentor on the other hand enables pupils to avoid such inhibitions because mentoring does not involve complex formalities and lengthy processes. Learning mentor support can be used as a channel to disseminate information on mental health issues to parents and students who are reluctant to engage because of the stigma mentioned above. Mentoring has the potential to address various needs of children in the initial stages and prevent them from escalating into more severe problems causing unnecessary trauma and the involvement of social services leading to the pupil being labelled.

However, in order to achieve this, immediate, concrete steps must be taken to organise and develop the learning mentors as an efficient, well trained strand of professionals with a clearly defined role and mandate, prepared and equipped to meet the needs of the children. The following section sets out some recommendations based on the findings of this study and will inform this process.

Recommendations.

Firstly, it is necessary to provide schools with a clear definition of the role of the learning mentor so that it is differentiated from other similar functions in school but at the same time highlights the pastoral nature of the role in order to encourage service users particularly parents and pupils to seek help. It should also lead to a common understanding of the nature of the role throughout the primary school sector while at the same time providing the all-important flexibility to adapt mentoring activities to fit the needs of the institution and individuals, particularly pupils and their parents/carers.

This will not be an easy task. As Colley (2003) highlighted, the difficulty in arriving at a universal definition of mentoring particularly because of the variety of meanings attributed to the term by different participants. As a result, several years of academic work in the field of mentoring has failed to reach consensus on a definition. However, the multiplicity of meanings should not divert us from the task of finding an acceptable and applicable description of the role which accommodates the many meanings attributed to it but at the same time makes it easy, particularly for parents and pupils, to understand.

Secondly, there is a need to refine and re-organise the operational structure in schools so that the learning mentors are deployed most effectively. Schools should ensure that the learning mentors are not used as additional pair of hands or given other responsibilities that are not directly associated with mentoring. They should not for example, be deployed as teaching assistants or dinner supervisors as this would create confusion among service users particularly pupils as to what role is being discharged by the learning mentor at a particular time. This in turn could have negative implications for their unique characteristics such as availability and approachability. Furthermore, checks must be put in place so these unique characteristics are not taken advantage of to justify unrestricted and unstructured movement or engagement with the learning mentors in a manner that disrupts learning and discipline. It is encouraging to find some schools already putting in

place certain measures to address this issue. For instance, in one of the participating schools, mentees were provided with an identifying card which indicated to other staff that the pupil was on his way to meet the learning mentor and this avoided the need for repeated queries and clarifications. At the same time, this system provided a method of monitoring the child's movements within the school, and gave the pupils the confidence to seek help without being under pressure. Therefore, availability and approachability should be strengthened by appropriate procedures and guidelines governing such interactions and opportunities.

Thirdly, in order to ensure that the pupils' needs are met to the best standards, a review of the qualifying criteria and appropriate training of the learning mentors must be carried. Although individuals from different backgrounds can bring a wealth of experience, it cannot substitute the knowledge and expertise gained through appropriate training and qualification to meet the complex needs and barriers faced by primary school pupils. The contents of such training should be established on appropriate further research. Therefore, steps must also be taken to put in place appropriate mechanisms to establish and monitor suitable training programmes – both initial and on-going – for the learning mentors and they should be subject to regular evaluation and assessment as in the case of teachers, SENCOs and teaching assistants.

However, care must also be taken to avoid any situation where the role of the primary school learning mentor is not subsumed within matters of professional training and qualification to the extent that it only serves to sever the link with the local community which is one of the main strengths of the role. This special link helps service users to distinguish learning mentors from other forms of more structured and stringent forms of supports such as counsellors and social services.

Fourthly, a comprehensive review of existing training programmes, training resources, selection criteria as well as recruitment process should be undertaken. The inadequacies of the current practice of providing training after being appointed as learning mentors should be amended whereby appropriate training is available to anyone who wishes to become a learning mentor and completing such training

should be a necessary condition for being considered for appointment. A learning mentor should be 'a trained professional who is available, approachable and easily accessible in order to be an active, non-judgemental listener who provides various forms of support as identified in chapter 10 in order to remove barriers to learning thereby enabling pupils to access learning and achieve better social and academic learning outcomes.

Similarly certain minimum academic qualification as an eligibility criterion should be determined. The training programme for the learning mentors too requires regular and periodical assessment and update to include relevant and current issues. The current duration of mandatory training which is 5 days should be reviewed. In view of the significance of the various issues which the learning mentors deal with as part of their role it is extremely important that a much more detailed, structured and extensive training programme and process are put in place. Listening has been identified as the most important role of the learning mentors and therefore the contents of their training programmes should focus on developing these skills. They should be given appropriate training to enhance the unique dispositions of learning mentors such as availability, approachability and trustworthiness in order to make learning mentor support more effective. This will ensure that on completion of training, the learning mentors are sufficiently prepared and ready to support the pupils rather than undertake the role as an experiment or proceed on general presumption, estimate or personal experience. It is also recommended that completing the training and acquiring the specified qualification is made an eligibility criterion for applying for the position of the learning mentor rather than appointing someone to the post who then enlists for the training programme. In addition, similar to other children centred roles such as teachers, practical training in schools and under the supervision of lead mentors should be incorporated into the learning mentor training programme. Training should focus on the purpose of mentoring so that the learning mentors are able to fulfil their role in a manner that will encourage those in need to take the initiative and approach them rather than the learning mentor or other staff members embarking on a detective mission observing, assessing and enrolling pupils for the learning mentor programme. At the same time, training programmes for other professionals in primary schools should

provide them with adequate knowledge and awareness of the role of the learning mentor so that they are able to use them effectively to meet the needs of children requiring their support.

Fifthly, it is recommended that schools review the existing methods of providing information about learning their learning mentor provisions and take more pro-active steps to disseminate information to parents and pupils through appropriate methods of communication both printed and verbal highlighting the learning mentor's role as available, approachable listeners whose remit is to offer support and champion those children affected by barriers to learning.

Sixthly, steps should be taken to enable the learning mentors to create and maintain their own unique professional identity by providing appropriate structure and recognition of the learning mentor profession in primary schools and safeguarding their financial wellbeing and job security.

Seventhly, administrative bodies such as the Department for Education and Local Education Authorities should recognise the important role played by the learning mentors in enabling children to participate in learning and preparing them to make positive contributions to society. Steps should be taken to train and recruit more learning mentors where necessary in order to address issues such as waiting lists for pupils seeking support (as discovered in school S6) and other professionals acting as learning mentors.

While recognising the limitations of this study even to advocate fuzzy generalisation (Bassey, 2001), it is hoped that it will provide suggestions for good practice. However, in order to address the limitations as mentioned in the above paragraphs and as a continuation of this project, I propose to undertake a longitudinal case study. Limitations of the current study in relation to sampling will be addressed by choosing a socially and geographically more diverse sample for the proposed case study. The proposed case study will also examine in detail whether and how continuous, cross-institutional mentoring support is provided to pupils who

progress from the primary sector to the secondary sector and how schools co-ordinate to ensure these provisions are adequate.

The current study has highlighted the learning mentors' role as listeners who are not directly associated with academic activities. As such, my proposed further research will examine the relationship between their job title 'learning mentors' and the actual role which the study suggests to be less academically oriented and in fact more of a pastoral nature. This is particularly important in view of the fact that some of the schools which participated in the study have recognised this issue and taken the step of changing the name of the role from learning mentors to pastoral support managers.

In conclusion, this study has drawn attention to the significance of the role of the learning mentor as listener in removing barriers to learning as well as their considerable success in enabling children to participate in learning in order to realise their full potential. On a personal context, this study has enabled me to take my first steps in the field of research which has encouraged me to ask questions and seek explanations in order to become a better practitioner. The experiences of various people I was fortunate enough to interact with as part of this study has enhanced my understanding of a different aspect of inclusion through mentoring and enabled me to gain a new perspective on various factors which might seem insignificant to others, but are distressingly huge barriers affecting primary school children. Although it is unrealistic to claim that this small scale research by itself will bring about a radical transformation of primary education in England, it is hoped that it will facilitate a more accurate and realistic perception of the role of the learning mentor which in turn will enable schools to carry out effective deployment of these valued professionals for the benefit of children who are in need of support. At the same time, it is also hoped that this will encourage appropriate change in learning mentor policies which govern their recruitment, training and deployment and at the same time inspire further, more detailed research which will address limitations mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Reflection on the research journey

The PhD has often been viewed as an apprenticeship model whereby the novice researcher develops and hones their skills through a process of structured learning (Stenhouse, 1985). From a personal perspective I would agree that this course of study has enabled me to acquire a broad range of skills, understanding and knowledge not only in relation to the roles of the learning mentors but also with respect to conducting small scale research.

Carrying out this study has been my first step towards becoming an educational researcher. It has enhanced my ability and experience of Planning, managing and completing a project in terms of setting and achieving targets according to strict schedules. This experience has enriched my organisational skills such as arranging and carrying out various research activities, meetings and interviews particularly within a school/educational setting. Successfully co-ordinating the participation of parents in particular has been a valuable organisational experience. Although this was a small scale research project, this has been an effective learning experience in the planning and allocation of time and resources for successful completion of a research project. Moreover, the learning mentor programme was not only insufficiently researched topic within the context where it was being implemented, it was a concept that was completely new to me. In addition, the settings in which the study was carried out, the participants and their background, culture and language was completely new to me has added considerable value to my learning experience and development as a researcher.

Undertaking this project has made a significant contribution to my knowledge and research experience particularly methodological aspects of research. Commencing this project without any knowledge or experience of conducting research, this has provided me with a clearer understanding of various concepts such as research methods, methodologies, paradigms, and theoretical frameworks. Through this

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project, I have been able to gain fairly good understanding theoretical and practical aspects of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research. Furthermore, it has provided me the invaluable practical learning experience of choosing appropriate research method, designing data collection instruments, collecting data as well as coding and analysing of data in order to answer research questions in a realistic manner. Another important learning experience has been gaining an understanding of ethical considerations, and their significance, particularly in social science research. Furthermore, through this study, I have gained the practical experience of implementing such ethical considerations in my own research study. This was of particular significance as my social and educational background prior to this study has had little or no association with ethical considerations or requirements.

As result of undertaking this study, I have begun to ask questions and examine views, opinions and theories critically rather than accept them on their face value. Apart from the methodological and project development aspects, this study has enabled me to gain a much more detailed understanding of the structure and development of English education system, how the learning mentor role affects and influences life and learning of the mentees in particular as well as how this profession the education system in general and the. Most of all, it has given me a deeper and clearer understanding of the role of the learning mentor in the primary school context and how pupils benefit from the support offered by the learning mentors. It is expected that this knowledge and expertise that I have gained through this study will be further enhanced through more detailed and focused research into various aspects of the learning mentor role which emerged from this study. Besides, I hope to disseminate the key findings among practitioners and stakeholders with a view to enable more pupils to benefit from learning mentor support. The research experience and knowledge that I have gained so far will enable me in carrying out this proposed further research.

Appendix 1

University of Northampton – Research about the role and impact of Learning Mentors in Primary Schools in England.

Interview with mentees

Explain the process in simple words. Remind the pupil that they have an adult with them to make them feel at ease.

Thank the interviewee for participation and revisit the aspects of ethics, anonymity and freedom to stop, not to answer particular questions. Help them relax talking about familiar things and put them at ease.

How do you spend your day at school? Do you enjoy your day at school?

What do you like most in the school? (Prompt for reason if possible)

What do you find most difficult to cope with at school? (Prompt for reason)

When this happens, what do you do?

Does anyone help you in a special way? Who is it? (Lead to mentoring and mentor)

Do you spend a lot of time with (mentor's name)? (Prompt for duration)

Does anyone else join you and (mentor's name)?

What sort of activities do you engage in while you are with (mentor's name)?

Does (mentor's name) help you only in the classroom? (Prompt for other instances of help)

Which part of mentoring activity do you like most? Why?

Do you think mentoring is helping you? Why do you think so? (Prompt with what and how the pupil found it difficult and how mentoring has helped)

Is there anything you wish you and (mentor's name) could do better?

Do you talk to your parents about mentoring? What kind of things do you talk about?

Is there anything else that you would like tell me about your mentoring?

Thank you for your time and participating in the interview.

University of Northampton – Research about the role and impact of Learning Mentors in Primary Schools in England.

Interview with the learning mentors

The interview is divided into three sections:

General Demographics
a. Employment history
b. Training and qualifications

Role and Responsibilities
a. Main activities associated with mentoring.
b. Other professional activities and responsibilities
c. Management of the mentoring role

Impact.
c. Response of the school towards mentoring.
d. Response from parents/carers of mentees
e. Response from mentees
f. Response of any other agency involved.

General.

How long have you been working as a mentor?

Before becoming a mentor, have you had any school based roles and if **yes**, for how long?

What prompted / attracted you to become a mentor?

What are your educational qualifications?

What kind of training did you undergo in relation to the position before you became a mentor?

Who provided and facilitated this training?

Is there any ongoing training provided by your current employer? (**if yes**, please tell me about the training)

Role.

What is your job title at the school?

Has the role been changed or modified since you became a mentor?

Were you given a written job description at the beginning of your work as a mentor?

Has this been amended or updated and what kind of changes were made?

Are there other activities that you are involved with at the school apart from mentoring? (**If yes**, what are these?

How are pupils selected to receive mentoring?

How many pupils do you support in your role as a mentor?

How are mentoring sessions organised?

Could you describe a typical mentoring session for me?

How often do you meet each pupil for mentoring?

Are these meetings with individual pupils or do you provide group support?

Do you work with the mentee outside mentoring sessions? (**if yes**, in what capacity?)

Is there anyone who co-ordinates the mentoring activities and what is the procedure for this co-ordination?

Do you work with outside agencies (e.g psychologist, therapist) as part of your role as mentor?

What kind of assistance do you get from the school in your mentoring activities?

How do you co-ordinate and update class teachers/co-ordinator regarding your mentees?

What are the main challenges you face in carrying out your duties/responsibilities as a mentor?

What do you do to try and overcome these challenges?

How are you supported in addressing these difficulties?

Impact

How do you record and keep track of the progress of the pupils you mentor?

Are these standard systems used by all mentors in the school or are they used only by you?

Who has access to these records?

How do you evaluate your mentoring activities? Do you have a standard system for this?

How do teachers value mentoring and mentors? (how do you know?)

What feedback do you get from teachers or special educational needs co-ordinators with regards to the mentoring you provide?

Do you interact directly with the parents/carers of pupils you mentor?

How do these parents/carers value mentoring? (how do you know?)

How do the pupils who are mentored value the support they get? (how do you know?)

What is your opinion with regard to mentoring and its impact?

What is the most important aspect of your role as a mentor?

Was there any occasion when you felt mentoring did not bring about any positive impact in any particular situation and why was it so?

What impact does your role as a mentor have on you personally?

Would you like to make any other comment or is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview.

**University of Northampton – Research about the role and impact of
Learning Mentors in Primary Schools in England.**

Interview with parents of mentees
*Thank the interviewee for participation and revisit the aspects of ethics,
anonymity and freedom to stop, not to answer particular questions.*

How old is your child and which year is s/he in?

How long has your child had a mentor?

Does your child have a statement of special need?

What prompted or encouraged you to agree to mentoring for your child? (Prompt:
Was it any specific difficulties/problems that your child faced?)

Who proposed mentoring - the school, child or a mutual decision?

What were the formalities that you had to complete to commence mentoring?

Are you involved in and participate in the mentoring activities and process of your
child?

Do you get regular report/information on your child's progress and development in
relation to mentoring?

Do you have regular access to the mentor? (prompt: what do you do during this
time?)

Who does the co-ordination between you, the mentor and teacher regarding
mentoring and its impact on your child's attainment?

What is your opinion on the impact of mentoring on your child's attainment?

*{What in your opinion is the impact of mentoring on your child's attendance? If
attendance is a barrier}*

Does mentoring have any impact on your child's relationships? – with peers, with
teachers and with others?

What was your most important concern about your child prior to beginning
mentoring and what is the impact of mentoring on this concern?

Is there any other evidence to support your opinion?

In your opinion, what are the benefits of mentoring?

In your opinion, are there any drawbacks of mentoring?

Is there anything else that you would like to add to what you have already said?

Thank you for your time and participating in the interview.

Appendix 2

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHAMPTON
School of Education

<div align="right">

The University of Northampton
School of Education, Park Campus
Boughton Green Road, Northampton
NN2 7AL

Tel. 01604 892897; Fax. 01604 716375

</div>

Dear Parent / Carer

Research Project: Role and impact of learning mentors in English Primary Schools.

You are invited to participate in the above research project commissioned and supported by the University of Northampton through the School of Education. An information sheet containing the details of the research is attached herewith for your consideration.

You have been selected to participate in this research as a parent / carer of a pupil who underwent / is undergoing mentoring in a primary school. If you and/or your child are willing to participate in the research, please complete the consent form below.

Thank you for your time and considering this invitation and I sincerely look forward to you taking part in this valuable research.

1. I have been fully informed about the nature of the research
2. I understand my role and the role of my child/ward in the research/interview. I understand:
3. That no names of individuals or institutions will be used in the final report to cause identification
4. That the findings may be published in academic journals or presented at conferences.
5. That our participation in the research is entirely voluntary
6. That I can withdraw from this research project/interview and at any time
7. That my child can withdraw from this research project/interview at any time
8. That data collected during field work would remain the property of the researcher.

Please tick(√) as applicable   Yes   No

	(Yes)	(No)
I have read the statements above and agree voluntarily to participate in the research	☐	☐
I give consent for my child/ward to participate in the research	☐	☐

Parent/guardian Name (please print)   Parent/Guardian Signature.   Date

All relevant information about the above research project has been explained to me and I agree/do not agree to participate in the research/interview.

Pupils Name (please print)	School (please print)
Class	

Research Title: Role and impact of Learning Mentors in English Primary Schools.

Interview Participant Consent Form.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview today. As explained in the information sheet, the purpose of this interview is to gather information about the perceived role and impact of learning mentors from your perspective.

As part of the procedure to ensure that the code of ethics has been adhered to and to safeguard the interests of the participant and the researcher, I would be grateful if you could confirm the following.

1. That I have been fully informed about the nature of the research
2. I understand my role in the interview.
3. I understand that no names of individuals or institutions will be used in the final report to cause identification
4. That the findings may be published in academic journals or presented at conferences.
5. That participation in the research is completely voluntary
6. That I can withdraw from this research project and at any time
7. That data collected during field work would remain the property of the researcher.

Name: Signature: Date:

Research Title: The Role and impact of Learning Mentors in English Primary Schools.

<u>School's consent for participation in Research Form.</u>

Dear Sir / Madam,

My name is Benny Kuruvilla and I am PhD student at the University of Northampton. I am researching the role and impact of learning mentors in English primary schools under the supervision of Professor Richard Rose. A summary of all the information regarding the research and its implications are attached herewith for your consideration.

The research requires that I collect data from key individuals who are involved in the mentoring process including mentors, mentees, parents/carers of mentees, head teachers and mentoring coordinators. In preparation for this research I have been working with the Northants Mentoring Network and have the support of Mrs Jan Geary, co-ordinator for this group in respect of this project. In order to proceed with my field work I would like to request your kind permission to involve colleagues from your school in this work.

The research is subject to regular scrutiny through the University of Northampton Ethics Committee. I have a current CRB certificate and have worked for several years in schools both in India and the UK.

If you are willing to participate in this research I would be grateful if you could complete the attached form and return it to me in the stamped addressed envelope provided.

Should you require further information or verification of this research please contact Professor Richard Rose <u>Richard.Rose@northampton.ac.uk</u>

Many thanks for your consideration of this matter.

Research about the role and impact of learning mentors in English Primary Schools

I confirm that:

1. That I have been fully informed about the nature of the research
2. I understand that no names of individuals or institutions will be used in the final report and that the identification of individuals and schools will be protected
3. That the staff and pupils at my school are participating in the research voluntarily
4. That they can withdraw from this research project and at any time
5. That data collected during field work would remain the property of the researcher.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Designation:

School:

Appendix 3

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHAMPTON
School of Education

Research Information Document.

Research Title: Role and impact of Learning Mentors in English Primary Schools.

About the Research: This research is commissioned and supported by the University of Northampton through the School of Education.

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this research is to investigate how the role of the learning mentors is perceived, how their work is developed and monitored and what is the impact of learning mentors on the learning and social inclusion of the pupils with whom they work.

The researchers: The research will be conducted by a PhD student researcher, under the guidance of experienced university research supervisors. Their contact details are provided below. The researcher and supervisory team have current criminal records bureau certificates.

What the study involves: The research team will gather data from the learning mentors, pupils, parents, head teachers and service providers through questionnaires, interviews and observations.

What kind of participation is requested? Participants will be asked to respond to questionnaires, participate in interviews, and enable some observation of mentoring sessions. Transcriptions of interviews will be provided to participants to confirm the accuracy of their narration.

What will happen to the information? All data collected–both written and electronic - will be kept securely in a locked storage area and will be accessed only by the researcher, the supervisors and the participant concerned. The identity of each participant will remain anonymous throughout the research process and in the report. Each participant will be assigned an identification number or code and any information provided will be identified only by this number or code. Once the research is completed, the data collected will be destroyed. The information you give will be for research purposes only. It will not be shared with anyone else for any other purpose.

Consent and Withdrawal. Written consent will be obtained before the commencement of the data collection. Each participant –parent / guardian in case of children- will be given access to all the details regarding the purpose and extent of the research and every participant is free to withdraw from research at any time. However, if this happens after completion of the interview, the information may be used, but no further participation will be requested.

Possible outcome of the research: The student is required to submit a thesis as part requirement for the degree of PhD. A report of the outcome of the research will be made available to all the participants, schools and local authorities. It hoped that the result of this research will positively influence the training and deployment of the learning mentors and inform practice in this field and at the same time assist in formulation of policies to ensure best possible outcome for mentors and mentees in primary school level through deployment of mentors.

Researcher : Benny Kuruvilla, School of Education, The University of Northampton, Park Campus, Boughton
        Green   Road.   NN2   7AL.   Tel.   01604-892193.
    benny.kuruvilla@northampton.ac.uk

Director of Studies: Prof. Richard Rose. School of Education, The University of Northampton, Park Campus,
        Boughton Green Road. NN2 7AL. Richard.rose@northampton.ac.uk
    01604-892762.

Thank you for your interest and support. If you would like to participate in the research, please complete and return the consent form attached.

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHAMPTON
School of Education

Research Information Sheet. (Mentees)

Research Title: Role and impact of Learning Mentors in English Primary Schools.

About the Research: This research supervised by the University of Northampton

Purpose of the research: To investigate the role of the learning mentors, and their impact pupils' performance.

People who will contact you: The researcher and his director of studies.

What would you be doing: Answer some short questions/discussion about your studies and other activities at school or outside school. It is not an examination or test but a general chat/discussion where you are free to say anything you wish to about your learning mentor and other activities you do. I might also come and join you whilst you have the meeting with your mentor but only if you agree. If you need to know more about the project, you can either ask me at any time or ask your learning mentor. You could also ask them to arrange a meeting with me so that I can explain it and answer your questions.

Your words will be safe with us: Anything you say or write will be kept secretly and securely in a locked place and only the researcher and his supervisors will know/see it. Your name or personal details will not be disclosed to anybody else. No one will know who said what. However, if you mention any harmful practices, the research team would be obliged to inform the appropriate people for your own wellbeing and safety.

Consent and Withdrawal.
Your parent/guardian has already agreed it is alright for you to participate. But, you don't have to say anything that you don't want to. Even if you started it, but would like to stop it, you can stop at any time. Nobody will ask why. However, if this

happens after completing the interview, the information may be used, but again, we will not say who said it, and nobody will contact you again.

Possible result of the research: At the end of the research we will tell you what we found out. It is hoped that more children will benefit from mentoring.

Researcher Details: **Benny Kuruvilla,** School of Education, The University of Northampton, Park Campus,
Boughton   Green   Road.   NN2   7AL.   Tel.   01604-892193.
benny.kuruvilla@northampton.ac.uk

Director of Studies: Prof. Richard Rose. School of Education, The University of Northampton, Park Campus,
Boughton   Green   Road.   NN2   7AL.
Richard.rose@northampton.ac.uk 01604-892762.

Thank you for your interest and support. If you and your parent/guardian would like to participate in the research, please complete and return the consent form and the contact details form in the stamped addressed envelope provided.

Growing Optimism

The children in current year 6

Where they were prior to intervention of GO and progress following intervention.
This is with levels given at end of Autumn term in year 5 to Feb in Year 6

In green is where there is an increase of 6 points or more in 1 year.

Reading	Writing	Maths	Reading	Writing	Maths
2B	3C	2A	4C	3C	4C
3B	2B	3C	4B	3C	4B
3C	1C	2A	3C	3C	3A
3C	2C	1C	3B	3C	3C
4A	2A	3A	5B	4B	3A
4B	1C	3A	5B	3C	3C
4B	2C	4A	4A	3B	3A
4A	4C	3B	5B	3B	3C
3C	2C	3C	3C	3C	3A
3B	2B	3C	4A	4C	4C
4C	2A	3A	4B	3B	4A
4C	2B	3C	4B	4B	4C
4B	3A	3C	4A	4B	4C
4C	2B	2A	4A	4B	3B
4C	3C	3B	4A	3B	4B
4B	2B	1B	3A	3C	5B
1C	1C	2A	2A	3C	3B
4B	2A	4C	4A	4B	4A
1A	1B	1B	2C	2B	2A

Mentees attainment records

Reading levels

Start of year	November	January	March
P7	P7	P8	1C
1S	1S	1S	1S
1B	1A	1A	2C 2C
1A	2C	2S 2A	2A
P8	1B	1A	2A
2A	2A 3C	3C 3C	3C

Writing levels

Start of year	November	January	March
PC	P7	P8	1C
1S	1S	1S	1S
1B	2C	2C	2C
1A	2C	2C 2C	2S
1C	2C	2S	2B
2S	2A	2A 2A	2A

Maths levels

Start of year	November	January	March
P7	P7	WB	1C
1S	1S	1S	2C
1B	1A	1A	2C
1A	2C	2C	2S
1C	1B	1A	2C
2S	2S	2S	2A

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Mentees attainment records

Start of year

[blue box] Y6 Reading Club

Reading levels					Writing levels					Maths levels				
Start of year	November	January	March	(next year)	Start of year	November	January	March	(next year)	Start of year	November	January	March	(next year)
3B	3B	3B 3B	3B 3B		3B	3B	3B 3B	3B		4C	4C	4B		
3C	3B	3B 3B	3B		2A	3C	3C 3C	3B		3C	3B	3B		
3B	3B	3B 3B	3B		3C	3C	3B 3B	3B		3B	3B	3A		
2A	3C	3C 3C	3C 3C		2A	3C	3C	3C		3A	3A	4C		
3A	3A	4C 4C	4C		3B	3B	3A 3A	3A		3B	3B	3A		
3B	4C	4C 4C	4C		3C	3C	3B	3A		3A	4C 4C			

Mentees attainment records

Reading levels					Writing levels					Maths levels				
Start of year	November	January	March	Academic year	Start of year	November	January	March	Jun/end of year	Start of year	November	January	March	Jun/end of year
2B	2B	1B	2A		1A	1A	2C	2C		2A	3C	3C	3C	
3C	3C	GB	3B		2A	2A	3C	3B		3B	3B	3C	3A	
2A	2A	3C 3C	3B		3C	3C	3B 3B	3B		3C	3C	3C	3B	
2B	2A 2A	2A 2A	2A		2A	2A	3C	3C		2A 2A	2A	3C	3C	
+2	P7	P8	1C		1	P7	P8	P6		P7	P7	P8	P8	
2B	2C	2C	2C		2C	2B	2B	2B		1A	1A	2C	2C	
P7	P7	P8	1C		P7	P7	P8	1C		P7	P7	P8	1C	
/	P5	P8	/		/	P6	/			/	P7	/		
Pb	Pb	P8	P6		Pb	Pb	P8	P8		P7	P7	P8	1C	

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Appendix 5

	5th Sep-Sep	Sep-Oct	Just Oct	Sep-Nov	Just Nov	Sep-Dec	Just Dec	Sep-Jan	Just Jan	Sep-Feb	Just Feb	Sep-March	Just March	Sep-April	Just April	Sep-May	Just May	Sep-June	Just June	Sep-July	Just July
2013-2014 R-Y6	96.5	95.3	94	95.6	96.1	95.5	95.2	95.8	95.6	95.6	94.6	95.6	95.8	95.7	96.6	95.8	96.7	95.8	95.5		
2012-2013 R-Y6	93.4	94.4	95.2	94.8	95.2	94.3	94	93.6	91	93.9	95.4	94	94.8	94.2	96.2	94.3	94.9	94.2	92.6	94.2	91.2
Excluding under 5s	93.5	94.6	95.2	94.4	94.4	94.3	93.9	93.6	91.1	93.9	95.4	94	94.7	94.2	96.2	94.5	94.9	94.1	92.4	94.1	91.0
2011-2012 R-Y6	94	94.1	94.2	93.5	92.6	93.3	92	92.8	91.5	92.5	91.1	92.3	91.5	92.5	93.6	92.4	92.2	92.4	92	92.1	88.9
Excluding under 5s	93.8	94.1	94.3	94.4	92.9	93.3	92.3	92.9	91.7	92.7	91.6	92.6	91.9	92.4	93.6	93	91.4	92.6	92.1	92.3	88.9
2010-2011 R-Y6	93.3	94.1	95	93.9	93.4	92.2	85.5	92.6	93.8	92.8	94	92.8	93.2	92.7	91.4	92.8	92.1	92.8	92.6	92.5	89.5
Excluding under 5s	93.5	94.4	95.4	93.6	93.2	93.1	87.8	93.3	93.6	93.1	94	93.4	93.7	92.9	91.4	93.1	93.7	93.3	93.2	93.1	90.4

September 2013 – Usual illnesses. Year 6 child – school refuser with 0% attendance.

October 2013 – We have had the usual illnesses that come with starting back after the summer holidays. Also a child in Reception had two whole weeks off for suspected food poisoning. A family of three had an unauthorised holiday. A year 5 child had a week off after having an operation. We still have a year 6 child on roll who is a school refuser.

30/06/2014

Registration Certificate

2012-2013					
w/b					
27/08/2012					
03/09/2012	♦♦	♦♦	/\	/\	/\
10/09/2012	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
17/09/2012	L\	/\	/\	/\	/\
24/09/2012	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
01/10/2012	L\	L\	/\	/\	/\
08/10/2012	L\	/\	/\	L\	/\
15/10/2012	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
22/10/2012	/\	L\	L\	/\	/\
29/10/2012	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
05/11/2012	L\	/\	L\	/\	U\
12/11/2012	L\	L\	L\	L\	/\
19/11/2012	L\	U\	/\	L\	/\
26/11/2012	L\	/\	/\	/\	II
03/12/2012	II	/\	L\	/\	/\
10/12/2012	L\	/\	L\	/\	/\
17/12/2012	L\	L\	L\	♦♦	♦♦
24/12/2012	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
31/12/2012	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
07/01/2013	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
14/01/2013	II	II	II	II	II
21/01/2013	L\	L\	L\	/\	L\
28/01/2013	/\	/\	/\	II	/\
04/02/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	L\
11/02/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
18/02/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
25/02/2013	/\	II	/\	/\	/\
04/03/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
11/03/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
18/03/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	II
25/03/2013	L\	/\	/\	♦♦	♦♦
01/04/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
08/04/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
15/04/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
22/04/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
29/04/2013	/\	L\	I\	/\	/\
06/05/2013	♦♦	/\	/\	/\	/\
13/05/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
20/05/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
27/05/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
03/06/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
10/06/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
17/06/2013	L\	/\	/\	/\	/\
24/06/2013	♦♦	L\	L\	L\	/\
01/07/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	L\
08/07/2013	L\	L\	/\	L\	L\
15/07/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
22/07/2013	/\	/\	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
29/07/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
05/08/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
12/08/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
19/08/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦
26/08/2013	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦	♦♦

Summary 01/09/2012 AM - 26/07/2013 PM	Sessions	%
Attendances	355	93.92
Authorised absences	21	5.56
Unauthorised absences	2	0.53
Possible Attendances	378	
Including		
Approved Ed. Activity	0	0.00
Lates before reg closed	40	10.58
Lates after reg closed	0	0.00
Unexplained absences	0	0.00

Key to Codes	
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration (attending other establishments)
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)
H	Annual family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (not med/dental appointments)
J	Interview
L	Late (before reg closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised abs (not covered by other code)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work Experience
♦	Planned whole or partial school closure
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Z	Pupil not on roll
-	All should attend / No mark recorded

Personal Details

Registration Certificat

2013-2014					
w/b					
26/08/2013					
02/09/2013	**	**	**	/\	/\
09/09/2013	L\	/\	L\	/\	/\
16/09/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
23/09/2013	II	L\	/\	/\	/\
30/09/2013	/\	YY	L\	/\	/\
07/10/2013	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
14/10/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
21/10/2013	/\	/\	L\	/\	/\
28/10/2013	**	**	**	**	**
04/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
11/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
18/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	L\
25/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
02/12/2013	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
09/12/2013	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
16/12/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
23/12/2013	**	**	**	**	**
30/12/2013	**	**	**	**	**
06/01/2014	**	/\	/\	/\	/\
13/01/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
20/01/2014	/\	/\	L\	/\	/\
27/01/2014	/\	/\	O\	O\	/\
03/02/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
10/02/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
17/02/2014	**	**	**	**	**
24/02/2014	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
03/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
10/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
17/03/2014	/\	/V	/\	/\	/\
24/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
31/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	L\	/\
07/04/2014	**	**	**	**	**
14/04/2014	**	**	**	**	**
21/04/2014	**	**	/\	/\	L\
28/04/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
05/05/2014	**	/\	/\	/\	/\
12/05/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
19/05/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
26/05/2014	**	**	**	**	**
02/06/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
09/06/2014	/\	II	/\	/\	/\
16/06/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
23/06/2014	**	L\	/\	/\	/\
30/06/2014	--	--	--	--	--
07/07/2014	--	--	--	--	--
14/07/2014	--	--	--	--	--
21/07/2014	--	--	--	**	**
28/07/2014	**	**	**	**	**
04/08/2014	**	**	**	**	**
11/08/2014	**	**	**	**	**
18/08/2014	**	**	**	**	**
25/08/2014	**	**	**	**	**
01/09/2014	**				

Summary 01/09/2013 AM - 27/06/2014 PM	Sessions	%
Attendances	336	98.25
Authorised absences	4	1.17
Unauthorised absences	2	0.58
Possible Attendances	342	
Including		
Approved Ed. Activity	1	0.29
Lates before reg closed	14	4.09
Lates after reg closed	0	0.00
Unexplained absences	0	0.00

Key to Codes	
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
b	Educated off site (not Dual reg)
c	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration (attending other establishments)
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)
H	Annual family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (not med/dental appointments)
J	Interview
L	Late (before reg closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised abs (not covered by other code)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work Experience
#	Planned whole or partial school closure
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Z	Pupil not on roll
-	All should attend / No mark recorded

Personal Details

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Registration Certificate ·

2013-2014					
w/b					
26/08/2013					
02/09/2013	‖	‖	‖	/\	/\
09/09/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
16/09/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
23/09/2013	/\	/\	L\	/\	/\
30/09/2013	/\	YY	/\	/\	/\
07/10/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
14/10/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
21/10/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
28/10/2013	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
04/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
11/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
18/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
25/11/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
02/12/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
09/12/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
16/12/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
23/12/2013	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
30/12/2013	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
06/01/2014	‖	/\	/\	/\	/\
13/01/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
20/01/2014	L\	/\	/\	/\	/\
27/01/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
03/02/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
10/02/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
17/02/2014	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
24/02/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
03/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
10/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
17/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
24/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	L\
31/03/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
07/04/2014	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
14/04/2014	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
21/04/2014	‖	‖	/\	/\	/\
28/04/2014	/\	/\	/\	/V	/\
05/05/2014	‖	II	II	II	II
12/05/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
19/05/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
26/05/2014	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
02/06/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
09/06/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
16/06/2014	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
23/06/2014	‖	/\	/\	/\	/\
30/06/2014	--	--	--	--	--
07/07/2014	--	--	--	--	--
14/07/2014	--	--	--	--	--
21/07/2014	--	--	---	‖	‖
28/07/2014	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
04/08/2014	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
11/08/2014	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
18/08/2014	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
25/08/2014	‖	‖	‖	‖	‖
01/09/2014	‖				

Summary 01/09/2013 AM - 27/06/2014 PM	Sessions	%
Attendances	334	97.66
Authorised absences	8	2.34
Unauthorised absences	0	0.00
Possible Attendances	342	
Including		
Approved Ed. Activity	1	0.29
Lates before reg closed	3	0.88
Lates after reg closed	0	0.00
Unexplained absences	0	0.00

Key to Codes	
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration (attending other establishments)
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)
H	Annual family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (not med/dental appointments)
J	Interview
L	Late (before reg closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised abs (not covered by other code)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work Experience
#	Planned whole or partial school closure
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Z	Pupil not on roll
-	All should attend / No mark recorded

Personal Details

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Registration Certificate

2012-2013					
wfb					
27/08/2012					
03/09/2012	**	**	/\	/\	/\
10/09/2012	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
17/09/2012	/\	/\	L\	L\	/\
24/09/2012	L\	L\	/\	L\	/\
01/10/2012	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
08/10/2012	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
15/10/2012	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
22/10/2012	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
29/10/2012	**	**	**	**	**
05/11/2012	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
12/11/2012	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
19/11/2012	/\	/\	/\	L\	/\
26/11/2012	II	/\	/\	/\	/\
03/12/2012	L\	L\	/\	/\	/\
10/12/2012	/\	L\	/\	/\	/\
17/12/2012	/\	/\	L\	**	**
24/12/2012	**	**	**	**	**
31/12/2012	**	**	**	**	**
07/01/2013	L\	/\	L\	/\	/\
14/01/2013	/\	/\	L\	/\	/\
21/01/2013	L\	L\	L\	/\	/\
28/01/2013	/\	II	L\	/\	/\
04/02/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
11/02/2013	**	**	**	**	**
18/02/2013	II	/\	/\	/\	L\
25/02/2013	/\	/\	L\	/\	U\
04/03/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/C
11/03/2013	L\	/\	/\	/\	L\
18/03/2013	L\	/\	/\	CC	CC
25/03/2013	/\	/\	/\	**	**
01/04/2013	**	**	**	**	**
08/04/2013	**	**	**	**	**
15/04/2013	/\	/\	L\	L\	/\
22/04/2013	L\	/\	L\	L\	/\
29/04/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	L\
06/05/2013	**	U\	L\	/\	/\
13/05/2013	HH	HH	HH	HH	HH
20/05/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
27/05/2013	**	**	**	**	**
03/06/2013	/\	L\	Y\	/\	/\
10/06/2013	/\	U\	OO	/\	/\
17/06/2013	/\	/\	/\	/\	/\
24/06/2013	**	/\	/\	/\	L\
01/07/2013	/\	N-	--	--	--
08/07/2013	--	--	--	--	--
15/07/2013	--	--	--	--	--
22/07/2013	--	--	**	**	**
29/07/2013	**	**	**	**	**
05/08/2013	**	**	**	**	**
12/08/2013	**	**	**	**	**
19/08/2013	**	**	**	**	**
26/08/2013	**	**	**	**	**

Summary 01/09/2012 AM - 28/06/2013 PM	Sessions	%
Attendances	318	92.44
Authorised absences	21	6.10
Unauthorised absences	5	1.45
Possible Attendances	344	
Including		
Approved Ed. Activity	0	0.00
Lates before reg closed	32	9.30
Lates after reg closed	3	0.87
Unexplained absences	0	0.00

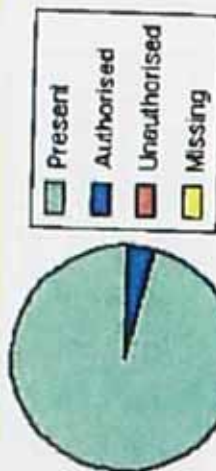| Key to Codes	
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual Reg)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration
E	Excluded
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late (before registers closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised Abs
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
#	Planned whole or partial school closure
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Z	Pupil not on roll
-	All should attend / No mark recorded

Personal Details

Attendance marks (Attendance Year 2013/2014)

Week Beginning	Mon AM	Mon PM	Tue AM	Tue PM	Wed AM	Wed PM	Thu AM	Thu PM	Fri AM	Fri PM
01-09-2013										
02-09-2013	#	#	#	#	#	/	/	/	/	M
09-09-2013	/	/	/	/	L	/	/	/	/	/
16-09-2013	/	/	L	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
23-09-2013	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
30-09-2013	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
07-10-2013	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
14-10-2013	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
21-10-2013	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
28-10-2013	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	/	#
04-11-2013	/	/	/	L	L	L	L	L	/	/
11-11-2013	/	/	C	C	/	/	/	/	/	/
18-11-2013	C	C	C	C	/	/	/	/	/	/
25-11-2013	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
02-12-2013	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
09-12-2013	L	/	L	L	/	/	L	/	/	/
16-12-2013	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
23-12-2013	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
30-12-2013	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
06-01-2014	#	#	#	/	/	/	L	/	/	/
13-01-2014	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
20-01-2014	I	I	L	/	/	/	L	/	L	/
27-01-2014	/	/	L	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
03-02-2014	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	L	/
10-02-2014	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
17-02-2014	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
24-02-2014	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
03-03-2014	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
10-03-2014	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
17-03-2014	/	/	/	/	Y	/	/	/	/	/
24-03-2014	/	/	/	/	Y	Y	/	/	/	/
31-03-2014	/	/	/	/						

View: Session Week View

Analysis of marks 01/09/2013 - 23/07/2014

- Present
- Authorised
- Unauthorised
- Missing

Description	Sessions	%
Present	363	96.0
Authorised Absence	15	4.0
Unauthorised Absence	0	0.0
Possible Attendances	378	0.0
Including	0	0.0
Approved Educational Activity	4	1.1
Late before reg closed	14	3.7
Late after reg closed	0	0.0
Unexplained Absence	0	0.0

Code totals 01/09/2013 - 23/07/2014

Code	Description	Sessions	%
/	Present (AM)	166	43.9
\	Present (PM)	179	47.4
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)	4	1.1
C	Other Authorised Circumstances	6	1.6
I	Illness	8	2.1

Attendance marks (Attendance Year 2012/2013)

Week Beginning:
01-09-2012, 03-09-2012, 10-09-2012, 17-09-2012, 24-09-2012, 01-10-2012, 08-10-2012, 15-10-2012, 22-10-2012, 29-10-2012, 05-11-2012, 12-11-2012, 19-11-2012, 26-11-2012, 03-12-2012, 10-12-2012, 17-12-2012, 24-12-2012, 31-12-2012, 07-01-2013, 14-01-2013, 21-01-2013, 28-01-2013, 04-02-2013, 11-02-2013, 18-02-2013, 25-02-2013, 04-03-2013, 11-03-2013, 18-03-2013, 25-03-2013, 01-04-2013

View: Session Week View

Analysis of marks 01/09/2012 - 22/07/2013

Legend: Present, Authorised, Unauthorised, Missing
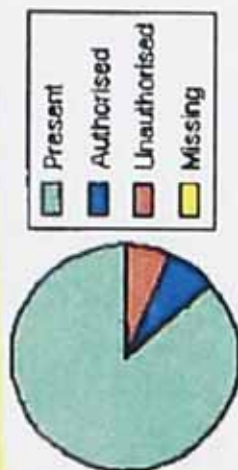
Description	Sessions	%
Present	323	86.4
Authorised Absence	27	7.2
Unauthorised Absence	24	6.4
Possible Attendances	374	0.0
Including	0	0.0
Approved Educational Activity	6	1.6
Late before reg closed	5	1.3
Late after reg closed	0	0.0
Unexplained Absence	0	0.0

Code totals 01/09/2012 - 22/07/2013

Code	Description	Sessions	%
/	Present (AM)	150	40.1
\	Present (PM)	162	43.3
C	Other Authorised Circumstances	4	1.1
I	Illness	17	4.5
L	Late (before registers closed)	5	1.3

Appendix 6

Role Profile

Job title: Mentor

Role Purpose

To work with young people within schools and colleges on a one-to-one basis, inspiring, motivating and helping them to make the best of their education and maximise their potential. To help and support mentees to develop their skills, improve their performance, behaviour and attendance creating more opportunities for themselves. Successful mentoring will result in an increase in the number of young people entering employment and progressing in to education and training.

Key tasks/ accountabilities

Delivery

Be professional and caring, giving one-to-one mentoring support to a number of young people at any one time as directed.

To give support to the mentee in confidential meetings where they can freely discuss matters of concern and also in the classroom as required.

Arrange a schedule of mentoring appointments with each mentee, agreeing with them where, when and how often they will occur.

Set out the rules, responsibilities and boundaries for the mentoring relationship, agreeing with the mentee what can and cannot be covered, who will do what and how the support will be given.

Support mentees by being available to them when needed, giving them regard and listening to their concerns without judgement.

Develop openness, trust and mutual respect between mentee and mentor by demonstrating these and keeping your promises.

Help the mentees to find solutions to their problems and offer practical impartial advice when needed.

Agree actions that the mentees can take to make positive steps and discuss progress made at future sessions.

Celebrate the mentees successes and help them deal with setbacks, giving useful positive feedback and demonstrate a can-do-attitude through personal example.

As the mentees confidence and self-esteem grows, to gradually reduce the level of support and help them to find ways of continuing their success without mentoring.

Maintain our duty of care for mentees at all times.

Ensure that the mentoring process values equality and diversity at all times.

Follow the policies and procedures of SkillForce and the school/external customer.

Introduction

The Learning Mentor is a new role in school developed to support pupils by providing a range of additional learning opportunities.

The Learning Mentor role will often be customized according to the needs of the school in which they are working.

Learning Mentors are neither counsellors nor part of the sanction system of the school.

They are part of the support system

They are a short term intervention and very much target driven

What We Do

We work in partnership with pupils/families/school staff and other agencies to help pupils to develop their potential by removing barriers to learning.

A barrier to learning is any factor that prevents a child from being in a suitable emotional, physical or psychological state to engage in their lessons and learn

What We Are

- Role models to mentees
- Active listeners
- Observers of young people in their various contexts
- Encouragers
- Professional friends
- Challengers of assumptions young people may have about themselves and their aspirations
- Target negotiators

Referral to the Learning Mentor.

WHAT IS A LEARNING MENTOR?

A "Mentor" literally means "a wise or trusted counsellor", the modern working definition is "A person who helps another get to where they want to be in life".

Learning Mentors work with pupils, their families, school staff and outside agencies to help develop their potential by removing barriers to learning.

A barrier to learning is any thing that prevents a child from being in a suitable emotional or physical state to engage in their lessons,

These factors include:

Absence from school

Bereavement

Behaviour difficulties

Bullying (Victim or Perpetrator)

Lateness to school

Moving schools

Family difficulties

Friendship problems

Transition (moving into a new year)

Medical needs

Special educational needs

Lack of social skills

Abuse

What we aim to do

Encourage confidence

Nurture independence

Raise self esteem

Improve behaviour

Improve levels of attainment

Improve attendance & punctuality

How we do it

In class support

One to one sessions

Group sessions

Breakfast and lunch club

School council

By encouraging pupils to set their own achievable & realistic targets

We aim to provide an environment where children can express their feelings safely

Seely Supernovas

We help children feel good about themselves. When children feel good about themselves they are more able to learn.
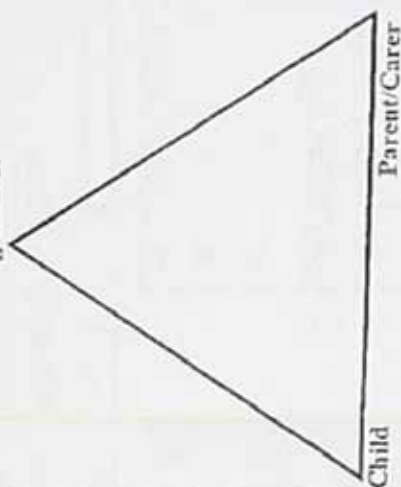
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What is a Learning Mentor?

The learning mentor is part of a new initiative in Northampton. As part of the school staff, a Learning Mentor is there to assist with your child's academic, social and personal development and to support the parent/carer too!
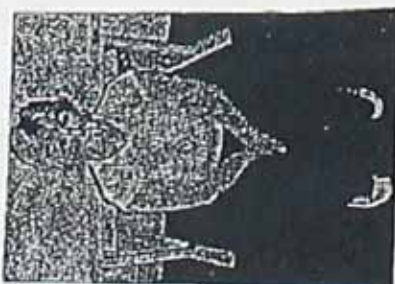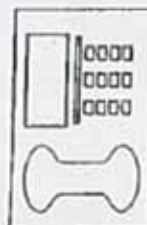
In April 2004 we appointed **Michelle Wootton** as our Learning Mentor

Learning Mentor

Parent/Carer

Child

Michelle can be contacted at school
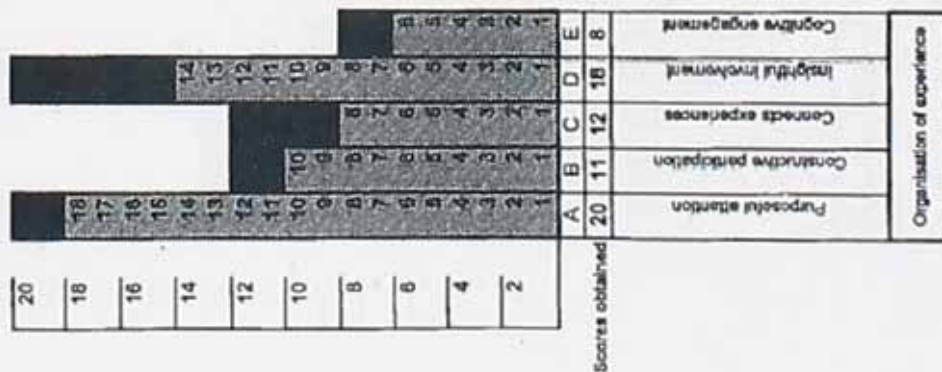
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What will the Learning Mentor do ?

➤ Be a friend
➤ Help to improve pupils' self esteem, confidence and motivation
➤ Encourage pupils to reach their potential at school
➤ Assist pupils to remove individual barriers to learning enabling them to achieve their own goals.
➤ Help pupils to take ownership of their problems
➤ Help improve social skills, relationships and attitude
➤ Help them to make the transitions across the Key stages and from Primary to Secondary school.
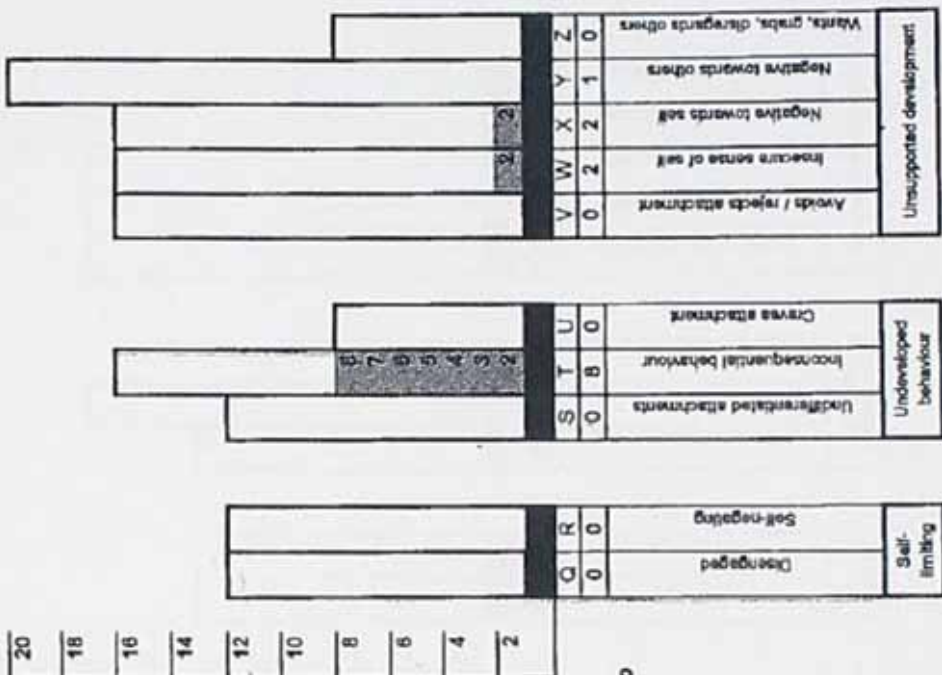
Appendix 7

CHILD A

THE BOXALL PROFILE

Developmental Strands	START	25.10.13

THE BOXALL PROFILE

END 18·12·15

Developmental Strands

Organisation of experience

		Score
A	Purposeful attention	20
B	Constructive participation	11
C	Connects experiences	12
D	Insightful involvement	18
E	Cognitive engagement	8

Internalisation of controls

		Score
F	Emotionally secure	12
G	Accepts constraints	15
H	Accommodates to others	20
I	Constructive responses	8
J	Maintains standards	8

Scores obtained

Diagnostic Profile

Self-limiting

Q	Disengaged	0
R	Self-negating	0

Undeveloped behaviour

S	Undifferentiated attachments	0
T	Inconsequential behaviour	3
U	Craves attachment	0

Unsupported development

V	Avoids / rejects attachment	0
W	Insecure sense of self	1
X	Negative towards self	1
Y	Negative towards others	0
Z	Wants, grabs, disregards others	0

132
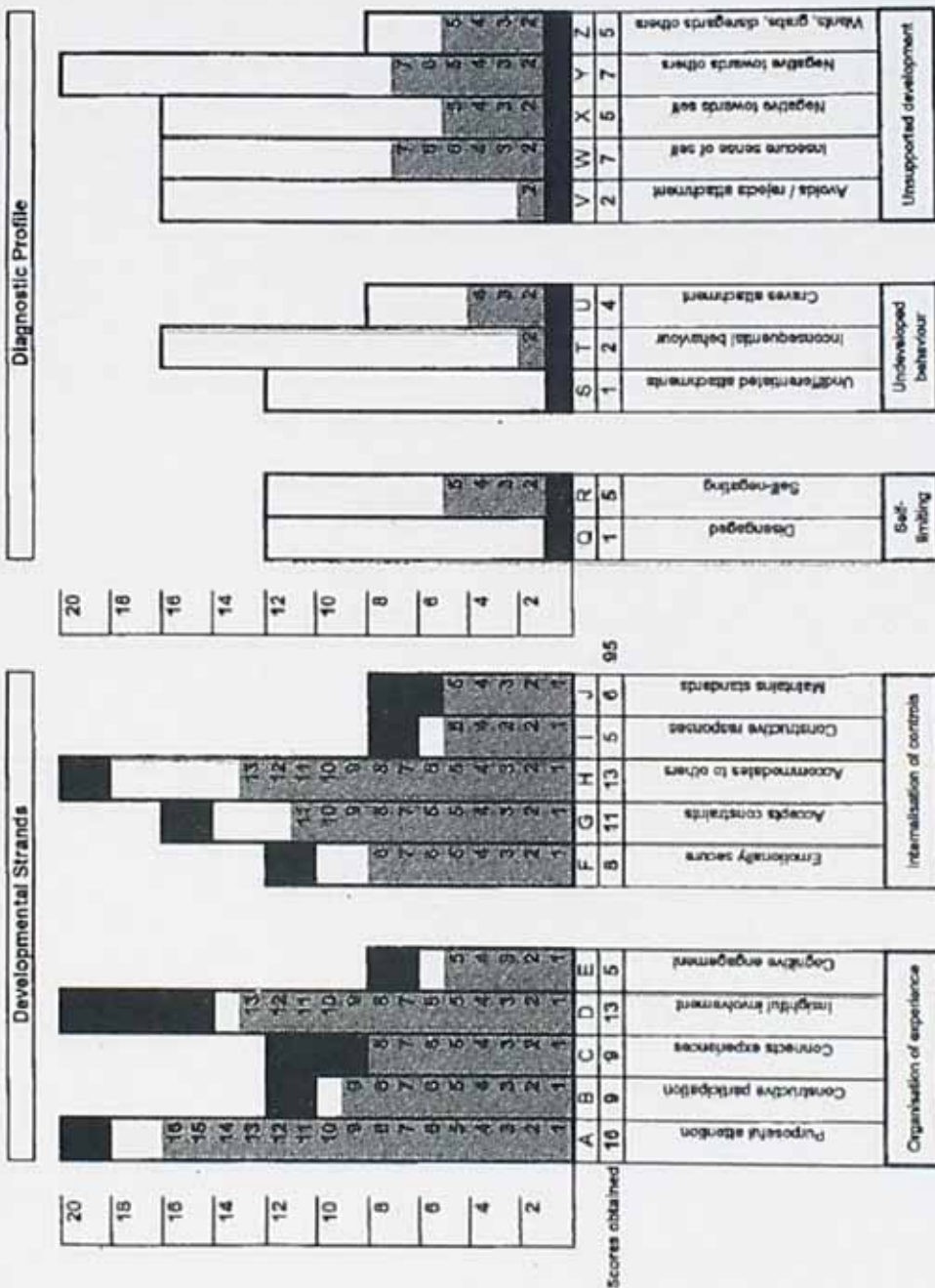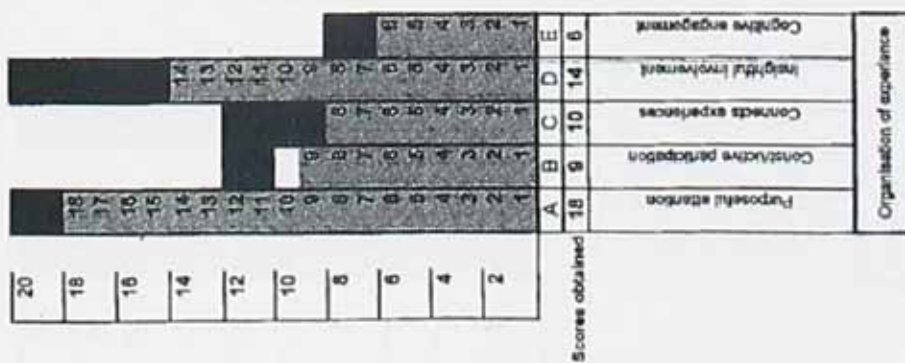
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THE BOXALL PROFILE

LD 8
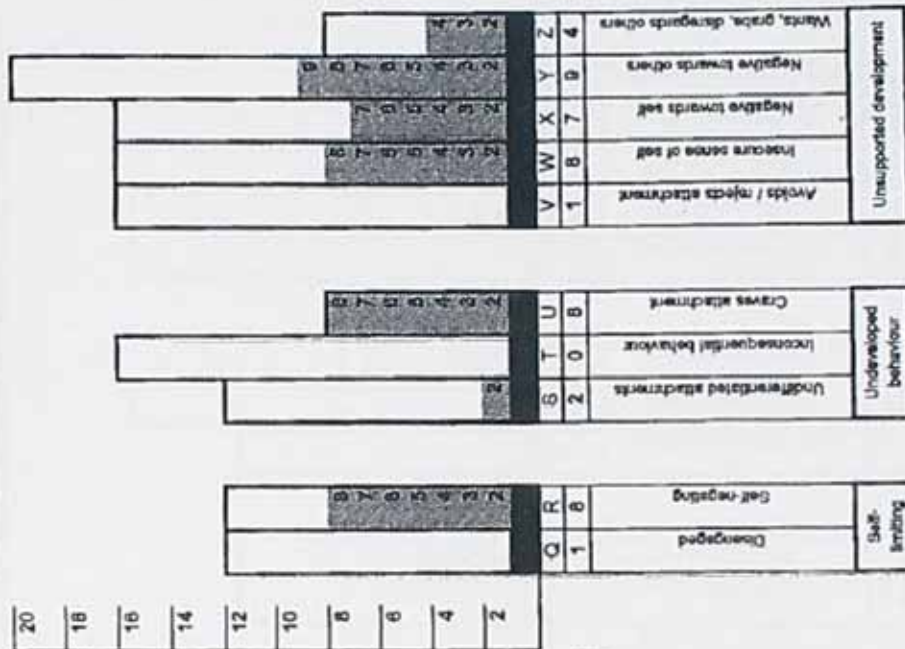
START   25.10.13

Developmental Strands

Diagnostic Profile

294
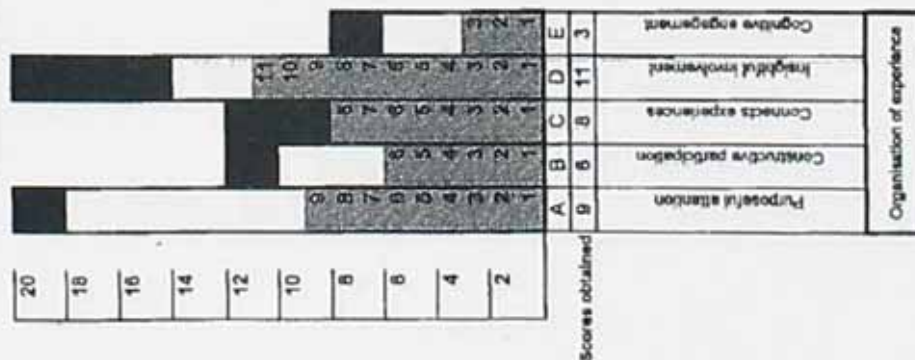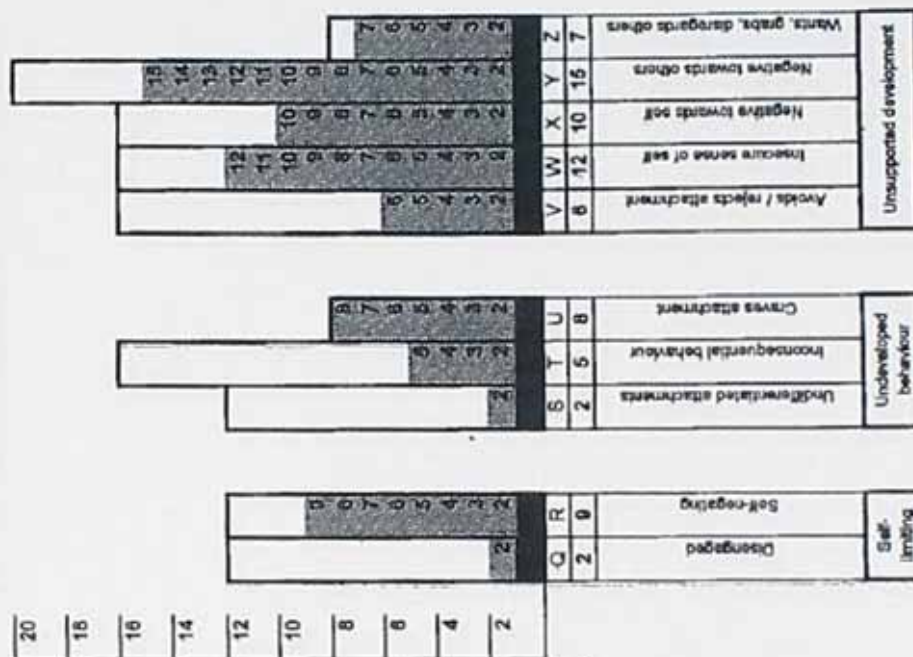
CHILD C

THE BOXALL PROFILE   START   18.12.13

Developmental Strands

Diagnostic Profile

48

10'

##

Scores obtained

		Organisation of experience
A	18	Purposeful attention
B	9	Constructive participation
C	10	Connects experiences
D	14	Insightful involvement
E	6	Cognitive engagement

		Internalisation of controls
F	11	Emotionally secure
G	11	Accepts constraints
H	12	Accommodates to others
I	5	Constructive responses
J	5	Maintains standards

		Self-limiting
Q	1	Disengaged
R	8	Self-negating

		Underdeveloped behaviour
S	2	Undifferentiated attachments
T	0	Unconsequential behaviour
U	8	Craves attachment

		Unsupported development
V	1	Avoids / rejects attachment
W	8	Insecure sense of self
X	7	Negative towards self
Y	9	Negative towards others
Z	4	Wants, grabs, disregards others

CHILD C

END   4.4.14

THE BOXALL PROFILE

Developmental Strands

Diagnostic Profile

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CHILD D

THE BOXALL PROFILE

START   24.1.14

14 D

THE BOXALL PROFILE

END   25.3.14

Developmental Strands

Diagnostic Profile

Scores obtained

	A	B	C	D	E		F	G	H	I	J
	14	10	9	14	7		8	15	19	5	8

Organisation of experience
- A — Purposeful attention
- B — Constructive participation
- C — Connects experiences
- D — Insightful involvement
- E — Cognitive engagement

Internalisation of controls
- F — Emotionally secure
- G — Accepts constraints
- H — Accommodates to others
- I — Constructive responses
- J — Maintains standards

Diagnostic Profile

Self limiting
- Q — Disengaged — 2
- R — Self-negating — 1

Undeveloped behaviour
- S — Undifferentiated attachments — 3
- T — Inconsequential behaviour — 4
- U — Craves attachment — 0

Unsupported development
- V — Avoids / rejects attachment — 3
- W — Insecure sense of self — 2
- X — Negative towards self — 2
- Y — Negative towards others — 1
- Z — Wants, grabs, disregards others — 3

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Appendix 8

Document Analysis Chart

Code	Source	Document	Description
LM	Corby Excellence Cluster	Learning mentors contribution to the five ECM outcomes	Chart/diagramme showing how learning mentors support the ECM outcome
DSaD	CWD Coordinator	Similarities and differences between LSAs/TAs and LMs.	Gives brief outline of the similarities and difference of the roles of Support Assistants and Learning Mentors.
DTOA	CWD Coordinator	Training offered and accessed by the Children's Workforce in Corby.	Lists various training programmes which are offered to the mentors in Corby Mentoring Network
DMD	CWD Council	Making a difference; Learning Development and Support Services	Job role description of Children's Support workers, and the response of Learning mentors on their experience and work.
DEEE	Corby Learning Partnership	Empowering, Enabling Enthusing	Children's Workforce Conference day summary
LMR 08	Corby Excellence Cluster	Learning Mentor Strand Report 2008	Feedback from Various sections on Learning Mentor strand
LMR 05-06	Corby Excellence Cluster	Learning Mentor Strand Report 2005-6	Feedback from Various sections on Learning Mentor strand
DWFC	Corby Learning Partnership	W Word from the Chief	Newsletter report from CLP Coordinator
DWYA YC	Corby Learning Partnership	Wellbeing - you and your child	Parent/carer evaluation day programme details
DBTAT S	Corby Learning Partnership	The Best Thing About This Year	Mentors feedback on the best thing for them for that year (06-7)
GPGL M	DfES	Good Practice Guidelines for Learning Mentors	DfEs sponsored evaluation and guidelines for learning mentors
LMT-M1	Liverpool Excellence Cluster	Learning Mentor Training, Module 1	Training material for learning mentors Induction, school structure, increasing effectiveness and promoting inclusion
LMT-M2	Liverpool Excellence Cluster	Learning Mentor Training, Module 2	Training material deals with role, child prot., support agencies and inter-agency working
LMT-M3	Liverpool Excellence Cluster	Learning Mentor Training, Module 3	Training material dealing with barriers related to SEN, study skills and intelligence of children
LMT-M4	Liverpool Excellence Cluster	Learning Mentor Training, Module 4	Training material - supporting children's emotional, behavioural and learning activities.
CECIGL M	Corby Excellence Cluster	Induction Guide for Learning Mentors	Induction and initial training material for LMs in the cluster
MSAF	Corby Excellence Cluster	Mentee self assessment form	used by LMs to assess the mentees prior to commencement of mentoring.

LMIPC	Chiltern Primary School, Northampton	information sheet for parents and carers	document explaining the role and remit of LMs for parents/carers
LMSGS	Studfall School, Corby	Learning mentor support - a guide for school	document explaining the role and remit of LMs for parents/carers
LMIP	Seely Junior school Nottingham	Learning mentor information for parents	document explaining the role and remit of LMs for parents/carers
LMAI	Ecton Brook Primary School	Learning Mentor An Introduction	document explaining the role and remit of LMs for parents/carers
WIALM	st.Luke's CEVA Primary School	What is a Learning Mentor?	document explaining the role and remit of LMs for parents/carers
PRS	Kingswood Primary School	Pupil review sheet	sample review sheet where the mentee gauges own progress
TRS	Kingswood Primary School	Teacher's review sheet	sample review sheet where the teacher gauges mentee's progress
MAR	Kingswood Primary School	Mentees' Attainment Records	sample form for tracking mentees numeracy, literacy, attendance and attainment over a period of time.
LMR - 06	Corby Excellence Cluster	Learning Mentor Extract from Mentoring Report	Review report on mentoring activities and developments in all participating schools.
ROCLP	Val Carpenter Associates	Review of the Operation of the Corby Learning Partnership.	Professional assessment of the Partnership by external agent.
BWDDM	Corby Learning Partnership	But what difference does it make?	Head teachers' comments on the impact of learning mentor programme.
CCWU	Corby Learning Partnership	Corby Children's Workforce Update	Co-ordinator's report to the management board.
CS-2010	Corby Learning Partnership	CLP Children's Workforce - Case Study 2009-10	case study of a specific intervention.
RLT	Corby Learning Partnership	Reading & Learning Together, Corby Reads-Family Day	Report on the family day as part of the Corby Reads programme to promote reading habits.
WOTW	Northampton Excellence Cluster	Well On The Way - Evaluation Report of the Learning mentor and Working with Families Strand.	Assessment report on the performance of learning mentors in Northampton Excellence Cluster
MAD	CWD Council	Making a difference; Learning Development and Support Services	

Appendix 9

Learning mentor survey questionnaire

The role and impact of learning mentors in English primary schools.

1) What is your understanding of mentoring in a primary school context and why is it important?

Mentoring in primary is important as it helps identify and deal with any aspects of school/famil life that restricts the learning and development of the child.

Mentoring early on is important to give the child a voice and the tools to cope with any barriers they come up against.

2) In your opinion, what are the essential skills/qualities of an effective learning mentor?

Patience

Empathy

non judgmental

Sympathetic

Enthusiastic

Good sense of humor.

Available

Reliable

Helpful

Constantly consistant

Big ears (listening)

Positive attitude.

3) In your experience, what are the most common barriers to learning affecting primary school pupils? Could you provide some examples?

Home life, family situations have the biggest impact on a child's ability to learn.

Recently, Children from EAL backgrounds have had issues because of the way they understand our languag and customs.

Children with additional needs, medical + physical needs.

The role and impact of learning mentors in English primary schools.

4) In your opinion/experience, what is the role of the learning mentor in removing barriers to learning experienced by pupils?

Mentors identify needs and plan with the child the steps they need to achieve their goals. Mentors work 1:1 or in small groups to develope confidence and develope a sense of idependance. I like to have lots of fun and casual chats. Children don't realise they are learning in this way.

5) In your view/experience, what are the most important outcomes of mentoring in primary school? Could you give some examples?

The most important outcome is to see a child happy and confident.
To see a child achieve things that they thought they couldn't do is truly amazing and life changing for some children.
For a child to learn this in their early years sets them up to be a confident adult.
To have a "Can do" attitude.

6) How are the impact/outcomes of mentoring assessed/evaluated in your school?

They are assessed by Teacher and parent evaluations.
Also by accademic results, when a child is able to learn because of being able to look at and over come their issues it is normal to improve in other areas.
Thus removing their barriers to learning.

Appendix 10

Transcribed interviews

Interview with Mentor 3, School 2.

R: Thank you for participating in this interview for the research into learning mentors. To begin with, how long have you been working as a learning mentor?

P: Since 2006.

R: Since 2006. So, that is about 6 years. And before becoming a mentor, did you have any school based role?

P: Yes, I was a TA, a learning assistant, a classroom assistant here in ….

R: How long did you do that?

P: I don't know, for about eight years.

R: eight years? That is quite a long time. Did you enjoy that?

P: I enjoyed that. I am also teacher trained which means I work with autistic children all the time. So my priority was working with autistic children, like, that's what I did.

R: After working for eight years as a TA, what prompted you or attracted you to the role of a learning mentor?

P: It was a new role in Northamptonshire at that time and my headteacher, I think because I worked so long with autistic ASD children, the relationship I had was slightly different from others and I was always there for parents to be asked question and to put things in place. So I just thought it would be a nice bit of progression for, to be a kind of buffer to someone the kids could come to and because every child is unique you know and you can handle them and I thought natural progression. You could still work with the ASD children but with other children who need that little bit of extra help and need someone who can.

R: You mean those children who may not have the statements but still have difficulties.

P: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

R: So, were you one the first learning mentors in the area or the school?

P: Yes, I was one of the first, it was the second lot I was.

R: You did mention about being teacher trained. What are your qualifications, educational qualification?

P: ooof. Since I came here.... I've attended the University of Northampton on an autism course. I've done that for a year and I've done just my learning mentor's course. And I've done a five day teacher course and a three day teacher course. My qualifications are just in autism and practice.

R: It's just to know on average what is the qualification of mentors. What kind of training did you undergo in relation to mentoring before you started your actual role as a mentor?

P: I had to do a five day course...

R: The National one?

P: Yeah, the national one, yes.

R: anything else before, just before mentoring?

P: No.

R: And that was provided by the partnership?

P: Yes, it was, yeah. By ….

R: By ……? What about ongoing training?

P: Oh, yeah, yeah, I go to different things, like I've done solution for kid's speech therapy which I enjoyed. I've done toolbox and things like that. So I've done continuing the training...

R: What is this toolbox?

P: Its just like any problem will be in this little box and it teaches you how to deal with all the problems. I've also done some training on ...... Cognitive behavioural therapy, I've done that as well.

R: Ok. What is your job title, present job title at school?

P: Learning mentor

R: Learning mentor? Has that role changed over time, has that been modified or has it remained the same?

P: No, it has changed, changed.

R: In what way has it changed?

P: Well, changed, at first we were like, we still deal with barriers for the children, but now until now, the new student has been referred by teachers. But now there are a lot of self-referrals. So, there have been children who will come up to you and we are like a buffer sometimes and what may not seem like a big problem to a teacher, is a big problem to a child and we are there, these doors are always open for any child. They don't need to be referred.

R: So, has that sort of widened your role as anyone who wants to come rather than pupils referred by the teacher?

P: So, the doors are always open.

R: In the beginning when you started your role as a learning mentor, were you given any written job role or anything like that?

P: No. Just given an office and said, there it is...

R: There it is, start doing your mentoring then?

P: Yeah.

R: That would have been quite interesting?

P: It was quite interesting at first.

R: Beginning of the adventure then?

P: Yeah, beginning of the adventure.

R: Since you were not given any learning mentor job role, how did you kind define or decide what all things you were going to do?

P: I spoke to the head who was very very supportive and to the teachers as well, spoke as an individual speaking to them and spoke at the staff thing as well to tell the staff what I was doing, what my job was and what they could expect from me and so we've done that and I put up some posters and flyers and got in touch with parents as well let them know who I was. Also it was put in the school handbook that I was available, so that was there and that defined the role.

R: OK, is there any activities that you are involved in, other than mentoring?

P: I do, I'm the forest school leader.

R: somebody has started or is starting a sort of forest school at the University of Northampton. Have you got any idea who is doing that?

P: No, I haven't. We heard about it through the grapevine, but not no. I've been to the University of Northampton to give talks on forest school myself. And but I haven't heard... It'd be interesting, it works superbly.

R: Does it? What all things you do there?

P: well, we ... The ????? Thing is, we'd like children to trust them. We have children in year three using knives and things and obviously we teach them how to do it, but it is that trust and that is something that they have never, never done, it is children who haven't achieved, even tying a knot. It is whittling about what these children are achieving that we trust them to work with these...

R: Do you find that just that trust is giving them that push or boost to perform better?

P: Yes, it does, they do perform better, yeah.

R: How do you select your mentees? How do you select the pupils for mentoring? You did mention about referrals.

P: referrals from teachers, teachers gave referrals if they are having problems we have a form that they fill in, and the teachers to fill it in and give it to us or put it in our pigeonhole and will pick which one, obviously they are sent, because we are three of us, we can say can you work with this child? Or else, sometimes they specifically asked for a certain learning mentor which is fair enough.

R: since you are trained in autism, if anybody has got that issue, they come to you?

P: yes I get al.l those, yes that's true. So I put in all the social skills and structure for all the autistic children in the school.

R: otherwise do you coordinate among yourselves about who gets which child?

P: yes, yeah, yes.

R: how many pupils do you mentor now? How many mentees do you have now?

P: how many have I got now? At this moment in time I have 34.

R: 34? That's a big number.

P: some of them are just self-referrals as well. You know, they come in to the cells and just talk to you.

R: how do you organise the mentoring sessions with them?

P: sometimes I have a group session with this group which is meeting on Friday afternoon and a Thursday afternoon and the other ones are individual ones. Obviously, we make appointments, they have an appointment card and then not it down, they put that time because I don't want to embarrass them by taking them out of the class. So they have an appointment card and the teacher knows about it and she will give them a little nod...

R: and tell then it is time for them to come and meet you?

P: yes, yes.

R: of the 34, how many would you say are individual mentees and how many would be in the group?

P: there are about 15 in the group and the rest are individuals.

R: and how many groups would you have normally?

P: I would have between two and three groups.

R: can you explain briefly as to a typical mentoring sessions with an individual?

P: we will go, if it is the first one I will do empathy test and self-esteem test and a pupil progress test what he thinks of himself, and gather that information and work on what he's weaknesses are. Usually teachers always say that a child has got self-esteem problem. But it is not always the case. It is usually much deeper than that and we have to work on that to bring it out. After we have turned the profiling of the children, we work on them issues and I use, as I said I use social focus a lot.

R: is it that a kind of theory or something?

P: it is what they use, they use it for, they use it a lot in prisons with children who are child murderers. And it gets you to see ...

R: isn't that a bit extreme, child murderers?

P: world they were. That's why it was tried. We use it with changes. That is where it was started by E M.... We use it is, the basis of it is I want my children to think that someone has made that decision with me being somebody there for them like a buffer (unclear) but it is all positive talk. I will say to them, "this time next week when you're not getting into trouble, how you would feel?" And it is all positive, it is all future talk.

R: making them think for themselves?

P: yes. And then they begin to realise yes, I want this, I want this is not getting into trouble. So this time next week when I'm not doing those things it will be good for me. That's what I use.

R: so we are you making them part of the decision-making of not getting into trouble?

P: yes, yes, yes.

R: how often do you meet these people? You mentioned 15 individuals. How often do you meet them?

P: I meet them every week.

R: is there any child who you meet every day?

P: well, now and not every day.

R: but at least once a week?

P: yes, but, those ones that I meet every day, there are the autistic children who are, who need me to be part of their daily routine, I mean, to check that everything is in place for them and, most of my boys, we have a boys launch.

R: yes they did mention that. They have got the girls lunch...

P: and boys' lunch. You are not allowed to talk about school. You can talk anything else but not school.

R: not school?

P: no. In boys lunch because it's the boys lunch.

R: do you think that's the time they love it most? Because they don't have to talk about anything related to school?

P: yeah, yes. We talk, we tell bad jokes and just relax.

R: during these meetings, are they on a particular day every week or do you change it?

P: will be on a particular day unless there is an emergency crops up and the child needs to see me beforehand then they will have to.

R: otherwise, it is, they know that if it is a Wednesday, they need to come in every Wednesday, it doesn't change.

P: yes, apart from if there is an emergency.

R: you did say that you have got individuals and groups. Is it the same with the groups? A particular fixed day every week?

P: yes, Thursdays and Fridays.

R: do you work with any of them outside these mentoring sessions?

P: yeah. I have. Every spring, every summer we have a maintenance squad.

R: all right. And what is that?

P: maintenance squad is, we go around and we paint all the garden furniture.

R: so, all these students go around painting and garden furniture?

P: yes, my kids, I picked a group of kids. I also have a guitar school on Friday and they come in and we teach each other how to play guitar. But the maintenance squad is wonderful because some children can't cope with the whole day in school. They need a break. And that's what they get. So they go in and do something to enhance the school and they take great pride in enhancing the school.

R: some children can be very practical but not very good in the classroom.

P: yeah, yes, yes.

R: so, do you do it during the class time or at the end of the day?

P: yeah, during the class time. In the afternoons, it's always in the afternoons. Not during the core subjects, I wouldn't do it during maths or English. I would be unhelping them if I do that.

R: definitely. But you will find a proper time for them to come out and relax. Who coordinates your mentoring activities?

P: we have an ECM a meeting every month and basically our head teachers & the SENCO coordinate, I mean we report to them and let them know what is happening.

R: they are kept in the loop about what you are doing?

P: yes, yeah, yeah.

R: what about the outside agencies, external agencies?

P: sometimes we work with external agencies. I will obviously work with them like am working just now with someone from another school who used to come here whose father is in prison and the boy wants to go and see his father and the school, he is struggling in his secondary school so they have been in touch with me to go and talk to him and can't arrange transport to go and see his father in prison. So we will be working with that.

R: server, you will have to liaise with the prison authorities et cetera?

P: hopefully it'll work, hopefully we can get through for him because he is struggling a little boy.

R: what kind of assistance do you get from the school in your mentoring activities?

P: when I first started, none.

R: none?

P: none when I first started.

R: so are you just left on your own?

P: I was left on my own. I was like get on with it. Then .... joined me which meant that there were two of us. But since then now we have teachers coming in and talking to us, coming and asking us for advice and the head teachers and our SENCO are always there for us. We also have a school counsellor who we can go and talk to if things... We have lots of support now, a lot more support.

R: T....?

P: yes T......, school counsellor. And we have each other, we bounce off each other a lot.

R: you said you have about 34th children as mentees and they would not always be from the same class which means you will have to liaise with different class teachers. How do you do that? How do you coordinate that updating and keeping them in the loop?

P: usually the teachers will come to me and say, "this child is really doing well or do you think you could do a bit more work with them"? And we talk to the teachers, we talk to the teachers of the children we are mentoring.

R: is there any particular time date format or anything or is it just a random as the need arises?

P: no, no, every week I make sure I talked with teacher, every week at the beginning of the week I talked to the teachers of the children that I work with.

R: but no fixed times?

P: no, no fixed times, no. Timetable doesn't allow for that either you know what I mean?

R: so is it just find your time?

P: yeah.

R: what is the main challenge that you face in you work as a mentor?

P: (whispers ' main challenge, main challenge) main challenges to get children to trust not me, to get them to trust that I'm not a teacher, that am not going to judge them. They need to know that I am non-judgemental, and that they are free to talk to me and use whatever language it is when they are talking with me and to know that unless they are in a dangerous situation, what they say, stays with me.

R: assure them of the confidentiality?

P: yes, yes.

R: what do you, when you find yourself in those kind of situations what do you do to try and overcome them?

P: I, do you mean personally for me? What I do to... ? Well, I, I switch off by, I sing, I sing all over the school. I walk around the school singing. And when I come in in the morning, I play very loud music for about an hour and that is myself.

R: in your office? Wouldn't that influence would disturb the children next door?

P: no they are not in yet. I'm in well before the children are around.

R: what time do you come in?

P: I come in at 7: 30.

R: 7:30. So, if you are stressed or you have got some problems and you can't get over it, play the music loud.

P: put music loud and I do it and I sing. But I am very lucky, I don't suffer from stress very much. I am quite as stress-free person. I'm quite laid-back.

R: are there any support that you get from anybody else school or colleagues when you are in these kind of difficulties?

P: I will be yes, ... and especially ..... S..... and ..... the head teacher and Mrs. (...) who is the SENCO. So I have got a very good support system in place.

R: how do you to keep track of the record of what the children are doing, their progress or....

P: we have, I have sheets that I fill in after every meeting before every meeting, after every meeting and then the work I do is put it in a folder but I am always recording it, always recording it, paper and on my computer as well.

R: so, are you using, are these standard forms and systems for all three of you?

P: yeah, yes. We always use the same ones.

R: who will have access to these records?

P: me.

R: just you?

P: me unless, no, me.

R: what about the SENCO, the coordinator, the head teacher.

P: the SENCO , if it is something that needed to be shown, yeah they can have access to it, but no one else.

R: no one else? What about the parents of the pupil?

P: we tend to meet if it is serious, we tend to talk to the parents of the child. But it is up to the child. If the child doesn't want the parent to see that then I won't give them access, unless it is serious, unless it is a serious thing you know, obviously I would let everybody know.

R: but otherwise they don't get access?

P: no, no. They have to be respected, my children have to be respected and I wouldn't expect anyone to, unless it was extremely serious, in a bad situation, then no.

R: how do you evaluate mentoring activities, how do you, what do you do to take stock of what is happening?

P: I, obviously I get feedback from teachers, and I get feedback from our heads and the SENCO and from parents sometimes.

R: what has been the feedback from the teachers? What do they say about mentoring?

P: positive. We have been three good mentor is here, we have been three good mentor is in the school.

R: so they would like to see you work on and on and progress in much more?

P: oh yes, yeah.

R: are they happy about what you do?

P: I think so, yes.

R: why do you think so?

P: well, I never go asking anybody if they think I'm doing a good job. I do my job. That's it. I judge my work by watching my children smile, by watching them coming in to school. For some kids that we have worked with, coming into school is progress. And if I see them coming in the school, I don't need anyone to tell me I'm doing a good job because they are in.

R: what about the parents? Do you interact with them directly?

P: we have to. Obviously, I can't mentor a child who has been referred to me without parent permission. Self-referral is different. The child just wants to talk to me. That is different. But I always send a letter home inviting parents end to meet with me. Some do, some don't.

R: what if they don't meet with you? Do you terminate the mentoring?

P: no, no, as long as I have their permission I'll carry on.

R: if you need to contact them, do you need to go through the school authorities like the school head?

P: no, now I have ...

R: so do you have the permission to contact them are sent when you feel necessary?

P: yes, yeah. Plus, I to bus duty every morning. I use that as my meet and greet so I can see them every day and I talk to the parents if I need to talk to them over there.

R: what is the feedback from the parents, how do they value it, the mentoring?

P: they are good, they, they, of course a parent wants to know there is someone caring for a child and someone is looking out for them, that there is someone there to help them and that is a good thing. That reassures them that they child is not going to be left, that somebody is looking to make sure that your child is going to be okay. That is important.

R: what about the mentees, the pupils themselves? What is their feedback, what do they say about mentoring?

P: they like it, they like it. They like they, they feel better themselves, they feel better , and they feel better that someone is listening, like if two kids are fighting in the playground , the advise the from the dinner lady or the teacher is, you go to that playground you go to that playground and that'll be it, finished. That is rubbish because the kids will end up meeting in there and nothing is changed. So, they need someone to say to them "how you're going to make it work? How do you think you can you two can fix this out?" And that is where people are asking them not constantly telling them this is what you do. We're letting them take ownership of the problem as well and have a self-solution to the problem which is important for growing up.

R: not a quick fix of sending them in two directions?

P: yeah, yeah. Or keeping them in for 5 min. It doesn't work. Whereas if the child has made a conscious decision 'no, this is what I should do, and then says doesn't matter if I have planted this in his head, it is his decision and he is implementing it.

R: he feels responsible for either failure or success?

P: yeah, and if he fails it, we talk to him and see it is a blip, it's a blip. We start over again we leave behind this.

R: he doesn't feel like he's being ordered to do something? What is your opinion? What about mentoring, how do you what you mentoring?

P: I love it. I think it works. I think it works as long as you treat every child is unique it works. If you treat, if you had a bunch of kids and you treat them all the same it won't work. Every child is unique even within the group, they are all unique and you have to work with that uniqueness.

R: would you say that this is what is different from being a teacher in the classroom and being a mentor?

P: yeah. I do.

R: what is the most important aspect of your role as a mentor?

P: being available and listening. Not judging.

R: was there any occasion when you just put your hands up despite several attempts you said 'okay, mentoring is not going to anything to this, so I give up'? Was there any occasion like that?

P: nearly. But I never give up. I never stop.

R: what made you say that, like 'nearly'? What was the occasion?

P: the occasion was, I wasn't long as a mentor, and I just couldn't get through to a child. I couldn't just get through to this child that the changes he had to make to affect his life to make himself better in life, he had to do it, because he was so used to being spoon fed all the time. People were making decisions for him all the time and I nearly gave up, but never. I never give up.

R: that is something we should do we should never give up. What would you say is the most important goal, aim of mentoring?

P: I want my child, any child that I work with to feel better about themselves, to be more resilient, to celebrate the uniqueness and to know they are worthwhile.

R: do you think that will help in breaking down the barriers to learning?

P: yes, I do.

R: this is a bit more personal. What about, what impact has it had on you personally?

P: I left school at 15, in Scotland. I worked at building sites. I came from a bad place. My childhood was bad. And there was never no one there for me. I lived off my wits, I lived off my nerves, there wasn't anyone, no one I could turn to, no one could spell out as to what happened to me as a child.

R: where you are living with your parents at that time?

P: I left home at 15. Before that it wasn't a good place. And there was no one there for me. And I determined that if I ever could change and help any child in the situations that I was in, then I would. So for me it has been like, not a healing, but like a justification of my life. If you can understand that. It may seem complicated but it's me putting something back, it is what it should have been in place for me, it's in place for these children.

R: so, it was not therefore you, but you are doing your bit to make sure that it is in place for somebody who could be in similar situations as you?

P: because I needed someone to listen. All a lot of people need is someone to listen.

R: and at that time it was not available.

P: it didn't happen then.

R: so are you saying that he could have made a big impact on your life?

P: I think so yeah. I would have, a lot of stuff would have to carry around for a lot of years, if I can make a difference in the child's life that's good.

R: is there any other comments that you would like to make?

P: I just think that, no, I just think that every school should have mentor. I think it should be an integral part of the school. No matter what the title is mentor is whatever, there should be someone there.

R: what is the difference between being a mentors and a counsellor? Don't they do the same job?

P: no. I think a university degree and £3000 extra a year..... (Unclear).... But obviously there is somethings that there is some counsellors that are experts that we would view as, seminars been helping my child better than me, they will be asked to because you can't be playing with the child's life. You have to do the best for them.

R: thank you very much

P: you're very welcome.

Interview with Mentee1, School 1.

R: As I have explained, J., anything you say here would be confidential and anonymised. your name will not be mentioned in anything that is published as a result of this research. Are you happy to go on with the interview?

P: definitely yeah

R: Thank you. ahmm... how do you spend your day at school?

P: I spent most of my time very happy because ahm... Mrs M has helped me deal with the problems that I face during break times and lunchtimes.

R: Right. ah... do you enjoy your day at school now?

P: Yeah,

R: you do? Does that sigh mean that you didn't actually enjoy it as much earlier?

P: Yeah, ah.... once Mrs M. has ahm... tra...helped me in various different ways all calming myself down, it's made my like, I like coming to school because Mrs. M. has helped me.

R: Right, okay, what do you like most about school about your life at school what do you like most?

P: Just the chance that at break times and at lunchtimes ahm.. year threes, year fours, year fives and year sixes can be around playgrounds and we can mix in and it is best chance you know we can get to know each other if they are new from school and introduced ourselves and if they are new in our classrooms, we can introduce them to our friends and all that, because we are outside.

R: Right, outside the class or outside the school?

P: Outside of the class.

R: outside the class. ok. now, what do you find, what do you find, you know, there will be Little things we all find it difficult in our day to day life But what is it that you find most difficult in your life at school?

P: concentration on my work.

R: concentrating on your work. ahm.. like ... Could you elaborate a bit more on that?

P: Well, Whenever you like we do test, I'm almost like the first one to finish and I've I don't get a lot of marks for it because it's dodgy, it's got like bad handwriting or something. as I explained, I struggled to concentrate on a certain piece of work for a certain amount of time.

R: Right, shall we say that you rush through work and finish it but, you don't do..

P: the best that I can do.

R: the best that you can do. okay, when this you know, when it happens, what do you do? When you realise that you are rushing the, what do you do?

P: I don't realise till I finish and the books have been you know...

R: Taken away?

P: Just is gone and have realised that I have messed up completely, so I don't realise until it is all until all of it is gone.

R: when you realise it, what do you do?

P: I start panicking.

R: you start panicking? What are the things that you do when you panic and?

P:Sometimes I get a bit frustrated a bit hot and sweaty ahm... and then you know I start swinging, I get frustrated and start swinging on my chair, and do things that I am not supposed to be doing.

R: You'll get agitated and okay, alright, well, does anyone help you in a special way?

P: That is a bit of a tricky question really because, Mrs M. has helped me for a certain amount of time,

R: Right,

P: And then ahm....obviously my teacher and Mrs Stuart and Mrs Fowler have helped me in various different ways sorry (unclear...)

R: yeah, okay, So you have mentioned some ahm... definitely Mrs M. and ...

P: yeah

R: a couple of your teachers, okay.. ahm.... do you spend a quiet a lot of time with Mrs M.?

P: Well, Me and Mrs M. have stopped because I mean, Mrs M. thought it would be the, the pair of us thought it would be the best idea because we've, we discussed all the situation on how to, you do it and how to calm myself down and all that and Mrs M. does, when we see each other in the corridor she asks how it is, how everything is going and all that just because she still cares about me and all the things that I do.

R: Right, okay. Now, you said something about the tricky question. If there is anything that you do not want to say, or any question that you do not want to answer, you can say that you do not want to answer it and if you feel like you'd need a break, you need to stop for a couple of minutes, you can let me know and we will stop and start again. Or you don't want to, you wanted to stop and go away, you can tell me and we will do that. it is not compulsory that you should sit down and and answer all my questions. okay... feel free.

P:Okay.

R: we are just having a chat okay...

P:mmhmmm..

R: mhmmm...when you are with Mrs M., mhm... does anyone else joined you or is it just the pair of you?

P: well, we, we, I used to be in a group. We called ourselves the Monday mornings.

R: Monday mornings? That's nice.

P: yeah, ahm... and it was in the family room, and basically it was a group of us and you can probably just see there that what we have done and we've also ahm... it was my brother was here as well cos me and my brother didn't really get on.

R: Right.

P:And And Mrs. M. kind of like tried to cos me and J, my brother are kind of like the same height we, Mrs M. tried some trust exercises with me and my brother to try and get us to trust each other and you know just be civil to each other.

R: Right, okay. What all things do you do in the mentoring activity other than those?

P: Sometimes, we just sit and chat. Sometimes we used to do like work paper but that it was all fun. We used to colour and we used to do a lot of things.

R: Right, does Mrs M. help you in the classroom or is it just in the mentoring session?

P: it's just in the mentoring session.

R: just in the mentoring session. ahm... in the mentoring activities that you do, what is it that you like most? What is it that you enjoy most?

P: We have a good laugh and you know it's just put over the worries to a side and you can talk about anything you wanted to you know, you can just have good and just enjoy you can just enjoy say playing a board game or something the links to a certain topic.#00:06:44-9#

R: Right, ok. Do you think that this mentoring has helped you?

P: yes, definitely.

R: in what way?

P: Well, it's helped me to get better behaving and it's stopped me from getting into trouble outside the school as well.

R: mhmm... ok.. now,is there anything that you think you wish "oh I wish I could have done this better with Mrs M.".

P:I think just have a better laugh, you know. Otherwise, it's been it's, it's really great fun you know, see Mrs M. is nice.

R: well said for that. do you discuss your mentoring activity with your parents?

P: yes, Cos my mom and my dad both asked for this to happen because you know and Mum and dad and I think it was a Tuesday We used to do the mentoring sessions and Mum and dad would go a a Tuesday night "how was it with Mrs M. today" and I would say certain things but probably wouldn't say all of it because I would've probably forgotten.

R: not because you didn't want to?

P: No no

R: Right, just because you got things. ahm.. so that would be a kind of regular, they are they are regularly updated on what you do?

P: yeah

R: In the mentoring session?

P: mhmmm…

R: And they are interested to know what you do?

P: Yeah, because they look after me and take care of me always.... (not clear....) as parents would

R: ok,..Now it's your turn now, ah is there anything you is that you would like to tell me ahm...add to what we have already discussed?

P: I'd probably like to say I'd like to say thank you to Mrs M. for all her hard work that she put in and probably thank you to all the teachers for helping me through the various days.

R: yeah ok. Anything else? That's it? Ok thank you very much for your time and participating in this interview.

Interview with parent 2, school 4.

R: how old is your child and which year he or she is in?

P: I have a nine-year-old in year three and a five-year-old in reception.

R: a boy or a girl?

P: a boy, the nine-year-old is a boy and the five-year-old is a girl.

R: do they both have mentors?

P: I don't know if they are assigned as such or access only when needed. So, off hand, no.

R: both of them or is it just one of them?

P: for example, my dad expired two years ago and N…was helped through the school to deal with his grieving. But on a day-to-day basis, I don't think they don't use mentors.

R: so they don't have mentors?

P: no.

R: when they had the mentor, how long do they have it for?

P: it was about seven weeks in all two years ago to help through his grieving process.

R: does your child have any statemented special needs?

P: he doesn't, no.

R: he doesn't? Okay. You just mentioned about the grieving process. Was it that what prompted you to have mentoring?

P: yes. I didn't have, my my mother died when I was 20 I didn't have kids. My father died two years ago and I had two kids and didn't know I found out suddenly I was dealing with how to deal with my children's grief as well, went to the school to explain and ask if there is anything that could help and in particular S….. had all these brilliant plans to help them with the grief and they are superb with N….. S…., she wasn't at school that time and we dealt with her because she was only three and it wasn't too difficult. But N….., very attached to his grandfather, it was difficult for him and he received a lot of help through the school.

R: okay. Is there were any other or war is there any other problems that prompted you to choose mentoring?

P: no, but I feel the mentors are so fantastic, I can come to them with any problem and never had any have never gone away thinking that wasn't helpful etc. so, they are oh very open to, I can, I feel very comfortable if there was a problem at my children's school that there are people here who would deal with it.

R: you said you came to the school asking for help when that incident happened. Did you have to go through the authorities or could you approached the mentors straightaway?

P: approached the mentor's straightaway.

R: so you didn't have to go through them and get permission and all of that?

P: no, no I spoke, I can't remember who I spoke to initially, but I was immediately said, "oh we have got S and P..... They will help you deal with that and I spoke to S..... straightaway. There was no waiting or anything. It was, they had time for me straightaway and if I can recall S.... is set that she had recently been given some, how is it, some kind of education on how to deal with grief. So, it was nicely timed so to speak. So she was obviously she was more efficiently than, than before I presume.

R: so you didn't have to go through any long list of formalities and signing forms or anything like that?

P: not at all. It was great. It couldn't have been easier.

R: so, are you saying that the school authorities at that time were really supportive and corporative?

P: extremely, yeah.

R: are you involved in all way you involved in the mentoring activities and the process, the mentoring process of your child?

P: what, through the grieving process?

R: yes.

P: yeah, I've got to speak to a lady as well who, that was a speciality, I think she had come into the school anyway and S..... arranged for me and my husband the speak to her. Our main focus at that time was our children and anyone who can give advice on how to deal with it child's grief and I'm sorry I can't remember the lady's name but again, she was brilliant, she was special and then S.... went through a I think she saw N.... twice a week, I can't remember, it was two years ago, where they did things together then they built a, like a bottle where they put different coloured sand depending on what Grandad meant to N..... and they did a great book together and stuff like that. It was, it was incredibly helpful the school has been very helpful.

R: did you get like, kind of regular feedback and reposed on what was going on, what the child was doing?

P: yeah.

R: even at that time did you have regular access and a report about it?

P: yeah, yeah. Like I said incredibly approachable. I was getting feedback, N..... I found it that it was definitely to his the way he sees death and (unclear) because of that.

R: so, the feedback was quite regular?

P: yes, yeah.

R: was there any particular like weekly or daily?

P: like I say it is difficult, it was two years ago. But I feel like I found (unclear) after every session she had N....... either she would phone me or she would see mean school and she would tell me what she thought N...... was how he was doing and N..... would do me the feedback as well.

R: and who did, if you need a mentor or when you needed it you said you straightaway went up to the school and they are directed you. But who coordinate all these?

P: you know what, I am now a school governor and I also help out at the school. I feel I could get a lot from the school so I'm happy to give back. So I am personally in a position where if I feel I need to speak to S.... or P...... about any problems, I could approach them directly. I don't feel I have to go through even the desk. Because I am aware who they are and what they do so very often do I rarely go through anybody. If I want speak directly about things that I think P..... and S..... can help me with, then I would speak directly to them. That is not a problem.

R: what about a parent who is not a governor who does not have access?

P: I believe if they went to the reception and asked, if they said, I've got a problem with blah blah blah and it was quite obvious it was the mental problem, I believe they would be sent to either of them. If there weren't busy that moment, they would be able to see them straightaway. That's how it tends to work here I think.

R: in your opinion what is the impact of mentoring?

P: it feels, it gives you security in sending your kids to school instead of just getting educated and then missing that nurturing by a loving parent. I think it is something like a stopgap for that. If they, because I believe there is certain things like, there is a worry box in the school and any kid who has a worry about anything, bullying or anything he puts it in the worry box, they just say their name on something but it's all other aspects are anonymous and S..... and P..... check the worry box on a daily basis and approach that child and help them. I think it gives the children some sort of living security that may be general education might be missing.

R: you used the word security and also a couple words like bullying and issues at school. Do you think there are issues external to the school that are affecting that security?

P: actually, my little boy is quite sensitive. So if some other kid, some kid says to him, "you smell", or something like that to him, it is bullying where it's just a child being a child. So, in my overall opinion is there isn't a massive bullying problem within the school. But, N..... knows that if he does feel upset or something, he can go to S..... or P..... and I would like to, I believe that, that's, you know, there isn't, in my opinion there isn't a massive bullying problem in the school. But, I think the children are generally given a feeling that if there is anything they are worried about these two are here for them. If they could approach their teacher then they could approach S..... or P.......

R: you are one of the governors of the school. So, there could be parents who would be bringing their issues to you as well. What kind of, have you come across any such issues?

P: I haven't. I have been a governor since July last year our tenth meetings etc. but again in my opinion before I was a governor I was approached if I was interested, I didn't know who the governors were. I didn't kind of think it to check it out. If I had issues with the school S .... and P..... would be great to talk about, if I was angry about something they were great to talk to and they would be good to liaison. So, generally I don't think a lot of people know I am a governor. I don't, sort of, walk around with the badge and things like that but if people did approach me and I thought it was something that S..... and P..... would be great to deal with them that's when I would point them to.

R: even otherwise, in your chats and discussions as parents, say, informal groups, do you come up with things that could be taken to do the mentors?

P: yeah. I am also a parent ambassador. I sound like I'm here permanently. But parent ambassador are quite a new thing, I don't know if they told you about it.

R: yes they did.

P: and we all, again, P..... does that, in general she takes care of it. Again, it is a great platform for parents, and then anybody could be a parent ambassador, but we are assigned generally to a class, and again it's meant to be liaising between us and teachers if a parent knows I'm the ambassador, and if a parent knows I am the ambassador for that class and they can't get to the teacher they can ask me and I can liaise with the teachers. That's the idea. Again I don't think a lot of people, it is sad but not a lot of people are interested. So when they are not interested in being a governor or an ambassador, so they are not quite often not interested in knowing about ambassadors and governors. But again she is there, P..... takes, it's every two weeks every I mean Thursday every two weeks. We can put our fears our worries are annoyances straight to P..... and she would, she can come up with some information directly and she will go back and she will come back to us.

R: has mentoring had an impact on the attainment of your child?

P: his attendance did you say?

R: his attainment.

P: attainment?

R: yes attainment, achievement.

P: oh I don't know, he's a really bright boy. So, he's a bright sensible boy she does incredibly well anyway. I really don't know. He doesn't tell me he comes to the very often apart from using them X..... was going through the grieving process two years ago. It's not something he is mentioned very often.

R: okay. You did mention about the grieving process long time ago. Was there any other relationship difficulties?

P: what, between...

R: did the child have any relationship difficulties with say peers with the teachers?

P: no. No, I think they are all very supportive. Yeah, I don't think he had any I think the school in general was very supportive.

R: I just remembered you mentioning that he is quite sensitive boy.

P: he's quite a little sensitive boy.

R: has that improved or has it helped?

P: yeah. He has, he has steadily grown confident. When he started nursery, he was, he was gone a couple of months after his third birthday and he had massive parent separation anxiety because I was just, I was a full-time mum, I'm a full-time mum still. He had a massive parent separation anxiety. So he, up until about a year ago, he wanted to be taken to school right into the playground and that these key stage two age when you consider you don't need your parents any more. So yeah, he has been very slow in separating from mum but I don't think he uses the mentors to back that up. I think he just dealt with it.

R: what in your opinion was the most important concern that you had about your child before mentoring began? Was there anything other than the grieving process?

P: do you know, up until, that happened only two years ago, he's been at school including the nursery for about, this is his sixth year. Up until the grieving process I didn't realise about the mentors

R: so you didn't know that there was a mentor or in the school?

P: yeah, yeah I didn't realise it and when I did realise I thought, well this is fantastic.

R: so, did the school authorities not let the parents know that if you need anything there are a mentors?

P: no, no. Again, in my opinion because I can't say clearly that they have been advertised as such, maybe I missed it, so it is not fair to say they haven't. Yeah, I was unaware of it.

R: so, effectively you are you saying that you know, most of the parents until they have or unless they have a problem they would not know, they're not all that there is a mentor?

P: they are unaware of their existence, yeah. And I think personally, I mean sort of I have had personal experience of them and found them fantastic and if I hadn't known about them and how fantastic they were to begin with I think out I would have been a lot more unsettled about sending my child to school because it is a scary thing, and you feel you are not there to take care of them who's going to take care of their worries and their fears and anything like that. Now I know that, I feel well happy, content.

R: so is it almost like ask and you shall receive so till you ask you don't get it?

P: yeah, possibly, yeah. I mean, maybe some kids are getting mentoring and their parents are not aware of it and I don't know how it works, I really don't, you know, but I know for example like I said the worry box etc, I don't think that is advertised to parents outside the school, and I think things like that are nice to know.

R: so, it is not given out as a general information that if anyone needs any help with any problems you have got to mentors. So there is no such information going out?

P: as far as I am aware, like I said, it is not fair for me to say 100% because it could be and I have never seen it, as far as I'm aware, in my experience, it is not out there. The school should be shouting this out because it is brilliant; it is definitely one of the best bits in the school.

R: is there any other evidence that you have, you did mention that your child has gone through that process quite successfully and has overcome that difficulty. Is there any other evidence that you have to support this?

P: it is hard to say, just, you know if it hadn't been there, I don't know, it would have been, I believe it would have been a lot harder, and obviously with my own grief and I was frightened of how to deal with my child's as well. And having massive support from school, I think helped me through it. The only way that I would be able to prove it is if he didn't get it and he wasn't. But yeah, personally I believe, yeah, it was a massive help.

R: do you believe that, or in your opinion, is there any other benefit of mentoring?

P: for me personally as a parent, contentment that they are there for my child. I think they are incredibly professional and incredibly nice people, I think, I don't know what they have got in other

schools but they have got brilliant examples here. I think for N...... I believe he knows they are here for me because I've always said to him. I think they how certain lunchtimes when they can just come in and chill and stuff like that. I think it is a kind of motherly instinct, connection that the kids have got until they get back home. My five-year-old she used to innocent, too, she's not aware, she is not had any need for them and she's not aware of their existence and it has not affected her.

R: In your opinion is there any drawbacks to mentoring? Is there anything that they should improve?

P: I couldn't, I genuinely couldn't say there was any drawbacks whatsoever. I can only say it's, it's a plus that's, I think without it the school would be a worse place. I think it is a benefit in the school definitely.

R: finally, is there anything else that you would like to tell me or add to what we have said?

P: I mean, for example saying that I didn't know of their existence until I needed them and I think obviously they're probably get a hell of a lot of work and they are struggling to do all the work they do, but it would be nice, I think personally for parents to know of their existence because it gives me contentment to know that those people are there for my child needs that there are securities or their insecurities or whatever. I just think it would be nice for every parents to be able to see them if they don't realise there are mentoring group are here (unclear) until you have experienced how good they are which gives me contentment like I said that if he's got, if N...... has got a problem at school, S..... and P..... are here. So for parents who are not aware of the mentoring group and not aware how good they are, it's kind of they are missing out on a little bit, you know, it sounds almost silly like they would had experienced to realise how much they could be missing out on.

R: so they should be advertised more?

P: yeah, but again, using, having experienced the mentor has given me the knowledge of how good they are whereas if you knew they were here it is until you use them you don't realise how good they are, so, yeah. That's it.

R: all right. Thank you very much.

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