



Undergraduate to Early Years Professional

The Place of Mentoring

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The Challenge

How do you develop skills of leadership and supporting others in students aged 20+ who had limited experience in early years ?





Setting the Scene

- 2008 - 4 pilots across England
- Early Childhood Studies to Early Years Professional Status
- Peer Mentoring





Literature

Mentoring is an umbrella term used to describe a range of activities designed at supporting and developing 'others' either on a formal or informal basis.

(Eby *et al*, 2007; Pask and Joy, 2007; Callan, 2006)





'culturally embedded' and a mentor model can be seen in all aspects of life as a means supporting others develop skills and knowledge.

Callan (2006:5).





...is everywhere, everyone thinks they know what mentoring is, and there is an intuitive belief that mentoring works.

Eby et al., (2007:1).





Mentoring is...

- diverse and complex activity
- can involve hierarchical or peer relationships
- the purpose of the relationship can be multi faceted and can involve both job specific and emotional support
- the setting in which mentoring takes place is varied





Mentoring and Higher Education

Value been recognised both nationally and internationally as an effective strategy for supporting first year students (Colvin, 2007; Terrion and Leonard, 2007)

Mentoring has been used in a variety of ways to support the student experience and can take a variety of forms, for example face to face, virtual, individual and/or group support

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(Storrs *et al.*, 2008)





It has also been seen as a way to:

- meeting targets in relation to all aspects of the student experience
- the challenges of the widening participation agenda
- retaining students

(Fox and Stevenson, 2006; Terrion and Leonard, 2007)





Benefits of Peer Mentoring in Higher Education

- Increased motivation
- Empowerment
- Transformation of the learning process from 'private to social'
- Improved learning experience
- Organisation
- Supporting marginalised groups

(Gynnild *et al.*, 2008; Storrs *et al.*, 2008; Colvin 2007)





Skills required to be a Student Mentor

Prerequisites for being a Student Peer Mentor	Psychosocial Tasks	Career Related Function
<i>Ability and willingness to commit time</i>	<i>Communication Skills</i>	<i>Programme of study</i>
<i>Race and gender</i>	<i>Supportiveness</i>	<i>Self enhancement motivation</i>
<i>University Experience</i>	<i>Trustworthiness</i>	
<i>Academic achievement</i>	<i>Interdependent attitude to mentoring, mentee, and program staff.</i>	
<i>Prior mentoring experience</i>	<i>Empathy</i>	
	<i>Personality match with mentee</i>	
	<i>Enthusiasm</i>	
	<i>Flexibility</i>	





Therefore...

The mentoring scheme offered an opportunity to build upon previous work on peer mentoring and expand it to consider how skills of leadership and supporting others could be fostered in students embarking on a professional course.





Research Aims and Objectives

- To support the transition of Year 1 students into Higher Education and with the integrated core tasks of the course.
- To enable students on the Early Childhood Studies Degree/Early Years Professional Status develop skills in leading and supporting the professional practice of others.
- To support the employability of students.



How?

ECSD/EYPS students to lead and support the professional practice of Year 1 students through:

- *supporting first year students through 'Welcome Week' and beyond;*
- *the first assignment;*
- *case studies;*
- *placement preparation;*
- *portfolio development;*
- *placement tasks;*
- *placement reflection.*





Sample

Year 1

Start 58 Students
(Possible 64)

Finish 48 Students
(Possible 58)

Year 3

17 Mentors





Methods

Start

Questionnaires

End

Questionnaires

Focus Group





Mentor Skill Development

Personal/ Professional/ Academic	Number of Respondents 17	Development as an EYP	Number of Respondents 17
Confidence	100%	Professional Boundaries	69%
Provide appropriate support	68%	How to support the learning of others	67%
Developed academic skills	63%	Leadership skills	53%
Organisation/ Time management	43%	How to support effectively	37%
Interpersonal skills	37%	How to deliver constructive criticism	31%
How to advise	32%	Reflection	26%



Mentee Development

Main Benefits	n 48
Confidence	100%
Academic writing/skills	100%
Supported	90%
Guidance	48%
Empowered	43%
Raised self esteem	27%
Developed communication skills	27%
Role models	20%





Support for Future Career





Discussion

- Positive implications for mentor and mentee
- Mentor developed a range of skills essential to their development as an EYP
- Raised questions around general mentoring, the role of mentoring for specific tasks and the financial viability of a mentoring project.





The experience of the mentors and mentees supports previous research into the benefits of peer mentoring in Higher Education. Data from questionnaires and focus groups suggested ECS students developed:

- *Increased motivation*
- *Empowerment*
- *Transformation of the learning process from 'private to social'*
- *Improved learning experience*
- *Organisation*

There was no specific evidence in relation to marginalised groups





Meeting targets in relation to all aspects of the student experience

Students reported high levels of satisfaction with the scheme.

The challenges of the widening participation agenda –

ECS has a diverse student cohort





Retention

2008/9

Start 64 End 58
(91% retention rate)

2009/10

Start 75 End 72
(96 % retention rate)





The Future

BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies Professional Pathway Northampton EYPS Peer Mentoring Model

Training and Support for Mentors

General mentoring training
Training to support Year 1 and 2 students with specific tasks
Support through professional practice module

Core Task Support Year 1 Students

Case Study Children
Placement Plans
Professional Development Folder
Support for Students on the Professional Pathway





Has it Worked?

100% students (Mentors) on Pilot 2 confirmed findings from Pilot 1





Research has led to:

- Greater understanding of the needs of ECSD/EYP students
- Greater understanding of challenges for Year 1 students





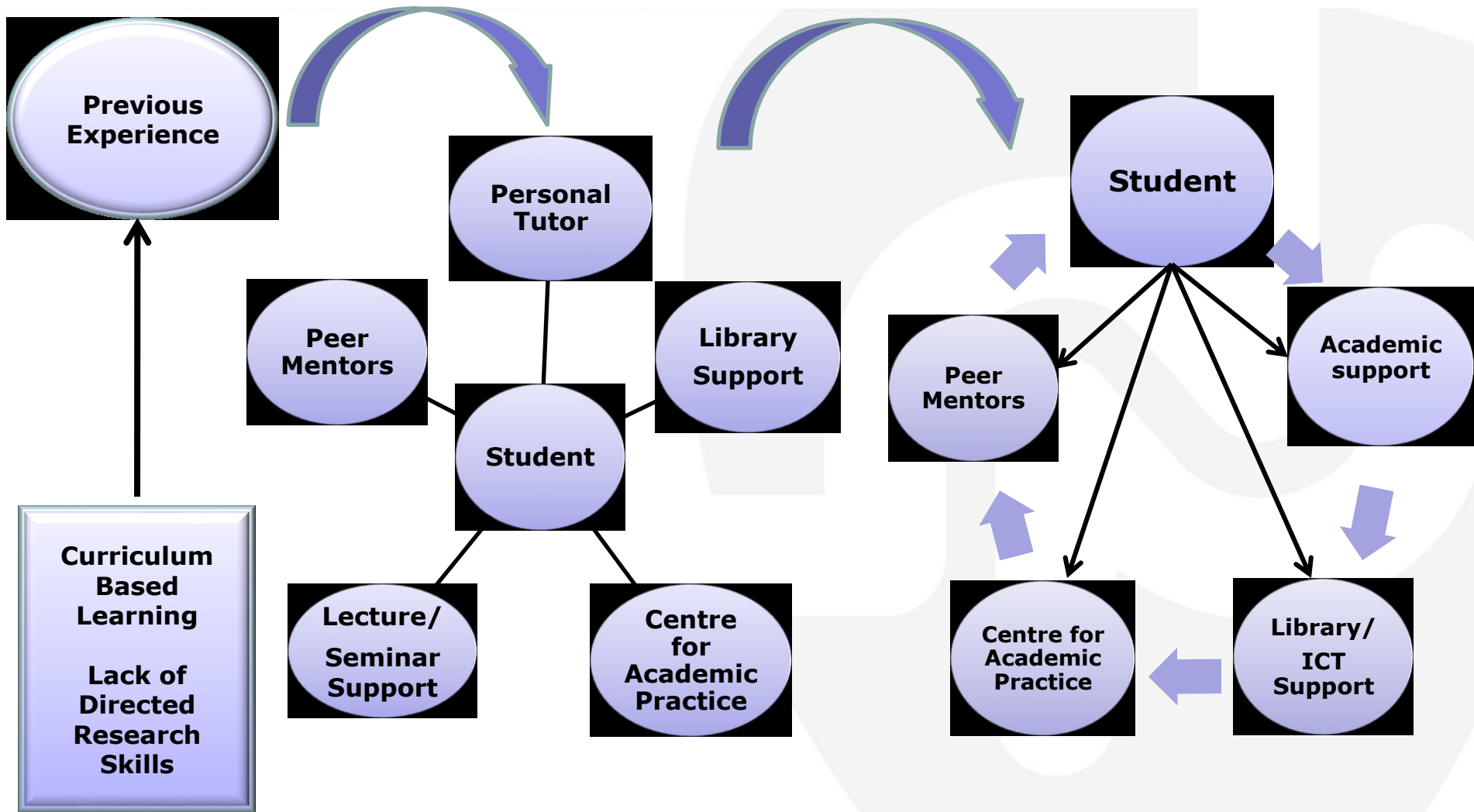
New Support package for Year 1 students:

- Peer Mentor by Year 2 students
- Core task peer mentoring by Professional Pathway students
- New model of support for Year 1 students:

'Transitional Bridging'



Transitional Bridging



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