

Peer Mentoring for secondary school students with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)

Jessica Newcombe School of Education University of Northampton - jessica.newcombe@northampton.ac.uk

Peer mentoring: For the purpose of this study peer mentoring involves a selection of students who are of a similar age working together on activities to achieve a qualification. The students included students with PMLD from a special school and students from a different establishment a social emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) school. Throughout the research the students from the SEBD school are referred to as peer mentors. Both cohorts of students (students with PMLD and students from the SEBD school) attended a weekly hour session at the special school with staff from both schools to work on activities to achieve a qualification.

Background: The research provides insights into the field of inclusive education regarding students with profound and multiple learning difficulties PMLD. Inclusive education for students with PMLD is considered by some to be unrealistic because of the levels of support required to meet the needs of students with PMLD.

Purpose: The purpose of the research is to explore the uses of peer mentoring and how it can be used with students with PMLD. To identify any barriers to the process and to discover what can help. It investigates the views of peer mentors and students with PMLD about peer mentoring and it explores the extent to which preferences and experiences of students with PMLD can be ascertained.

Research Methods: Using participatory methods the students with PMLD and the peer mentors (students from the SEBD school) became co-researchers. They and all of the participants collected data about the peer mentoring process. Using the 'mosaic approach' the data was gathered then was pieced together through dialogue, reflection and interpretation from all participants.

Findings: The research contributes to the knowledge of specialised education for students with PMLD through exploring the uses of peer mentoring. It provides opinions and experiences of all the participants involved in the peer mentoring process especially the students with PMLD.