

Peer mentors' perception of group mentoring

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ABSTRACT: Peer mentoring schemes are increasingly visible within professional practice and in recent years, universities have integrated mentoring across undergraduate programmes. Incorporating mentoring into Higher Education (HE) draws parallels with increasing awareness and recognition within nursing and midwifery for a number of years and is emerging within allied health practice. A peer mentor is a senior student who will offer the relevant guidance and support to encourage new-entry students through the many challenges of the first year experience (Keller, 2005). A peer mentor plays a pastoral role to facilitate the transition into Higher Education. The mentor facilitates teaching through supportive and guided learning activities. This is an important role as peer mentoring offers many benefits to those involved; however, this can equally be demanding and challenging (Bayer et.al, 2015). In order to provide the appropriate support to the peer mentors and for future development of peer-mentoring schemes, it is necessary to explore peer mentors' perceptions of their experience of mentoring. This small-scale study used a qualitative design. Participants were recruited from the peer-mentoring scheme at the University of East London, across two professional health programmes: Podiatry and Sports Therapy. 8 females and 4 males were recruited from level 5, second year of an undergraduate degree programme (mean age 28.7 and SD 1.13). Students who expressed an interest in peer mentoring attended a training session wherein the roles and responsibilities of the mentors were explained. Mentees were matched as best as possible with mentors. The matching criteria were: culture, age, and socio-economic factors. Semi-structured interviews with open ended questions were designed to explore the early experiences and expectations of being a mentor, mentorship activities, reasons and personal narratives for becoming a mentor and training received. Grounded theory was used to analyse the transcripts from the focus group interviews. The thematic categories identified in the data were: becoming a mentor, reasons and attributes; belonging, connection and disconnect; aligning relationships; benefits and boundaries; troublesome ness and navigating challenges. From these themes the researchers were able to conceptualise the journey mentors travel and the difficult spaces in which mentorship occurs. The study concludes with recommendations for new mentors.

REFERENCES

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