

Learning from Experience

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Focus of Workshop/Presentation

- the development of “innovatory approaches which incorporate the active involvement of young people who have had direct experience of the reality that ‘early school leavers’ face.” (Project Website)
- the potential of ‘mentoring’

Learning From Experience

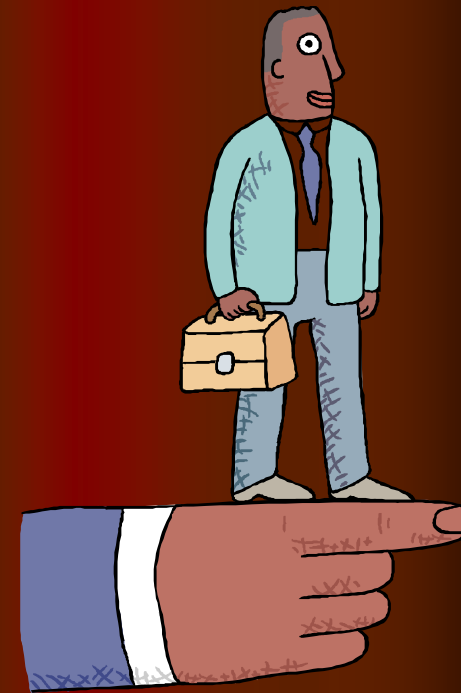
- Those with personal experience of early school leaving:
 - Can identify with and relate to young people experiencing problems at school
 - Can be powerful role models

Learning from Experience

“The Kid’s voluntary work involves working with disaffected young people in danger of being drawn into an ‘offending lifestyle’. It is a cause to which he is deeply committed, which is why the young people with whom he works respect and listen to him. They know that he knows where they are coming from because once upon a time he was there too.”

Turning to Practice: the case of mentoring

In essence mentoring involves the pairing of an older role model with a young person so that the former can befriend, advise and support the latter towards an agreed set of objectives



Types of Mentoring Scheme

- Mentoring Plus
 - mentoring is one component of a broader programme of education and training
- Open Ended Volunteer Mentoring
 - part and full time volunteers work with young people towards specific goals on a 'needs must' basis

Types of Mentoring Scheme

- Positive Action Mentoring
 - Mentors recruited to match ethnic, gender or other specified identity of young people
- Peer Mentoring
 - Targets mentors from within peer group

The Value of Mentoring from Young People's Perspectives

- "I can talk to her, with other adults I can't talk about some things but I can with her."
- "I know she won't judge me and that's important, other adults do."
- "Someone who will actually listen to what you have to say, someone in the job you'd like to go for cause they can give you a lot of advice and that. Me mum and dad felt it was really good, it got me motivated in a way that they couldn't."
- "We can phone him at any time - he is very accessible. If we have a problem we can phone him late at night or early in the morning, he is there for us."

Some Lessons from Evaluations of Mentoring

- Mentoring is more likely to be effective when it forms part of a more holistic action plan for addressing a young person's needs.
- Successful mentoring relationships are those which involve regular meetings over a period of at least six months or more.
- Young people's participation in mentoring projects needs to be voluntary and they need to be committed - "the single most important barrier to programme delivery is the unwillingness of young people to participate"

Some Lessons from Evaluations of Mentoring

- Mentoring is not a 'cheap' option.
- It is important to enlist the support of significant others (parents, friends, family members) for the mentoring relationship.
- Projects which place young people's views and goals at the centre of their practice are likely to improve the rate of take-up and commitment to mentoring relationships.
- Mentors need to have the time, energy and commitment to fulfil their role.

Conclusion

- Placing young people's voices, views and experiences at the centre of new forms of practice is critical – using former early school leavers as mentors is one means to achieve this
- In planning mentoring relationships between former and current school leavers, the needs of both these groups must be given equal consideration – mentees should be recruited early on; conversely, mentors should be recruited some time after their own bad experiences