DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING FOR FIRST YEARS THROUGH PEER SUPPORT

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OVERVIEW OF MENTORING AT KENT

Kent established Peer Learning schemes in 3 schools in 2007. Since then, peer learning has grown in popularity and it is now used in 16 schools. Each school has its own model of Peer Learning, but SLAS provides training, support, co-ordination and evaluation for all of them.

Over the years SLAS has collected data on the Peer Learning schemes, so we are now able to see the social and academic benefits for students and schools. This has enabled SLAS to develop and promote the scheme throughout the university.

Peer leaning is now being used as a core element of a two year OFFA funded project which seeks to ascertain the impact mentoring has on the retention and achievement of widening participation students.

MENTORS AT KENT 2016

Mentors by School
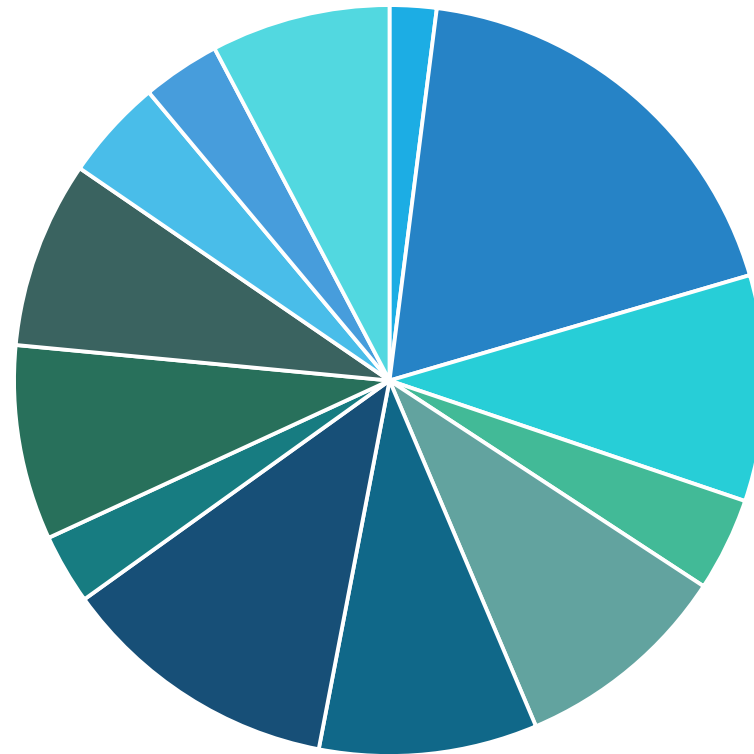
- Anthropology
- Architecture
- Biosciences
- Centre for World Languages
- Electronics and digital arts
- Business Canterbury & Medway
- Pharmacy
- Physics
- Politics
- Psychology
- European Lanaguge and Culture
- Music and Fine Art
- Maths
- Sports
- Social sciences

PARTNERSHIP

Success depends on a strong partnership between the department and SLAS

APM can be used to support lots of learning functions. It is good to be clear about the aims of the scheme before setting it up. For example it supports students': independent learning, employability skills, communication skills, social and academic integration

APM usually focuses on the things that students find most difficult in a programme of study. Rather than focusing on students

LAVE AND WENGER: COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
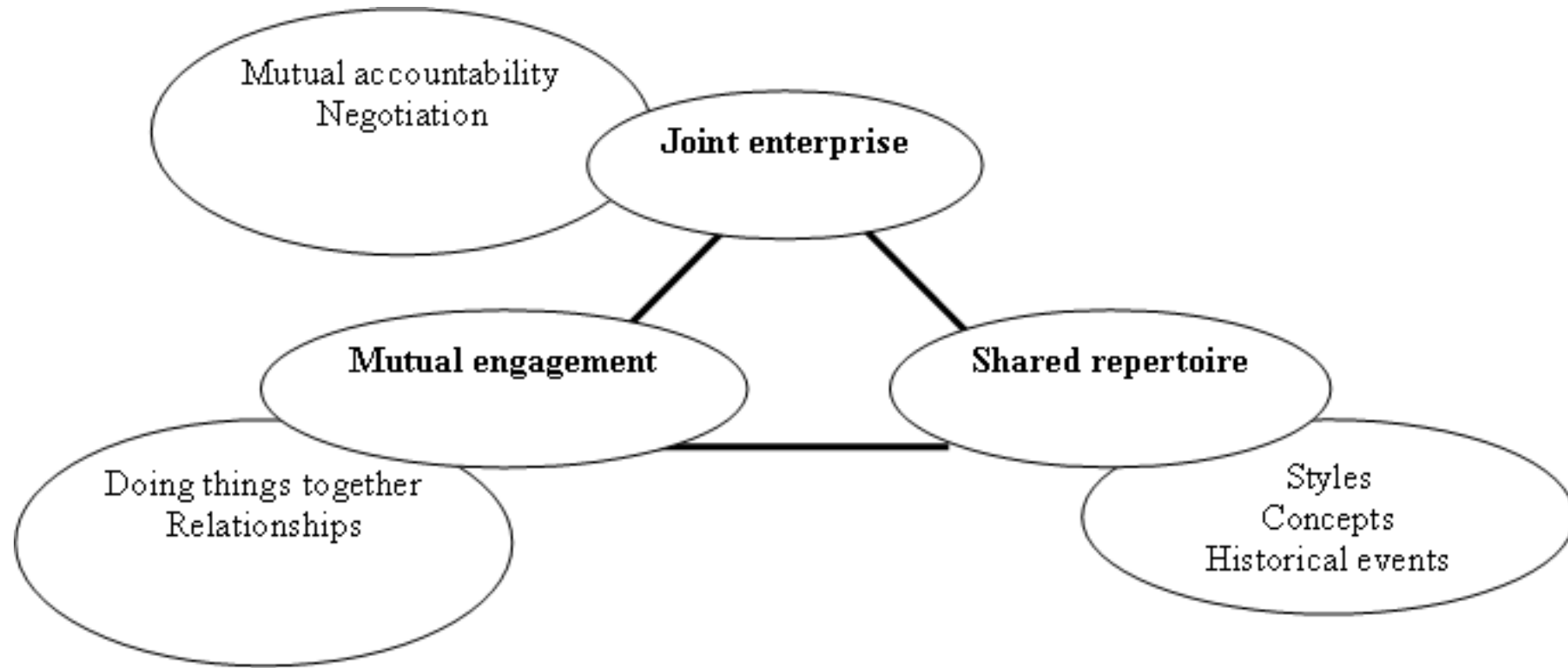
THRESHOLD CONCEPTS APPROACH

We use a Threshold Concepts approach to ascertain the troublesome knowledge in a programme of study:

1. What have you learned which has changed the way you think about a topic or subject?

2. What have you learned on the programme/module which you will never forget?

3. What have you learned which has led you to ask new questions about your subject?

4. What have you needed to go over and over again before you have understood it?

AIM OF MENTORING

To build students' resilience

'…a complex and multifaceted construct, referring to a person's capacity to handle environmental difficulties, demands and high pressure without experiencing negative effects.'(Kinman and Grant 2011 p262)

Hudson (2011) University of Brighton mentors toolkit and story board to help support mentors develop and build resilience

CONNOR-DAVIDSON RESILIENCE SCALE

Connor and Davidson developed a resilience scale (2003) which they use as a measure of a person's "bounce-back" (Haggerty et al 1996) and adaptability.

Their focus was mainly assisting people with anxiety, but the scale has also been used on studies with the general population and with student populations. (Hartley, 2011 USA Undergraduate students, and Giesbrecht et al, 2009 Netherlands Undergraduates)

The scale goes from 1--------------4, with 4 being most resilient

RESILIENCE QUESTIONS

Item	0	1	2	3	4
1. I am able to adapt to change					
2. I can deal with whatever comes up					
3. Past success gives me confidence for new challenges					
4. I see the humorous side of things					
5. I tend to bounce back after difficult time or illness					
6. I think things happen for a reason					
7. I know where to turn for help					
8. I like challenges					
9. I work to achieve my goals					
10. I take pride in my achievements					
11. I have a strong sense of purpose					
12. I take a lead in problem solving					

CAN MENTORS PASS ON RESILIENCE TO MENTEES?

Swanson, Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant and O'Brien (2001) studied how resilient adolescents achieve greater academic success.

Our question is: can mentors play a role in building the resilience of mentees and so possibly help them to persist and achieve in higher education.

Three areas of focus are:

Adapting to change: example from the student lifecycle - Transition into university – This is a critical time for mentors to be involved with supporting mentees

Problem solving: example from the student life cycle - Independent learning skills/time management – This is an area which often causes new students difficulties which they need to resolve

Community of learning: Students need to establish a peer group who they can work well with in order to achieve good results

WHY DO STUDENTS NEED TO A COMMUNITY FOR LEARNING?

- What constitutes a 'good' relationship between mentor and mentee?

- How can the success of a mentoring session be measured?

- How can mentees be encouraged to be proactive?

- What should the boundaries be in terms of what is expected of mentors?

- How can mentees be encouraged to engage with mentors?

OVERVIEW OF MODULE:

The module ran for 12 weeks. From week 6 to week 18

It was non-credit bearing, but branded under Kent Extra which means that it will appear on students transcripts

In total 69 students enrolled on the module: 17 from Medway and 52 from Canterbury

1. Motivations for becoming a mentor	7. Understanding mentees learning styles
2. Reflection: mentors characteristics	8. Supporting mentees well-being
3. Research methods: evaluating mentoring	9. Recognising mentors skills / employability
4. Team work for mentors	10. Planning a session
5. Equality and diversity issues in mentoring	11. Cross cultural communication for mentors
6. Mid-year review	12. Evaluating yourself as a mentor