

RECLAIMING THE JOY OF LEARNING: MENTORS AT TRACTION

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Research Question

“How do mentors at the TRACTION Community program experience the role of mentoring and how do they use the role to provide opportunities for young people to build their own future?”

Research Objectives

1. To understand the role of a mentor in assisting students engage in action-based learning
2. To gain insight on mentors perception of their impact on student development
3. Understand the challenges and benefits that are part of the experience of being a mentor

Methods

Fieldwork

- 13 semi-structured interviews
- 9 interviews with the TRACTION mentors
- 4 interviews with school representatives

Thematic analysis

- identified key patterns and themes which were evident from the interview process and drawn from literature.
- document analysis provided insight into TRACTION'S policies, procedures and the foundations of TRACTION.

The Program

The TRACTION program assists students who may be struggling at school, or looking to pursue new creative opportunities, providing them with an alternative education, out of school environment where students learn practical skills by building their very own bikes in a workshop set up with the support of TRACTION mentors.



Research Problem

- Schools can promote a limited image of students' success (McGregor, Mills, Te Riele, Baroutsis & Hayes, 2017).
- Those who fail to fit this image can lose confidence and tend to develop a lack of self-worth (McGregor et al. 2005).
- Students can become less engaged and unable to see the value of school (McGregor & Mills, 2013).
- Mentors are able to build relationships with students encouraging them to engage socially and practically (Edgar-Smith & Palmer, 2015; Dubois & Karcher, 2014).

Findings: Key Themes

Hidden curriculum –

Mentors do not follow standard school curriculum but implicitly impart constructive behaviours through their actions.

“Some of the kids who have very negative attitudes towards the school model actually quite enjoy learning, provided you don't tell them that's what's happening.” (Mentor 9)

Embodying change –

Physical expressions of positive change in the students.

“Shaking hands and eye contact is probably the most notable behavioural change we see with the kids” (Mentor 12)

Difference between mentors and teachers –

“There are thousand things that mentors help out with along the way”... from technical skills to just having a chat. (Mentor 8)

“Mainly at traction they do get a good sort of dose of life lesson, of life practical sort of stuff that they are likely to encounter as they enter the workforce...and then they want to work harder at school” (Mentor 3)

“Bike skills in addition to life skills” (Mentor 7)

Future Research

Longitudinal studies that include follow-up interviews with mentors and students to highlight long-term impacts of mentoring.

“It's a powerful program to have for young adolescents” (School Rep 11)

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