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Exploring students' experiences of one-to-one advice and guidance discussions: a pilot study

Victoria Rafferty (study support advisor and DProf student)



This study aims to gain insight into students' experiences of one-to-one advice and guidance discussions with an academic advisor

One-to-one discussions in Higher Education (HE)

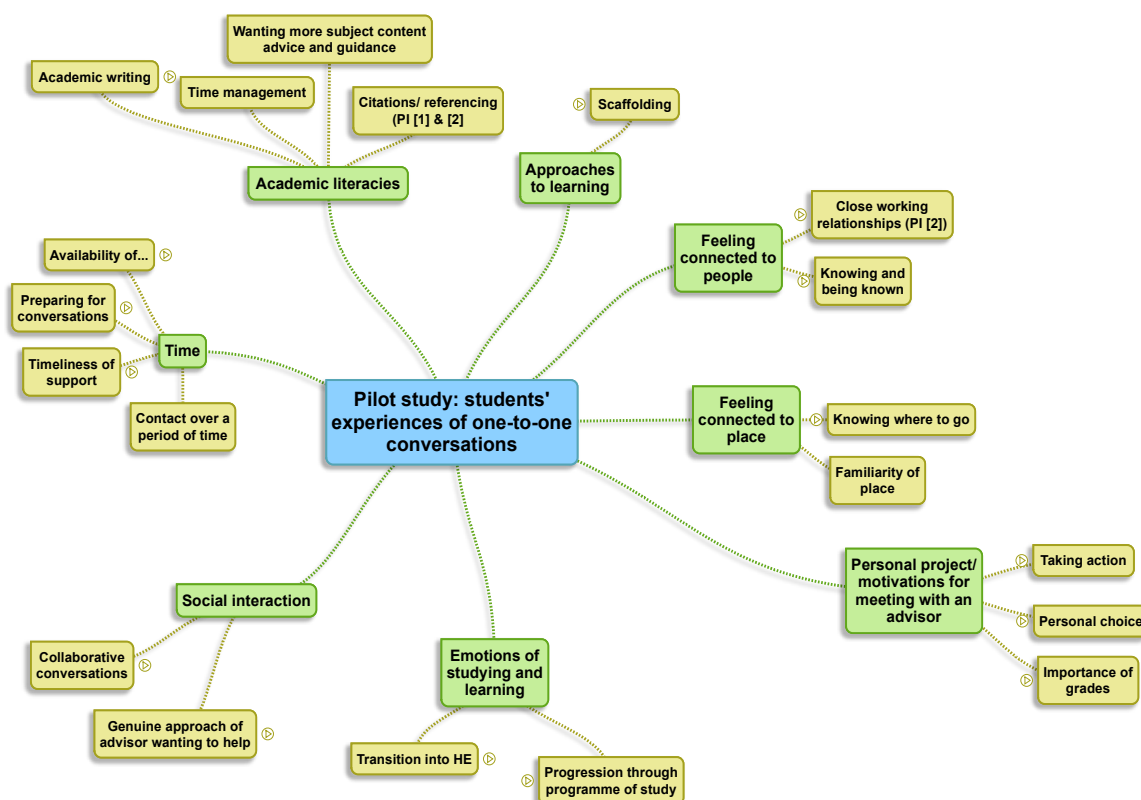
Within the current market-based environment, mass higher education is characterised by high student numbers (Nicol, 2010) and constraints on resources (Price, Handley & Millar, 2011).

Middleton (2015) argues that opportunities for 'personal, inclusive and supportive' learning have been diluted whilst other authors specify that dialogue is being 'squeezed out' of mass higher education (Nicol, 2010). However, not only does influential social learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and research support the benefits of personal interaction and support on learning and personal development (Cooper, 2011), students also attach value to such interactions (Wisker et al, 2008). Within many UK universities one aspect of supporting students one-to-one is academic advice and guidance (Hilsdon, 2011).

Pilot study and emerging findings

This pilot study, conducted between April – June 2016, consisted of two phases;

- Phase 1: written responses to an early draft of the interview schedule
- Phase 2: two semi-structured interviews: one with a female, stage 2, mature, home student and the other with a male, postgraduate, EU student



Alignment of findings to literature

- Social interaction and support to facilitate learning: relationship between talking, thinking and learning (Vygotsky, 1978)
- Positive personal interaction supporting high quality learning and engagement in learning (Cooper, 2004)
- Learning as a social and emotional process, not just cognitive (Illeris, 2004)
- Talk as a powerful tool (Alexander (2010); Effective dialogue as discursive – rich in two-way exchanges (Laurillard, 2002)
- The establishment of positive connections with someone students believe will guide them as they navigate their studies: 'guide on the side' (King, 1993)

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