Transition to and from Sixth Form: Students’ perceptions and experiences and implications for enhancing student resilience

A) RATIONALE FOR PROJECT

There is growing concern within Sixth Forms and Universities that many students experience high levels of stress and stress-related illness, associated with academic and/or social aspects of student life. (Nelson et al., 2015). The impact of academic pressures to 'succeed' upon students is increasingly evident, heralding an urgent need to address mental health issues and appropriate student support more rigorously.

PhD proposals are invited which build on current research conducted by Lucy Foulkes, which highlight the changing nature of Sixth Form provision, a notably under-researched area. Neuroscience research highlights how stress can adversely affect students' capacity to learn (Jones, 2014). More needs to be known about the protective role of students’ positive self-belief and resilience as predictors of well-being, motivation and academic achievement. Key questions which could be investigated at Doctoral level are given below. The value of identifying those most likely to struggle with transition to University could also be examined, as well as the potential benefits of opting for an Apprenticeship rather than a University degree.

B) REFERENCES THAT SHOULD BE READ (if you do not have access to these, please email me)


C) RESEARCH AIMS & POTENTIAL AREAS TO INVESTIGATE

To evaluate the experiences and perceptions of Sixth Form students/staff/parents re:
- Transition from Year 11 to Year 12/AS (retrospective experiences)
- Transition from Year 13/A Level to University (prospective expectations).
- Extent to which Sixth Form staff are giving priority to University over Apprenticeships in providing career guidance to students
- Comparison of Apprentices and undergraduate University students in terms of mental health
- Identification of key factors affecting well-being of students, e.g. influence of social media
- Development of resources for students and staff in enhancing resilience and coping.
- Any topic related to well-being of sixth form and/or undergraduate University students.

D) METHODS

There are various options regarding research methodology, ideally mixed methods to gather data from different perspectives of school/college/university students and staff and parents.