

Locking Down and Catching Up: How Pupils Make Sense of a Curriculum for Recovery

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Published version

POUNTNEY, Richard (2020). Locking Down and Catching Up: How Pupils Make Sense of a Curriculum for Recovery. In: ENCU Review of Education (ROE) Special Issue Webinar: Childhood, Curriculum and Culture in Diverse Contexts, Online, 15 Dec 2020 - 15 Dec 2020. SAGE Publications. (Unpublished)

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ENCU Review of Education (ROE) Special Issue Webinar: 'Childhood, Curriculum and Culture in Diverse Contexts'

Locking down and catching up: how pupils make sense of a curriculum for recovery **Richard Pountney, Sheffield Hallam University**

The closing of schools in England, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, in Spring 2020, save for on-site education for vulnerable children and children of critical workers, has impacted on teachers, parents and most of all pupils. The practical issues include feeling unprepared to resume a range of activities, and the danger of those children most in need of school as those more likely to miss out (Sharp et al., 2020). The phased return from the Summer includes priority for 15-year-old pupils preparing for important examinations, offering reduced timetables, some face-to-face contact and support to supplement pupils' remote education. These responses involve three sets of options (not necessarily exclusive) (Andrew et al., 2020): making students' experience of home learning more equal; bringing students back into schools at different times; and offering extra resources and additional support to students to help them catch up once they are back at school (Lucas et al., 2020). This paper reports a study of schools returning from lockdown arising from the Covid-19 and the efficacy of a mentoring intervention for pupils going into the final year of secondary education. The intervention involves a positive education program based on the Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspective, taking the form of a programme of online mentoring sessions carried out by recent graduates, organised according to a systematic curriculum of activities and tasks carried out collaboratively with the pupils. The specific objective is to investigate, within the context of a curriculum for recovery, the specific teaching practices and resources that help pupils to return to the school, environment, to recover a sense of wellbeing, and to re-establish habits of learning, in order that pupils can imagine and plan their futures.

The methodology involves evaluating and monitoring the fidelity of implementation in the mentoring process that has been developed, including measuring academic engagement, students' gratitude, and their habits of learning. Exchanges between 8 mentors and 40 pupils, centred on discussing the effects of lockdown and the capacity to articulate a sense of hope for the future, are analysed. Academic buoyancy and academic resilience are shown to vary according to the ability of individuals to overcome setbacks that have the potential to limit motivation and performance (Martin & Marsh, 2009). These measures are found to be ontologically distinct and to vary by relevance to academic outcomes (Martin, 2013) and how this is encountered in the school setting. The research finds that children acquire their understandings of the purpose of education from the responses to disruption made by the communities in which they live, and that this mediates how they interpret, internalise, and make meanings from adversity.

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