

## METHODOLOGY

- interpretivist
- mixed methods
- anonymous online survey (135 students; 32 staff)
- student focus groups (3)
- staff interviews (11)
- statistical, thematic and linguistic analyses
- purposive sampling

Metaphors were rated for the degree to which they captured the essence of the personal tutoring role.

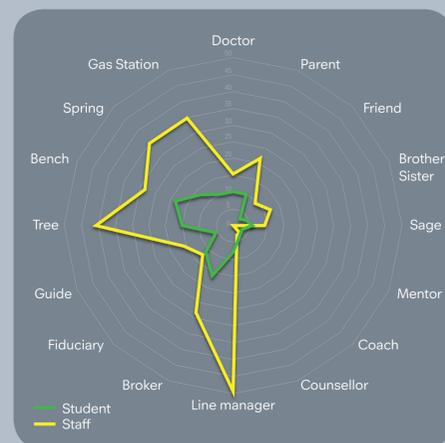
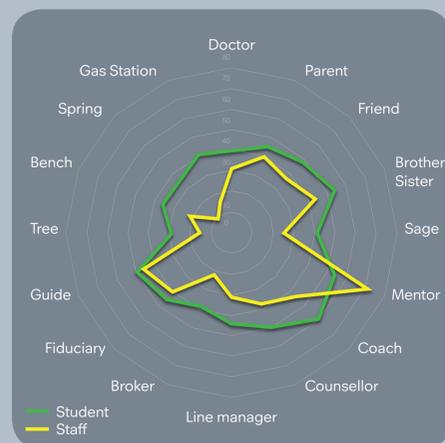
Research team: Ricky Lowes, Senior Personal Tutor, Plymouth Business School, Chao Su, Visiting Scholar, Hunan Agricultural University and Dejie Kong, Plymouth Business School.

Participants: mainland Chinese students; UK based lecturers.

## FINDINGS

Most preferred metaphors

Least preferred metaphors



## QUALITIES

Most important quality of tutor as rated by:	Tutors	Tutees
to know about university systems and processes	15.6%	25%
to like their tutees	3.1%	3.5%
to be a friendly person	12.5%	18%
to be highly knowledgeable in her/his field of study	3.1%	7%
to be highly intelligent	0.0%	3.5%
to be a caring person	18.8%	7%
to be a good listener	40.6%	10%
to be efficient and quick to respond	6.3%	25%
Total	100%	100%

## QUALITATIVE DATA

THEMATIC ANALYSIS SHOWED THAT:

**Staff value:**

- Student autonomy
- Tutor / tutee boundaries

*I don't think it's a friend role, I think there have to be boundaries with students, we are not their pal. Lecturer*  
 [Suggested metaphor for tutor]  
 111 operator- you call to explain what's wrong and you will be directed somewhere else; i.e. A&E, doctor's call back, nurse or paracetamol!

**Students value:**

- Help
- Support
- Care
- Warmth

[Characteristic sought in tutor]  
 Love which makes me feel that I am worthy of being loved and become the motive of my effort.

*My personal tutor is like a beacon who can show me the way when I feel lost.*

# MIXED METAPHORS

## COMPARING THE PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL TUTORING OF CHINESE STUDENTS & UK TUTORS

The personal tutor potentially plays a crucial role in aiding and supporting international students' successful transition to UKHE. However, personal tutoring, particularly with regard to international students, is an under-researched area. Given staff perceptions of the problematic nature of international student engagement with tutoring, this is a timely piece of research.

### METAPHOR CENTRAL HEURISTIC FOR ELICITING VIEWS

A tutor is like a...



### LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT STUDY:

- Small sample
- Difficult to recruit willing st participants
- Focus only on views and expectations

### FUTURE RESEARCH COULD FOCUS ON:

- Sts lived experience of tutoring
- Level of engagement
- Factors predicting engagement

## BARRIERS PERCEIVED BY STAFF

**ENGLISH**

*Some of them would only come in pairs because the one who wanted to see me was too shy to speak or felt that their English was not very good.*

**CULTURAL DIFFERENCES**

*But culture is [a barrier] ... when they say one thing I don't know whether that is what they really mean or whether it is a euphemism for something else.*

**STUDENTS' BEHAVIOUR**

*Studying, should be a central question. But, as I said, they rarely would admit that they are struggling with their study.*

**RELATIONSHIPS**

*I aim to keep in touch with tutees who are facing issues but it is difficult within the time allocated to maintain regular contact.*

## CONCLUSIONS

- Some degree of misalignment between the views of Chinese students and their UK tutors, both in terms of practical details and underlying orientations.
- Students' previous experience may vary considerably, which may affect their expectations.
- They may not understand system at their UK institution
- Tutors need some comprehension of what their Chinese tutees may or may not understand by the role.
- UK tutors, on the whole, even those of Chinese origin, may have a less hands-on, directive

approach than Chinese students would like. This may lead to the students becoming disenchanted and feeling that the tutor is not meeting their needs.

- Findings indicate that Chinese students appreciate their tutors taking a vivid interest in their progress, they would like practical and constructive suggestions, particularly on academic matters, in a timely fashion, and that they value a caring attitude. They are unlikely to be as proactive and independent as UK tutors might expect.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure clarification of the personal tutoring system
- Provide a framework for tutoring and a structure to tutorial meetings.
- Focus the tutorial meetings on students' expressed needs.
- Be aware of the precise needs of the students.
- Advice and guidance has to be timely.
- Keep the focus of the meetings practical and seek tangible outcomes.
- Target English language support at the students' specific needs.
- Allocate tutors effectively
- Provide cultural briefings for tutors working with Chinese students.
- Allocate sufficient time for tutoring

*From my experience, the students look for two things: they look for someone who is on their side and is a friend. A lot of teachers, I think, only believe that their job is to be a competent teacher. So they focus all their time on trying to communicate their subject and **don't spend any time looking at it from the students' point of view.** And for me, students look for someone who is eager that they do well. Lecturer*