

60-Second SoTL

Episode 7 – Triadic Partnership Mentoring

(Piano Music)

00:03

Jessie L. Moore:

How might a group mentorship scheme with students, alumni, and staff support student learning in a distance education experience? That's the focus of this week's **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. I'm Jessie Moore.

00:16

(Piano Music)

00:19

In "Triadic Partnerships: Evaluation of a Group Mentorship Scheme," published in the *International Journal for Students as Partners*, a team of professors, students, and alumni studied participant experiences in a triadic partnerships mentoring model.

The team from the Distance Learning Public Health Masters Program at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine included Anna M. Foss, Sophia Kohler, Sumedh Kulkarni, Natalina Sutton, Mary-Ann Schreiner, Nicolo Saverio Centemero, Grace Mambula, Diederik Lohman, Sarah C. Smith, and Rebecca S. French. Although the public research university is located in London, alumni and student team members from the distance learning program also resided in Germany, India, Rwanda, and Switzerland.

01:05

The study focused on an optional independent research module that students usually take in their final year of the program. Program staff launched a mentoring option for the research module in which alumni-mentor volunteers partnered with project module organizer staff to support students' learning. The authors also paired a triadic partnerships model - from medical and therapeutic scholarship – with a students-as-partners approach to study the experiences of student mentees, alumni mentors, and staff.

01:32

Eight alumni volunteered as mentors to support a forty-nine person student cohort. They participated in a one-hour training webinar prior to interacting with the students. They then interacted with mentees via the program's online communication platform, with posts in a discussion forum and live sessions via video conferencing.

From the student cohort, ten student mentees volunteered to share their perspectives for the research project assessing the mentoring scheme.

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The research team collected five datasets. Three of the alumni-mentors and four of the student-mentees conducted a thematic content analysis of end-of-pilot focus group discussions, email and forum interactions during the mentoring scheme, and five 1-hour video conferencing sessions that were spaced throughout the academic year. The staff principle investigator used descriptive statistics to analyze the last two data sets: an online student satisfaction survey and analytics for participation in the discussion forum and video conferencing.

02:31

The authors report that 85% of students who completed the end-of-project survey were satisfied with the support from alumni mentors, and other findings offer rich insight into the satisfaction of all involved. For example, during the mentoring scheme, peer-to-peer support increased, and mentors' responses to students' online queries allowed staff to provide fewer responses. In other words, building a mentoring constellation via the triadic partnerships may have redistributed workload, with more people – peers, alumni, and staff – supporting student learning.

03:04

The team also highlighted three themes from their qualitative analysis. First, all participants noted an added value from the triadic partnerships. Student-mentees felt supported emotionally, thought alumni-mentors could relate better to them than staff could, and appreciated the diverse perspectives mentors brought. Mentors appreciated the connection back to their program, and staff valued the authenticity and perspectives alumni-mentors brought to their interactions with students.

Second, the mentorship scheme fostered connections and relationships.

Third, student-mentees expressed a desire for similar mentoring for other program modules, though alumni-mentors noted challenges with sustaining the level of involvement they committed to the independent research module.

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Based on their research and reflections, the authors also offer a conceptual framework for triadic partnerships in teaching and learning and compare their framework to several students-as-partners frameworks. As a result, both readers interested in mentoring and those interested in students-as-partners practices will appreciate the authors' contributions.

04:06

To learn more, follow the link in our show notes to read this open-access article.

04:11

(Piano Music)

04:14

Join us next week for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning on **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. Learn more about the Center at www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org.

04:26

(Piano Music)