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Mentoring in Circumstance

Abstract

Mentoring approaches have been developed and adapted to a great extent in the last decade. One can find a great deal of theoretical discussions, but there is a lack of practical knowledge transfer and reflections for higher education. Based on BUELLS Models of Mentoring, we will present and analyse three different practical cases of mentoring and tutoring, successfully implemented in different highly frequented study programs. Against this backdrop, this paper will discuss generalizable aspects, which have the potential to map particular needs and circumstances of initial study phases to dedicated functions of mentoring programs. Conclusively, we see a peer-approach combined with the friendship model as a common fruitful principle. Furthermore, to adjust distinct mentoring programs to the requirements of highly frequented study programs, it seems recommendable to focus on three domains of support: gain of competencies, organisation and socialisation.

Keywords

Initial study phase, mentoring, tutoring, peer-mentoring, mass courses

Mentoring vor praktischer Folie

Zusammenfassung

In den letzten Jahren wurden viele unterschiedliche Mentoringmodelle auf theoretischer Basis diskutiert, sie erscheinen aber in der Praxis oft schwer umsetzbar. Dieser Artikel diskutiert die Anwendbarkeit von BUELLS Mentoring-Modellen vor dem Hintergrund dreier erfolgreich etablierter Unterstützungsprogramme für erstsemestrig Studierende hochfrequentierter Studienprogramme der Universität Wien. Vor dieser praktischen Folie werden die Mentoring-Modelle auf generalisierbare Aspekte untersucht, um Mentoringmaßnahmen an die speziellen Anforderungen unterschiedlicher Studienprogramme, insbesondere in hochfrequentierten Studieneingangsphasen zu adaptieren. Nach unserer Schlussfolgerung bewährt sich BUELLS Friendship-Modell in Kombination mit einem Peer-Group-Setting. Zusätzlich empfiehlt sich ein Fokus auf die drei Unterstützungsschwerpunkte Kompetenzerwerb, Organisation und Sozialisation, um die Rollen und Funktionen der Mentorinnen und Mentoren den Bedürfnissen unterschiedlicher Studienprogramme anzupassen.

Schlüsselwörter

Studieneingangsphase, Mentoring, Tutoring, Peer-Mentoring, Großlehrveranstaltungen

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1 Introduction

Mentoring programs in higher education find themselves confronted with a wide variety of different circumstances. This paper intends to discuss different roles of student mentors and tutors by embracing the ideas of mentoring in higher education settings. It tries to combine traditional mentoring approaches with current institutional and practical insights to develop generalizable aspects of mentoring with the potential to frame needs of particular study programs.

For this purpose we present three mentoring programs as case studies for different needs of study programs in comparable circumstances. All presented practical cases show the need to go beyond traditional concepts of mentoring or tutoring. By analysing the particular circumstances, aims, and resulting roles and functions of student mentors and tutors, this paper aims to disrupt established definitions of mentoring, which have often been reluctant to take particular circumstances and institutional goals into account.

Essentially, this papers focuses on three questions: What are general functions and aims of mentoring? Which mentor-roles and models are suitable for Higher Education settings? How can mentoring-functions and mentor-roles be adapted to particular institutional needs? Conclusively, this paper elaborates generalizable aspects which evolved from contrasting traditional ideas of mentoring approaches and university realities such as different challenges and requirements in the context of overwhelmed first-year students and poor teacher-student ratio during the study entry phase at mass universities.

2 The Idea of Mentoring

Traditionally scholars introduce the term ‘mentor’ by recurring to Homers’ Odyssey (DUTTON, 2003; JOHNSON & HUEW, 2003; BUELL, 2004; PASK, 2007). During Odysseus’ journey, Mentor stayed at home to guide and manage the life of Odysseus’ son Telemachus. PASK added another point by recurring to the linguistic roots of the word ‘mentor’: The Latin/Greek word ‘mens’ means ‘a mind’ and its derivative ‘mentor’, which mean ‘a thinker’ (PASK, 2007, p. 8).

A Mentor is a person who thinks about somebody else’s’ circumstance to provide guidance and support.

The superior goal of mentoring is recognized as the personal and professional development of individuals (CAPLAN, 2003; JOHNSON; HUWE 2003; PASK, 2007) in various organizational settings (YOUNG & CATES, 2004). Benefits experienced by mentees are career progression (BROADBRIDGE, 1999; SINGH et al., 2002), advancement of self-confidence (KRAM, 1984; FAGENSON, 1989), learning about dos and don’ts, well-being in an organization, and increased confidence in decision-making processes (DUTTON, 2003, p. 23). Mentors, on the other hand, gain recognition from fellow organization members for their commitment, job satisfaction as well as self-satisfaction due to a fruitful relationship and the positive experience of mentees admiring them as their mentors (DUTTON, 2003, p. 24). Moreover, “mentors often view the experience as an opportunity to make

productive use of their knowledge and work serving as a positive role model" (ALLEN et al., 1997, p. 488).

In regard to key competencies of mentors, one must point to listening (CAPLAN, 2003; HERMINIA, 2004): Mentoring is "heavy on listening, providing a role model, and making suggestions and connections" (HERMINIA, 2004, p. 79).YOUNG & CATES stated that "listening is a vital skill for mentors and is a characteristic of an ideal mentor" (YOUNG & CATES, 2004, p. 22). Emotional listing includes the verbalization of assistance and sensitivity as well as empathy and sympathy. As listening has first priority in regard to successful mentoring, JOHNSON & RIDLEY conclude: "Drop other activities when protégés want to talk; give them your undivided attention. Listen to identify both overt and covert meanings in your protégé's communication" (JOHNSON & RIDLEY, 2004, p. 47). Pask also mentions listing as a top priority for mentors' key skills, however, he also lists clarifying, reflecting back, paraphrasing, summarizing, and questioning as essential skills of mentors (PASK, 2007). JOHNSON & HUWE distinguish between desired personality and behavioural characteristics. They identify desired personality characteristics such as flexibility, patience, empathy, humour, warmth, and dedication as import personality traits.. In terms of behavioural characteristics, JOHNSON & HUWE find productivity, professional influence and power, effective communication, availability and a positive mentoring track record important for a mentor's set of abilities. (JOHNSON & HUWE, 2003)

Communication settings of mentoring can be analysed based on different aspects, such as number of participants, hierarchy, stakeholders and use of technology. Most concepts of mentoring "assume a one-to-one relationship between mentor and mentee" (MALDEREZ & BODOCZKY, 1999, p. 4). Especially in higher education "traditional mentoring involves two players: the graduate student, who needs direction on which steps to take, and an advisor, who provides that direction" (FUGATE, JARAMILLO & PREUHS, 2001, p. 132). This privileged type of mentoring concept has a great potential, because the mentor can focus the individuals' needs and requirements. Recently, group-mentoring settings have been increasingly applied due to its scaling for bigger cohorts of mentees (SHERK, 2006) and the positive aspects of social interaction (TOPPING, 1996; ALLEN et al. 1999). In this setting one or two mentor(s) are responsible for a small group of mentees. The use or non-use of technology, allows differentiating between face-to-face mentoring, technology-enhanced mentoring and blended mentoring. In face-to-face settings all stakeholders are present at the same location and at the same time. In technology-enhanced communication participants are not bound to location or time. Blended mentoring lies at the intersection of both, integrating the advantages of face-to-face and technology-enhanced communication in mentoring relationships.

Against the background of these theoretical reflections *mentoring is a relationship between mentor(s) and mentee(s), which gives the involved participants the chance to share their professional and personal competencies and experiences, to learn from mutual exchange and to cope with new institutional and social demands*.

3 Role and Functions of Mentors

After discussing the general aims of mentoring, the focus of this chapter shifts to functions and roles of mentors. Given the fact that "the ideal mentor does not exist" (JOHNSON & HUWE, 2003, p. 64), one can focus on the question which mentor roles actually exist in practice. From her practical research BUELL suggested four models of mentor-roles: The Cloning Model, the Nurturing Model, the Friendship Model, and the Apprenticeship Model (BUELL, 2004).

1. The Cloning Model understands the mentor as a person who wants to duplicate of him or herself. A high level of control and power characterizes the mentors corresponding to the Cloning Model. This model can be described as a mentor-centred model, due to the emphasis on the mentor.
2. In the Nurturing Model the mentor is a guiding, encouraging and supporting person. The mentor creates a trustful place for the mentee, to flourish in safety. Both partners set the goals of their relationship together. The evolving of a parent-child relationship, with high dependency and difficulties in the process of separation, might be a possible pitfall for a nurturing mentor.
3. The Friendship Model is identified as collaborative and co-constructed. Due to the non-hierarchical relationship of mentors and mentees, the 'peer' idea plays a key role. This model emphasizes beneficial outcomes for both parties. The main priorities are accessibility, trust, personal and professional exchange, honesty, and listening.
4. The Apprenticeship Model is based on a pragmatic relationship. Mentor and the mentee are not very close to each other. The mentor mainly passes on assignments and work pieces, so the mentee may gain experience by exercising and feedback of the mentor. Therefore, the mentee gets to know the relevant methods and strategies for a typical task within the community or organization.

These models outline different mentor-roles, creating specific relationships between mentor and mentee. Conclusively, a special focus on the different roles and functions of mentors and tutors as well as on the circumstances of higher education can can act as framework to interlink the theoretical mentoring models with the practical realities of different study programs.

4 Mentoring in the Circumstance of Higher Education

The specific circumstance of higher education induce how mentoring is developed, implemented and improved. In this chapter three cases of successfully implemented mentoring programs within the circumstances of the University of Vienna will be presented as basis of theoretical and practical reflections. The University is the largest Central European University with more than 90.000 students. According to its Development Plan 2015, over 40.000 students are enrolled in almost 60 bache-

lor programs, amongst which 16 bachelor programs have to incorporate more than 500 beginners per semester. These programs are classified as study programs in high demand and encompass about 65 % of all students. The mean professor-teacher ratio is 1:266 and even higher for study programs in high demand‘. This circumstance hardly allows intensive individual counselling between lecturers and students. Furthermore, the University of Vienna is committed to providing cost-free access to bachelor programs for EU-citizens without any requirements for admission. So called “Study Entry and Orientation Periods“(STEOP) are planned and implemented, including introductory courses and courses on subjects of particular significance for the chosen study program. The STEOP is limited to the first semester. Therefore students are required to pass the STEOP before they are allowed to enrol in other courses. If they fail the STEOP exams three times, they are not allowed to continue this study program.

These specific circumstances, typically for mass universities, cause changes in teaching practices as well as students’ behaviour and socialization in highly demanded study programs. Such study programs face several challenges especially in the initial study phase: First, they have to deal with the organizational challenges of the Study Entry Phase, providing administrative infrastructure for lectures and examinations for more than 500 students. Second, study culture changes due to the high number of enrolled students: The anonymity of masses impedes contact between first semester students of one cohort. Especially in the Study Entry Phase students tend to escape the crowded university structures, studying by themselves without getting to know their peers. Students tend to talk less to each other and do not exchange information and learning materials to the same extent as they would in smaller cohorts. Third, the communication between students shifts from face-to-face settings to virtual platforms, threads or Facebook-groups. Moreover, students´ contact to their lecturers is also reduced. Within lectures less contact takes place because of the lecturer-student ratio and the higher threshold of exposing oneself by asking questions in front of a huge audience. All in all, the contact with experienced students and professors does neither take place inside nor outside lectures. So their socialization into the culture of their discipline (ALLEN, 1999) does not start from the beginning of their study.

To cope with the problems described above, the University of Vienna aims at supporting first-semester students of highly demanded study programs through low-threshold services. The Center for Teaching and Learning of the (CTL) has supported several study programs in designing, implementing and realizing tutoring and mentoring programs for the initial study phase. A special focus has been put on preparing student mentors and tutors for their function in special workshops. Additionally, existing tutoring programs were supported with qualification workshops. The existing tutor programs made it necessary to rethink the boundaries between mentoring and tutoring. Tutoring is traditionally focused on transmitting specific knowledge or particular competencies, but most of the intentions for implementing peer tutoring (TOPPING, 1996) overlap with the mentoring roles described above. Attempts to establish theoretical differentiations between specific roles of tutors and mentors mostly failed to prove advantageous in practice. For this reason, this paper discusses all student support offers for the initial study phase

The mentoring and tutoring programs should cover four very distinct foci:

1. To bridge the gap between learning strategies at school and at university, suitable for the chosen discipline. Furthermore, to promote domain competencies as well as generic competencies important for the selected studies.
2. To bridge the gap between students' expectation and university reality by providing clarity about the characteristics of study programs and the chosen discipline to settle the study choice in a very early stage of study.
3. To foster generic competencies such as self-organization and –motivation and learning to communicate in a university setting.
4. To support socialization in the discipline and in a student discipline specific community and provide knowledge of how to use university structures and resources and how to obtain information and support (organizational matters).

A special emphasis has been placed on adapting each mentoring program to its particular, discipline-specific needs. For this purpose, the special requirements of each study program were analysed by experts from the CTL, study program managers, STEOP coordinators and student representatives. Institutional aims were defined and summarized, each with different importance for a particular study program: Consolidation of study choice, comprehension of study characteristics, better orientation within the curriculum, introduction to successful learning strategies suitable for university and the enrolled discipline, overview of discipline specific resources, electronic systems and sources of information, networking with peers and benefiting from advanced students, socialization in the culture of the specific discipline. The qualification workshops for student mentors were designed according to this consultation with focus on for three main competence domains:

- support socialization into the particular university study program
- help with organizational matters to manage the STEOP
- foster discipline-specific competencies and domain knowledge

As a consequence, student mentors and tutors of each study program were prepared in several training workshops, to take on a specially designed role, according to the discipline-specific purpose of the mentoring or tutoring program.

This study presents three practical cases to point out the importance of particular adaption of a student mentor's function and sense of mission to particular needs and circumstances of the study program. The chosen cases differ substantially in regard to their aims and communicational settings. The specific functions and resulting roles of student mentors and tutors in each discipline are described below.

4.1 STEOP Mentoring and Tutoring for the Bachelor of Biology

Approximately 900 to 1200 newcomers enrol in the bachelor study program Biology per year. The STEOP consists of two lecture series, which focus on areas of molecular and organismic biology and ends with a multiple choice test. Students reported great difficulties in getting information about organizational matters,

learning materials and resources as well as in understanding the presented content and in achieving the factual knowledge for the exam. The latter becomes visible in dropout rates of around 50 % and in low participation at the STEOP exams within their first study year, thus prolonging the duration of their studies. Study program managers additionally stated a lack of understanding of the characteristics of biology, both as a scientific discipline and as a vocational field. Moreover, they noticed a need to foster vertical exchange between students for encouraging an early integration in the scientific community.

To facilitate a good start for students, measures were implemented that comprise a combined mentoring and tutoring program with strong support by the CTL: To foster orientation and information, student e-Tutors were employed to design Moodle courses for the STEOP lecture, containing the newly implemented streaming of the STEOP lectures and offering a bundled offer of all learning materials provided in the lecture. Furthermore, E-Tutors were responsible for supporting students, tutors and mentors online in case of technical problems. Additionally, eight tutors were employed to answer domain-specific questions about the subject matter of the exams; each tutor specialized in one of the biological areas covered in the STEOP lecture. Their duty was to answer student questions in Moodle threads and in face-to-face tutorials. During the second year of the program tutors created a pool of questions for online self-testing to prepare for the multiple-choice exams.

Student mentors offered the third part of peer support. On the one hand they were responsible for socialization into a new university learning culture as well as into biology as a scientific discipline, on the other hand for clarity in organizational matters. More than 140 student mentors have been qualified in the course of the program, which gave over 1200 beginners (about 400 per year) the opportunity to take part in peer-to-peer mentoring sessions in groups of up to 25 members.

The mentors were accompanied by a special supervision lecture, gaining 5 ECTS points for their participation in the mentoring-program. At the end of each years´ lecture, an informal evaluation session took place with all mentors and the study program managers. The results influenced the design of the mentoring program and the qualification workshops for the next year‘s mentors. An additional evaluation was done by the Center of Teaching and Learning regarding the success and activity of mentees in the STEOP exams. Data has not been published yet, but due to the success of the measures, funding was prolonged up to 2014. Additionally, student representatives convinced of the positive impact of the mentoring and tutoring have started to engage in the mentoring program, providing additional workshops for the mentors’ qualification.

4.2 STEOP Assistants for the Bachelor of History of Arts and Architecture

The study program Bachelor of History of Arts and Architecture is in high demand: between 800 and 1000 students start this study program each year. The STEOP consists of three lectures with written module exams: Two introductory lectures (on iconography and architecture) and one propaedeutic lecture series, providing insights into the disciplines methodological approaches. As a part of the latter ex-

am, students have to create an ekphrasis, a discipline-specific description of art. Before the measures started, tutors have already been employed to support students in coping with the literature for the exam.

Student representatives as well as the study program manager stated the same problems: As a consequence of the teacher-centred mass lecture STEOP, first semester students lacked practical support in developing the methodological competence to perform an ekphrasis, resulting in poor performances in this part of the exam. Neither this special methodological habitus of literary visualization of art, a main characteristic of the discipline, nor direct in situ confrontation with objects of art was provided in the STEOP lectures. Therefore, the degree of first year students' socialization within the discipline culture of History of Art and Architecture was criticized to be poor.

To foster the particular competence of ekphrasis and the direct confrontation with art and architecture, so-called STEOP Assistants – were qualified with the support of the CTL: Between 10 and 18 advanced students had to complete a special course on ekphrasis as well as workshops on how to convey writing competencies and how to deal with a group of 25 study beginners in public places. After finishing qualification, each STEOP Assistant was employed to give a practical course on ekphrasis, with seven face-to-face peer-group mentoring sessions in museums or in front of Architecture. Furthermore, they had to give feedback on at least three art descriptions of each mentee. The course was supported by a Moodle, with the possibility to provide materials and a thread to answer students' questions online. The STEOP assistants had an own Moodle room to exchange views online and ask questions to supervising student assistants and trainers. Additionally, tutors took part in a workshop on fostering students' reading competencies.

An informal evaluation session took place with all mentors and the study program manager. The mentees were reported to be very successful in the exams. An additional evaluation by the Center of Teaching and Learning showed even an improvement of the mentees' grades, but data has not been published yet. Funding was prolonged up to 2014 for this mentoring program as well.

4.3 Tutor and e-Tutors at the Department of Communication

The study program of Mass Media and Communication Science has to incorporate an amount of approximately 1600 first-year students, each year. Due to the teacher-student ratio of 4:1600, first-year students have low contact with faculty members. Students had to be highly self-reliant, self-meditative and self-organized to deal with these new settings successfully. A lot of students could not cope with the transition to tertiary education: from small classroom interaction to mass lectures without personal guidance. The Department had to face a dropout rate of 50 % in the first semester, by trend.

Therefore the core aims of the tutoring program went beyond the traditional focus of tutoring on domain knowledge. To support students in fostering their social integration was seen as equally important, linking the tutoring approach to the aims of mentoring. The guidance in regard to learning domain-specific knowledge included open discussions and student-centred methods in face-to-face tutoring sem-

inars as well as weekly online-assignments and portfolio exercises in online tutoring courses.

Social integration was supported by face-to-face classes with an average of around 15 students each. In weekly meetings tutors and students could get to know each other in different settings. Discussions, mutual learning and group assignments as well as cooperative learning activities should foster teamwork and socialization in the seminar and beyond.

Online-only-seminars supported learning of domain-specific knowledge. Weekly assignments and portfolio exercises focused on the theory and methods of Communication Studies and built upon the topics of the weekly lecture. Most of the online features dealt with guiding, supporting students in regards to their work and giving feedback on the students' hand-ins as well as answering domain specific questions.

4.4 Resume

All three cases have been reported as very successful by participating mentees and mentors. The differentiated positioning of the function of mentors within the circumstance of each study program was an essential requirement for the successful support for students in the STEOP. The success of the programs was grounded in the elaboration of a special mentoring focus of each study program and each group of peer-supporters in cooperation with study program manager, student representatives and Mentoring Experts from the CTL. It turned out to be also very important to define strictly separated missions and duties for different peer-supporters and communicate them to the first year students. Otherwise false expectations led to confusion and disappointment instead of better orientation. It became evident in practice that three competence domains were crucial for mentors‘ and tutors‘ roles and functions: domain knowledge, organization and supporting socialization.

Domain knowledge includes discipline specific competencies such as reading and writing competencies for discipline specific literature, particular methods (for example ekphrasis), learning techniques suitable for particular domain knowledge and competencies to be achieved (within the STEOP). Among ***Organisation*** we subsume relevant information about the STEOP curriculum, exam procedures, resources and materials, and sources of information and support, as well as fostering self-competencies to organize life and studying at university.
Finally, ***Socialisation*** means to capture the culture of the discipline and start to become a part of it by being introduced to members of the scientific community, experienced students, institutes, and libraries on the one hand, and to ways of thinking, asking and discussing problems based on discipline specific paradigms on the other hand.

The definition of mentor and tutor roles and functions for all there cases presented above could be eased by positioning them across these three domains, as seen in Table 1:

Study program	Socialization	Organization	Domain Knowledge
Biology Mentors	++++	++++	
Biology Tutors			++++++
Biology eTutors		++	++
History of Arts STEOP ‘Assistants (Mentors)	+++		+++++
History of Arts STEOP Tutors			+++
Communication Sciences eTutors		++	++++
Communication Sciences Tutors	++++	++	++

Table 1: List of Study Programs

Based on this perspective we can also position the three presented cases according to the three domains (Fig. 1): Communication Sciences with focus mostly on domain knowledge and organization, as well as Biology with an emphasis on organization and socialization, and History stressing domain knowledge and socialization.

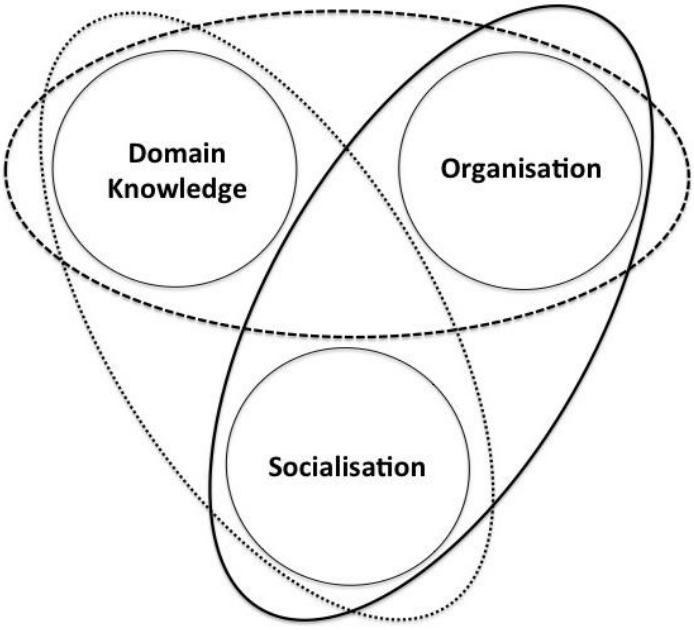

Figure 1: Core functions of Mentoring

We consider this model as useful tool do define the specific functions of student supporters for mentoring. To outline mentors‘ and tutors‘ roles along these three

core domains provides clarity for the implementation of mentoring od tutoring programs needed for different purposes:

- For tailoring the mentoring and tutoring programs to the needs of certain study programs.
- For setting special foci for the selection and qualification of student tutors and mentors.
- For transparency and clarity about mission and support of mentors and tutors for the mentees and targeted students.

5 Discussion & Conclusion

At this point, it is useful to recur to the main question: Which mentor-roles and models are suitable for Higher Education settings? How can mentoring-functions and mentor-roles be adapted to particular institutional needs? Based on the described practical experiences this discussion focuses on the question which theoretical mentoring model is appropriate for university education in order to define aspects, which are generally applicable.

Looking at the proposed mentor models of BUELL (2004) one can reason that the differentiation of BUELL cannot sufficiently provide a suitable framework. Rather than choosing one of BUELL's approaches it seems more convincing to draw aspects from all four models according to the particular needs of the institution. However, one of the models appears to be suitable as a principal substrate for mentoring approaches in comparable circumstances.

The Cloning Model can hardly cope with all mentee's needs, because the mentor's abilities do not necessarily fit to the first-year student's problems. Also the Apprenticeship Model may not be suitable for the support of first year students to cope with the transition from secondary to tertiary education and socialisation within the university culture. As passing on work and gaining experience by helping the mentor with his or her workload characterizes this model, it is rarely compliant with a supportive role of the mentor. The Nurturing Model is adequate as far as the mentor builds a "safe haven" for the mentee. As a model for the described circumstance needs to deal with a one year time frame and a large number of freshmen, the Nurturing Model can be problematic, as the intensive nurturing of every single first-year student goes beyond reasonable effort.

Specific aspects of the Cloning model (e. g. imitation of learning strategies and fostering of generic competencies for organization and socialization), the Apprenticeship model (e. g. online self-tests, feedback on assignments to achieve domain specific competencies) and the nurturing model (e. g. help with organizational matters and socialization in discipline culture and university) can be implemented in the design of a particular mentoring program, but none of these models seems to be generally suitable, except one: The Friendship model. The non-hierarchical Friendship Model provides a basic peer approach. The peer idea is crucial to a student-to-student mentoring program. In regard to the reciprocal advantages it is also suitable for providing teaching opportunities for post-graduate students. Even though a

higher number of mentored students decrease the possibility for personal interaction (nurturing), it provides a suitable setting for students to get to know each other, for socialization and mutual learning. Especially for first-semester students it is important to build a circle of fellow students for themselves. It can be seen that all three cases tend to fit BUELL's other models in some aspects, but we can conclude that the Friendship Model is closest to the practical realities.

Overall, an integrated approach that combines the Friendship Model and group mentoring by peers seems meet the needs of the initial study phase such as socialization, acquisition of domain knowledge and organizational guidance for first year students. Peer mentoring is considered as a non-hierarchal relationship. Therefore "fellow students can be invaluable sources of information on how to successfully navigate" (FUGATE, JARAMILLO & PREUHS, 2001, p. 132) in an institution of higher education. Also, due to the high numbers of mentees, technology-enhanced communication settings can provide advantages in terms of asynchronous communication: Not all mentees have to be in the same place at the same time. This enables a distribution of contact over time, which is useful to secure occasions for exchange in spite of problematic teacher-student ratios. Blended peer-mentoring can summarize benefits of face-to-face exchange with the advantages of technology enhanced communication.

Group mentoring by peers on the basis of BUELL's Friendship Model provides specific features for present-day circumstances at universities:

- A fruitful relationship between the more advanced postgraduate students and the newly enrolled first year students facilitating core aims such as socialization and acquisition of domain knowledge.
- A reciprocal non-hierarchal relationship is suitable for student-to-student mentoring as well as for tutoring designed to foster an atmosphere of enhancing all possible aims of the study program.
- A 'blended' approach is able to combine flexibility and socialization, being close to students' digital-native everyday lives.

Against the background of the practical realities of the presented study programs, the peer-approach, based on the Friendship Model, is a useful and generalizable model in the circumstance of highly-frequented first year programs.

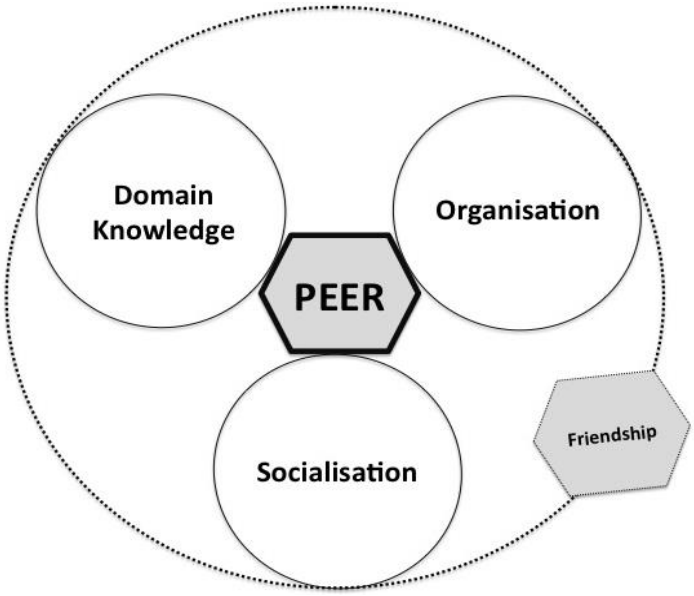

Figure 2: The Peer-Approach combined with the Friendship model as a central feature of successful Mentoring in the circumstance of higher education

To conclude, the combination of BUELL's Friendship model with a peer-approach as a generalizable strategy offers much potential to create successful mentoring programs. To customize the peer-Mentoring to the particular needs of a university study program of high demand the three crucial aspects should be considered: organizational support, support in socialization within the discipline and support to achieve relevant domain competencies.

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