Using Fanghanel's (2007) Framework to Explore the Micro, Meso, and Macro Factors Influencing Undergraduate Student Mentoring Programs

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Abstract

Successful undergraduate mentoring programs have the potential to help at-risk students achieve academic success, retention, and ultimately graduation (Terrion & Leonard, 2007). In most instances, the success of such mentoring programs at the university level not only relies on the effectiveness of the mentor-mentee relationship, but also the effectiveness of the coordinator of the program (Pfund, 2016). However, the role that the coordinator plays in the effectiveness of these programs is less understood. In order to better understand these dynamics, this exploratory, theoretical case study will use Fanghanel's (2007) framework (i.e., Micro, Meso, and Macro levels) to draw conclusions from observational data collected from one semester on two undergraduate mentoring programs from the coordinator's perspective. Specifically, the results of this analysis indicate that at the Micro level, issues pertaining to approach, networking, training, and expectations are important, whereas at the Meso and Macro level, feedback, logistics, listening, and holistic planning are valuable. The implications from this study provide actionable items that can be used to improve these programs from the perspective of the coordinator's responsibilities.

Introduction

Background:

- Universities use diverse mentoring programs as support mechanisms for students
- Coles (2011) defines informal mentoring as naturally occurring, supportive relationships that students have with older and more experienced individuals
- Mentoring involves the provision of general guidance, support and, in some instances, helping a student learn something new
- Mentoring promotes students' sense of well-being by challenging the negative opinions they may have of themselves and demonstrating that they can have positive relationships with adults (Coles, 2011, p. 2)

Research Questions:

- How can universities improve undergraduate mentoring programs; specifically in terms of retention, graduation, and academic success?
- What challenges do coordinators face in promoting mentoring programs?

Context:

For this study, two case studies featuring mentoring programs from a public, four-year university are considered: Program 1 and Program 2.

Methods

Data and Approach

To answer the research questions posed, this study takes a primarily exploratory, theoretical case study approach that focuses on the role of the coordinator in two undergraduate mentoring programs. Data for this study comes from coordinator observations made on these programs for one semester of their implementation. The data collected were analyzed (see Table 1) against Fanghanel's (2007) framework (see below).

Framework

Figure 1: Fanghanel's Framework

Micro Level

- According to Fanghanel (2007), these are internal factors affecting individual practitioner hence it studies how people balance their roles and identities

Meso Level

- According to Fanghanel (2007), this level comprises of two filters. I.e. the department and the discipline. Fanghanel (2007) stated that alliances and conflicts impacts academic's teaching approaches

Macro Level

- Fanghanel (2007) claims that this level has the most filters impacting on how we conceive of, and approach, teaching and learning. The filters are: the institution, the research-teaching nexus, external factors, and academic labour

Case Studies

Program 1:

The first program in this study is a program that helps to empower students to strive for good academic standing through additional advisement meetings, regular peer mentor meetings, online webinars, and participation in student orientation seminars. The design of this program strives to foster effectiveness in student retention, graduation, and success. Students are paired with older student mentors and must meet frequently throughout the semester to address academic issues, personal concerns, and other items relevant to their academic success. In this program, the coordinator helps to facilitate communication between the mentors and mentees.

Program 2:

The second program in this study aims at bridging the Colleges of Education and Engineering together as a larger mentoring community. The purpose is to retain and graduate a more diverse population of students in both colleges. This is done through engagement, retention, and success strategies implemented in first year students' careers pursing high demand STEM majors in Education and Engineering. Third year students in the same majors mentor the first year students. In this program, the coordinator helps implement these meetings, evaluate effectiveness, and plan curriculum.

Analysis

Table 1: Program & Level Interaction

Levels	Program 1	Program 2
Micro	Mentor-mentee dyad Resources/needs Mentoring style Lack of feedback Work ethics	Mentor's experience (skills, commitment, communication) Psychological profile Limited diversity amongst mentors/mentees Cost-benefit assessment Age differences
Meso	Disciplinary background Mentoring space/rooms Providing mentors with insufficient time Communication strategies Failure to limit the number of mentees per mentor Accountability tactics	Reward structure Accountability Field characteristic Retention
Macro	University policy Government policies (FERPA) Personal struggles Cultural factors (power distance, individuality vs. collectivity) Peer pressure Access to technology	Government policies University policies

Results

Two college mentoring programs were analyzed against Fanghanel's (2007) framework to better understand the challenges that mentoring program coordinators face at the Micro, Meso, and Macro levels of implementation. These results reflect recommendations that are based on the challenges, traits, and observation identified in the analysis.
These results provide knowledge concerning training, networking, and communication to mentoring program coordinators that want to improve the program's effectiveness.

Table 2: Analysis of Results by Level

Levels	Results	Description
Micro	Approach and availability	• Being approachable is key to building a trusted relationship
	Effective networking	• Can open doors for new opportunities that you may not have had access to previously
	Mentor training	• Maintain eye contact while speaking to someone
	Mentor expectations	• Keeping up with current events, sports or personal passions will help you to find topics of discussion with new people
Meso	Giving and receiving feedback	• Don't fear to take or give criticism
	Logistics and planning	• Keep up with program advisors on daily basis
Macro	Listening	• Don't talk more than you listen
	Understanding the whole picture	• Observe and follow university/government policies

Significance

Two college mentoring programs were analyzed against Fanghanel's (2007) framework to better understand the challenges that mentoring program coordinators face at the Micro, Meso, and Macro levels of implementation. These results reflect recommendations that are based on the challenges, traits, and observations identified in the analysis.
These results improve mentoring programs by providing knowledge concerning training, networking, and communication to mentoring program coordinators that want to improve the program's effectiveness.

Implications

Training and Logistics

Feedback:
- Providing feedback promotes effective communication

Reminders:
- Sending an early reminder gives the receiver of the message adequate time to plan their meeting

Texts over emails:
- Studies indicate that students respond to texts faster than they respond to emails

Communication Practices

Being appreciative:
- Being appreciative earns you trust and respect. Students rarely give back feedback. Be appreciative when you get one back

Being present:
- Being present helps to establish trust and show that you have a beginner's mind

No judgement:
- Judging a person while you are talking to them is criticizing and calling them names

Program Culture

Empathy:
- Having empathy for another person is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another

One on one:
- Taking someone aside and talking to them can be viable

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to use Fanghanel's (2007) framework (*i.e.* Micro, Meso, and Macro) levels to draw conclusions from observational data collected from one semester focusing on two undergraduate mentoring programs. As presented, eight results from a three level analysis and their related implications were generated to improve the efficiency of these programs from the coordinator's perspective. Conclusions found from this analysis can potentially improve the relationship and operational capabilities between a coordinator and their mentor/mentees. Future research will involve exploring these topics from the mentee's perspective to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts.

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