

## **The role of mentorship and supervision in enhancing the learning outcomes of undergraduate students engaged in live projects and work placements: a systematic review**

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### **Abstract**

Societal issues form vital lenses through which students learn, in and out of the classroom. This is particularly apparent where students interface with external stakeholders, such as in work-based learning, work-integrated learning, and live project modules.

This multidisciplinary, multi-regional review explores the role of academic mentorship and supervision in enhancing learning outcomes of undergraduate students engaged in these modules. Synthesising available literature and examining models already in use, this study contributes to the theory surrounding experiential learning in higher education, enhancing our understanding of effective pedagogical approaches.

Preliminary findings underline the importance of the triadic partnership (student, tutor, employer), and the effective intersections of these roles throughout the process.

Experiential learning should be reconceptualised in light of the competencies students must develop to engage meaningfully with contemporary issues. Professional development is important for academic tutors and workplace supervisors, leveraging experience and sense-making to support student involvement in experiential learning.

### **Full paper**

Higher education is often characterised by a drive to improve the development of employability skills in undergraduates, with institutional strategic agendas globally striving to align students' skills and competencies with industry expectations.

Societal issues form vital lenses through which students learn, both in and out of the classroom. This is particularly apparent where students interface with external stakeholders, such as in work-based learning, work-integrated learning, and live project modules. In these contexts, external

stakeholders often propose projects which reflect contemporary challenges related to e.g., artificial intelligence, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and sustainability goals.

Working with external partners has been shown in the literature to be highly beneficial for student development of curiosity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. It is therefore critical that students are empowered to make meaningful contributions to these projects through appropriate support, supervision, and mentoring.

This multidisciplinary, multi-regional review explores the role of academic mentorship and supervision in enhancing the learning outcomes of undergraduate students engaged in live projects and work placements. By synthesising the available literature and examining the models already in use, the study contributes to the theory surrounding practice-based learning in undergraduate higher education, investigating the benefits of mentorship and supervision for the stakeholders involved, and identifying factors which impact student experience, competence and employability; thereby enhancing our understanding of the effective pedagogical approaches in practice-based learning experiences.

Following an initial scoping review, a set of inclusion/exclusion criteria were identified, and a series of keywords were generated to perform a literature search across multiple databases.



Preliminary findings underline the importance of the triadic partnership (student, academic tutor, and employer), and the effective intersection of these roles at different stages of the process. Whilst there are several factors which influence student satisfaction, supporting behaviours from the organisation and co-workers are considered by students to be particularly significant.

There is a need to reconceptualise work-based learning in the light of the competencies that students must develop to engage meaningfully with contemporary issues. Similarly, professional development is important for both academic tutors and workplace supervisors, to leverage experience and sense-making to support student involvement in experiential learning.

Following on from the systematic review, an action-based research project is proposed to take more fully into account the perspectives of academics and employers.

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