Shakin' the classroom
Spreading alternative knowledge sharing methods

Please briefly explain the knowledge sharing method/approach/tool.
What are the main processes? What are the expected outcomes? In what ways does that method bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

Mentorship implies a specific, interactive relationship that entails the exchange of knowledge and experiences between a mentor (a more experienced person) and a mentee (someone less experienced). By using this approach, the mentor supports the mentee in his/her personal and professional journey. Also, they work together on exploring and developing mentee's skills, talents and abilities. Therefore, the main aim of mentorship is to create a space for thinking, self-reflection, personal and professional development. In this joint journey, the mentor is the one who asks open ended and engaging questions, listens, supports and follows. Despite of this, mentorship is a two-way relationship, in which both mentor and mentee give and receive, learn and grow together. Mentoring process is organised into sessions that follow mentee's goals and needs. In addition to meetings in person, the mentoring relationship develops online, via e-mails and other means of communication.

In which way is this method alternative?
How does it try to bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

The mentorship as a method is personal, contextual and situated, and very focused on needs of a mentee. At the same time, unlike more abstract knowledge sharing methods it is very practice and experience based, and fosters trust and affective relationship between those involved in the process.

What are your experiences with the method?
In case you have created, tested or experienced the method, what are your experiences? How have you applied the method? Would you change anything or suggest further development?

We have created and run a program called Creative Mentorship for 10 years already, with 6 generations of 300 participants total going through the program. At the same time, we have shared knowledge and experience on mentorship on numerous occasions and helped creation of numerous other mentoring programs in Serbia, Bosnia, Balkans, Portugal, Sweden and Belarus.

In your opinion, for what kind of pedagogical contexts, settings, participants and/or objectives is this method best suited for?
E.g. age, educational level, cultural and professional background, etc. Did it prove useful or successful in particular contexts and for particular objectives?

Mentorship, with its different variations, is used in numerous contexts. The process can take longer (a year or more) or shorter (such as in flesh mentorship). It can be developed within organizational structure or independently. It can focus on specific profession or target group, or it can feature a mix of disciplines and participants. It can function as a way of empowering socially vulnerable groups, and mentorship programs for women only, or for kids from disadvantaged backgrounds are common across the world. In all of these scenarios the common thing is the focus on mentees needs, dilemmas, struggles and development.

What are the requirements for applying this method?

Are there any requirements or limits in terms of location, number or profile of participants, tools and devices, time constraints and other? Are there certain skills, sensitivities or relations that need to be developed or assumed for the method to be successfully applied? What are the crucial points to pay attention to when implementing the method in different contexts? Are there any contexts for which this method is not best suited?

It can take longer or shorter, but from our experience, for the relationship to develop and be fruitful, there needs to be at least 5-6 sessions. This does not mean that one-off mentoring sessions are also not useful, as they can be particularly well suited when a person or a group is in a deadlock in relation to some idea or plan and wants to steer discussion and gain perspectives other than one own. The method is not suited when practiced as a one off or short-term engagement with people who face situations of difficulty and uncertainty. In these cases specifically, it is important that there is time and space to develop trust between a mentor and a mentee, and slowly move forward, relying on longer-term support.

If possible, please briefly explain the context in which the method/tool/approach has been developed.
Who were the main actors? What were the main reasons/motivations/inspirations behind the creation? Which previous developments have influenced it? If relevant, in what ways did the method/tool develop or change over time or in different locations/contexts?

The method has been used for a long time, and its root go back to Ancient Greece. It has been taken over in academia for the process of supervising a thesis and research by students, as well as in multiple public and private institutions as a way to transfer knowledge from more experienced employees to newcomers.