

TUTORING PHENOMENON AMONG STUDENTS OF SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

The term of tutoring was introduced by David Wood to determine informal, natural and spontaneous teaching. It takes place in situations of social interaction, enriched by naturally appearing 'didactic and educational occasions' (Brzezińska, Lutomski, Smykowski, 1995). This issue is discussed by a great number of authors (Musatti 1981; Forman 1981; Cazden 1983; Tudge and Rogoff 1989). In the teaching-learning process a leading role is attributed to a tutor of the same age.

In his deliberations on the phenomenon of tutoring, David Wood (1995, 1980, 1986) used the following terms: *instruction*, *teaching* and *tutoring*. At the same time he considered the term 'instruction' to be of overriding importance and he understood it in terms of intentional acquiring of knowledge and of pupil's abilities. In addition, he divided 'instruction' into: natural and spontaneous teaching, informal teaching or tutoring, and intentional and more formal teaching.

Children's tutoring

D. Wood carried out research on the tutoring phenomenon with reference to deaf children (Wood and others, 1986). His conclusions can be generalized. Wood examined deaf children as, according to him, they are most vulnerable to strict control of adults. His research findings demonstrate that control and correction of pupils in situations of tutoring produce very good results in a short length of time. However, if the length of time is too long its results are opposite. The children who are kept under excessive supervision on the part of their tutors are unable to develop self-control and cannot learn how to shape their own competence.

A system close to tutoring prevailed at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries in Anglo-Saxon countries. It was a monitorial system named after its creators-Bell and Lancaster. It consisted in the fact that more advanced students (monitors) taught their weaker classmates what they had previously learnt from their teachers. (Kupisiewicz 1980, p. 184).

The reference to the phenomenon of tutoring can also be found in the works of J. Piaget. According to him, the interaction between students of the same age is the interaction taking place between those who are equal to one another. However, if the process of teaching by a peer is to bring about the desired effect, partners should adopt different viewpoints. W. Damon (1984) maintains that teaching by a peer may be effective only when one of the children possesses a greater knowledge in a given field than their peer, and both children have a considerable insight in this field, as well as the need to improve it. Moreover, he believes that peers' cooperation is 'an ideal technique of encouraging children to respond to an intellectual challenge of discovery of new and difficult principles.' The process of learning to communicate properly by means of the written and spoken word, the discovery of the logic of scientific theorems, and becoming conscious of political reasons fundamental to the system of social control may be enforced as part of cooperation based on peers' interaction. Such intellectual benefits widen the limits of children's psychological capabilities. As a result of them, children develop at their best in conditions of highly-motivated discovery, of free thought exchange and of bilateral feedback. These are characteristics based on the cooperation of the exchange between children (1984, p. 340).

D. Jaques (1997) emphasizes a significant role of a group leader, or Pre-School and Early School Education; specialization in Oligophrenopedagogy in Radom.

In numerous publications their authors lay great emphasis on a group work, as it seems to be the most optimal form of work. The tutoring phenomenon can be observed in a group work and then be used for the needs of the teaching-learning process.

Experiment

The phenomenon of children's tutoring aroused my interest. Towards the end of the 1990s I conducted research involving 144 first-form and pre-school pupils. These findings concerned the turning point between nursery and primary school (7 and 8-year-old pupils). They brought me to interesting conclusions on tutoring and were the inspiration for further investigation.

I decided to verify the development of this phenomenon among elder students and adults. To that purpose, in May 2008, I performed an experiment with the 2nd-year students of Special Needs Education at UMCS University in Lublin and with the 2nd-year students of Pre-School and Early School Education with the specialization in Oligophrenopedagogy in Radom.

60 full-time students from Lublin and 30 full-time and external students from Radom participated in the investigation. The experiment consisted of several stages. I described its course to the students, giving them the experiment's objectives, and made sure they had understood it well.

Stage I-PRE-TEST

All students were provided with a sheet containing five logical tasks (logical tasks of which I made use in the experiment were taken from 'Mensa prezentuje: zadania i testy na inteligencję.' MENSA presents: IQ tasks and tests.' The tests were chosen from 1st grade of difficulty to enable all students to do them well). They were given 15 minutes to solve the tests. At this stage I selected tutors according to the criteria of correctness and speed. Tutors were those students who solved the tests correctly and needed the least time of all to do them. The first criterion was correctness, the second one was time.

Stage II

At the second stage I created triads through the introduction of the most effective person, that is a tutor, to two people with the worse test scores and, one by one, I approached the centre of the row. The score divergence between the tutor and two other people was gradually diminishing. In this way 20 triads came into existence.

The triads' aim consisted in solving the tests together. Each test included 10 logical tasks of similar level of difficulty to the first one. At this stage I also verified the correctness and time employed in solving the tasks.

Stage III-POST-TEST

Like in case of the first stage, students solved five tasks individually.

Stage IV

Every student completed a short, anonymous questionnaire signing it with a pseudonym. It was a source of the following data: the year of birth, sex, parents' education, number of siblings and sequence of their birth, place of residence (city, town, village), the last term average mark, qualifying course and additional field of study.

In the analysis of the data I compared 20 triads of full-time UMCS students, 10 triads of full-time Kolegium Nauczycielskie (Teacher-Training College) students, and 10 triads of external Teacher-Training College students.

The analysis of the data concerning students

The biggest age diversification, for obvious reasons, was found among external students. Over 84% of all respondents were born in 1986-87. (Table 1).

The year of birth	1960	1975	1976	1977	1978	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	Razem
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Lublin						2	2	2	8	46		60
Radom full-time students									8	21	1	30
Radom external students	1	3	1	2	2		1	2	8	10		30
Altogether	1	3	1	2	2	2	3	4	24	77	1	120

Table 1. Students' year of birth

Among the research participants were only 5 men. This fact is connected with feminization of education. What is interesting, four of them became tutors.

The analysis of education of students' parents demonstrates the broad spectrum-from primary to university education. More than 47% of fathers and 50% of mothers represent secondary education. In the analysed group mothers definitely constituted a more numerous group with a university education. (Table 2 and 3).

Education	primary	vocational	secondary	university	altogether
Lublin	5	24	24	7	60
Radom full-time students	2	7	18	3	30
Radom external students	0	13	15	2	30
Altogether	7	44	57	12	120

Table 2. Fathers' education

It is a prevailing trend in a contemporary society, arising from the shift of social roles in families. It wields enormous influence on children's development, since a mother's figure is usually the closest person who dedicates a lot of time to her children and shapes a young person.

Education	primary	vocational	secondary	university	altogether
Lublin	1	10	35	14	60
Radom full-time students	2	8	10	10	30
Radom external students	1	9	16	4	30
Razem	4	27	61	28	120

Table 3. Mothers' education

Around 10% of all respondents were only children. The family structure is one of the factors which has an impact on children's social development. It can be assumed that children growing in numerous families are better prepared for the group cooperation than the only ones.(Table 4).

Number	only	1	birth	2	birth	3 i więcej	birth	Altogether
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of siblings	children		sequence		sequence		sequence	
Lublin	6	34	14 m	18	6 m	2	1 m	60
			20 st		2 śr		1 st	
					10 st			
Radom full-time students	4	11	6 m	10	2 m	5	1 m	30
			5 st		4 śr		3 śr	
					4 st		1 st	
Radom external students	3	6	2 m	17	6 m	4	1 m	30
			4 st		5 śr		1 śr	
					6 st		2 st	
Altogether	13	51		45		11		120

Table 4. Number of siblings and birth sequence

The majority of the respondents (over 63%) came from towns.

It may suggest that possibilities and social mores make town children more willing to enter university education. (Table 5).

Place of residence	City	Town	Village	Altogether
Lublin	15	25	20	60
Radom full-time students	8	9	13	30
Radom external students	8	11	11	30
Altogether	31	45	44	120

Table 5. Place of residence

Almost 70% of all students scored the last term average mark of 4.0 in the scale from 2(failed) to 5(very good). Only two students from Lublin obtained lower than 3.5 last term average mark. On that basis we can presume that students are eager to study. They care about marks and their ambitions are high. Probably their purpose is not limited merely to receiving a university degree but to being a qualified specialist highly valued by future employers. (Table 6). Some students decide to specialize in additional fields of study in order to diversify their education and make it more versatile. It is dictated by a growing market demand for professionals.

Average mark	< 3,5	3,5 – 4,0	4,1 – 4,5	4,6 – 5,0	Altogether
Lublin	2	22	25	11	60
Radom full-time students		6	18	6	30
Radom external students		7	10	13	30
Altogether	2	35	53	30	120

Table 6. Last term average mark

In Teacher-Training College in Radom all female students study just one field: pre-school and early school education with the specialization in oligophrenopedagogy, whereas in Lublin students chose out of three specializations:

- 9 - oligophrenopedagogy
- 22 – tyflopädagogik
- 29 – Resozialisierung

Moreover, 12 students study contemporarily another field.

Tutoring phenomenon among students

Taking into consideration the data concerning environmental conditions and the education level of 40 tutors, it can be stated as follows:

1. only 5 of students are only children (more than 87% have siblings);
2. 90% of tutors scored the last term average mark of above 4.0
3. 23 fathers (57,5%) and 30 mothers (75%) of the respondents have at least secondary education
4. 15 tutors come from cities, 15-from towns, and only 10 live in a village.

The analysis of the results gained by tutors in pre-tests and in post-tests and their comparison to triads' results brought me to the following conclusions:

- all 40 triads scored 50% or even more in the tests
- students from Lublin were more efficient in the group (triad) – in 7 cases they scored from 90% to 100% in the tests
- in Radom only two triads scored 90% in the tests
- surprisingly, almost all tutors obtained worse results in post-tests than in pre-tests.
- members of triads, who were not tutors, in 26 cases, that is in 65%, obtained better results in post-tests than in pre-tests; in 10 cases –the same results, and only in 4 cases-worse results.

Previous research

While comparing the results and conclusions drawn from the research I had conducted among children and among students, you can notice certain similarities. In the research concerning children there are similar relations, which occurred in the results of tutors and of students' triads. Both children, solving tasks in post-tests, and students as the whole triad, obtained better results.

However, I noticed a surprising relation- a very good tutor lost the most in post-tests. Maybe such a tendency is caused by the responsibility that tutors take for solving the task by triads. Students were very serious about performing this experiment. It seems that children lacked this seriousness and they were just playing whereas students strived to show their knowledge and abilities, and come out well. Working under pressure made tutors 'burnt-out' working with triads, and thus they obtained worse results while solving the later tasks on their own. Still, the reason for that may be different- by adjusting themselves to the level of triads, tutors could not return to their own way of reasoning in a short time. That is why too wide divergence between tutors and other members' way of reasoning is not desirable.

There exists another similarity between children and students – that of their family structure - the majority of tutors in both groups had siblings.

Conclusions

The phenomenon of tutoring exists among students and can be used if we adhere to certain principles.

The research results show that tutors should be chosen from students who have: siblings, parents with at least secondary education, come from towns and receive good marks in education. Notwithstanding this, it is worth remembering that the introduction of a very good tutor into a weak triad is doomed to failure, first of all of the tutor. Even the best tutors who join weak triads obtain worse results and afterwards are slower at solving tasks. It is probably the result of a wide divergence of common ground for agreement. The closer level the tutor represents, the better results the triad receives and the tutor loses less or nothing. Thus, the best students should not help the weakest ones, as there exists too big difference between them. This task should be performed by average students since they will have a

closer contact with their peers. Solely people who are a bit better , have similar experience and associations, as well as the capability of sharing knowledge and skills in an accessible way to other members of the group can be tutors. At this opportunity another conclusion crosses my mind - if not every person can be a good tutor, not every person can be a good teacher. Taking that into consideration, should we not select candidates for pedagogical fields of study?

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