

Chapter 2

The Benefits of Peer Tutoring and Peer Mentoring in University: A Review of Research

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the results of a review of research about peer tutoring and peer mentoring in higher education oriented by two fundamental aims. The first of them, deepen and clarify from the conceptual point of view the peer tutoring and the peer mentoring in the university context and, in second place, to explore and evidence the benefits and the impact that these support modalities has in the light of the results of international investigations. The results show that the benefits of peer collaboration focus on two horizons: academic achievement and human-social development. An integrated approach is needed, for its greater impact for the university student. Finally, some conclusions and some guidelines for future research are proposed.

INTRODUCTION

The reforms proposed by ministers responsible for education in the member countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) focused on curriculum-based changes orientated around standardizing plans, a shared credit transfer system, equal opportunities and student/teacher mobility. However, a decade after the EHEA was created, this focus had significantly changed to methodological innovation and research with the aim of creating, firstly, students capable of responding to the challenges they face as active citizens and future professionals and, secondly, university teachers who improve learning

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processes through the creation of new strategies and teaching methods generated by in-depth didactic analysis (Medina, Sevillano & De la Torre, 2009).

Also, international bodies have recommended that “higher education institutions and national policy makers in partnership with students should establish counseling, guidance, mentoring and tracking systems to support students” (European Commission, 2013, p. 45). In fact, tutoring is a fundamental element of any educational process and, as such, it has been widely treated in the international scientific literature (Topping, 1996; Álvarez & Bisquerra, 1996; Goodlad & Hirst, 1989; Falchikov, 2001; Allen & Eby, 2007; Wisker, Exley, Antoniou & Ridley, 2008; López Gómez, 2015, 2017). However, two assessments can be made. In the first place, the tutoring and orientation processes have had a greater development, importance and tradition in the basic and pre-university education. Secondly, the majority of these processes of tutoring have been framed within the professor-student relationship, understanding in this way that the educational profession concretizes the educational relationship, that is a human relationship oriented to the support and the growth, the tutoring being one of the most pertinent means to make operational the purposes of the teaching and of the university education.

Nevertheless, it can be said that there is a long tradition of the tutoring programs in the university, with diverse purposes and they are organized through different approaches and modalities. In many of these programs and performances it has become evident that the tutoring relationships are not limited to the professor-student one, being possible to conceptualize and develop other ways of support between students. Therefore, cooperation, support and learning among peers are skills that should be developed in pre-university stages; these transferable skills are included in numerous university study plans and are also highly sought-after professional skills.

This chapter presents the results of an investigation on peer tutoring and peer mentoring in higher education oriented by two fundamental aims. The first is to deepen and clarify from the conceptual point of view the peer tutoring and the peer mentoring in the university context and the second is to explore and evidence the benefits and the impact that these support modalities have in the light of the results of international investigations.

METHOD

For the attainment of the previous aims, a strategy of search, selection, analysis and discussion of relevant research for a process of non-systematic literature review has been designed. In effect, although the criteria of inclusion of the documents have been taken into account in this study, it is evident that a criterion of systematization for concrete periods has not been assumed and this perspective brings about the main methodological limitation of this study. Nevertheless, the quality of the review can be justified because it has used relevant research in a wide temporary perspective, with the aspiration to discover tendencies and conceptual frames that have been a reference in the construction of the field of study around peer tutoring and peer mentoring.

For this, the following studies have been consulted: Goldschmid and Goldschmid (1976), Lawson (1989), Maxwell (1990), Saunders (1992), Topping (1996), Falchikov (2001), Colvin (2007) that emphasize the importance and impact in the scientific field of peer tutoring. On the other hand, in relation to peer mentoring, relevant studies focused on review of research have been included in this study (Jacobi, 1990; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Gershenfeld, 2014) as well as the work of Haggard, Dougherty, Turbam & Wilbanks (2011), those who reviewed the concept of mentor. At the same time, it is of great interest the

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