Peer Tutoring and Personal Adequacy in Elementary and Secondary Schools

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Introduction

Peer tutoring is a very old practice, traceable back at least as far as the ancient Greeks (Topping, 1996). It is used from a very long time in Britain: 200 hundred years ago, Bell and Lancaster used extensively this type of education.

In 1960, peer tutoring was started to be used in a large scale in USA (Topping, 2003). There are many studies done which prove the fact that peer tutoring has a dramatic effect in developing the reading and writing skills of young students. National Commission on Resources of the Youth, Inc. (NCRY), in their first study in 1967 in Newark (New Jersey), and in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), called Youth Tutoring Youth, show in their results that not only young students increased their reading skills with up to 3.5 years age equivalency but, that also, increased their personal adequacy (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989) in “Peer tutoring: a guide to learning by teaching”.

Studies to support PTPA

The concept behind this diagram is formed by four major theoretical perspectives.

1. Motivational Perspectives – “presumes that task motivation is the most important part of the process and that the hold other processes are driven by motivation.” (179)
2. Social Cohesion Perspectives – “students will engage in the task and help one another learn because they identify with the group and want another to succeed.” (180)
3. Cognitive Perspectives – “interactions among students will in themselves increase student achievement for reasons that have to do with mental processing of information rather than with motivations.” (182)
4. Developmental Perspective – “interaction among children around appropriate tasks increases their mastery of critical concepts.” (182)

As PTPA proposes, when older children are assuming the teacher’s role in tutoring younger peers, it is the responsible one to help others, children will see their tutoring duties more like reciprocal peer teaching, rather than having a position of superiority today. The only new thing that PTPA brings to life is the teacher role-play for helping others. As the literature shows, peer training is used since antiquity and offers already good models for teachers today. The new thing that PTPA brings to life is the teacher role-play for helping others. As the literature shows, peer training is used since antiquity and offers already good models for teachers today. The only new thing that PTPA brings to life is the teacher role-play for helping others.

Conclusions

As PTPA proposes, when older children are assuming the teacher’s role in peer tutoring interactions with younger ones, developing the understanding of what it means to be a teacher, not only will decrease in child-teacher conflict and increase in child-teacher closeness but they will also transmit this behavior to their peers.

To implement Peer-Tutoring and Personal Adequacy into elementary and secondary schools does not require too much spending; the school setting has everything that PTPA needs:

- Older students (as tutors) and younger students (as tutees);
- Teachers who can adapt, improve and, supervise the program, raising tutored;

PTPA is a program that can start from the first year elementary school, beginning with collaborative training for first grade children to get accustomed with the concept of helping others. As the literature shows, peer training is used since antiquity and offers already good models for teachers today. The new thing that PTPA brings to life is the teacher role-play for helping others.

The typology of tutoring, as part of PTPA program, can be constituted as close as to Topping (1996) describes it:

1. Curriculum Content – may be knowledge and skills oriented;
2. Contact Constellation – some programs operate with one tutor working with a group of tutees, but the size of group can vary from two to thirty or more;
3. Year of Study – tutors and tutees are from different years of study;
4. Ability – while many projects operate on a cross-ability basis, there is increasing interest in same-ability tutoring;
5. Place – Peer tutoring may vary in location of operation;
6. Target groups – peer tutoring should be scheduled outside regular class time; it will be more appropriate to be integrated as a course;
7. Tutor Characteristics – include not only students with good grades (as it has been done traditionally), but emphasis should be on students with lower grades who would benefit greatly (as studies show) from becoming tutors;
8. Objectives – “projects may target intellectual gains, formal academic achievement, social competence, or affective educational goals, such as self-concept, self-esteem, and self-concept goals, or any combination. Organizational objectives might include reducing dropout, increasing access, etc.” (222-232)

PTPA will be more efficient if it will become a required course such as reading, writing, math, etc. Along the years students will develop a better social skill in helping others.
REFERENCES


