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## Peer Tutoring

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### Abstract

Peer Tutoring schemes frequently appeal to educators in Higher Education and there is much literature examining implementation and assessment; this study wishes to understand the lesser considered student experience. In particular how students act as peer tutors on an accredited programme. The stories students tell give a picture of the complex, multi-faceted interpersonal relationships that comes into play as a peer tutor and the problems faced in the role. This inquiry finds the student perspective of peer mentoring shows us how to better support them on accredited programmes.

**Keywords:** Peer tutoring; student mentors; narrative inquiry; student experience; media production; accredited peer tutoring.

### Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring is not a new idea, it is possibly as old as any form of collaborative or community action and has probably always taken place implicitly or vicariously (Topping 2005) but in a changing Higher Education landscape, more formalised and even assessed forms of peer teaching are becoming ever more popular. Indeed Peer tutoring schemes appear to be becoming strategized; developing to meet calls for accountability, better assessment, and improved outcomes for students.

Peer tutoring (also referred to as peer learning, cooperative/collaborative learning and peer collaboration), is taken here to refer to the 'use of teaching and learning strategies in which students learn with and from each other without the immediate intervention of a teacher' (Boud et al., 1999: 413). The literature shows evidence that peer tutoring is being increasingly used across all disciplines as a type of supplemental instruction or surrogate support. Programmes are being implemented in various ways to enhance the curriculum and/ or support students through transitional stages of University life. These exchanges can range from formal teaching in the classroom to sharing information informally. In general, peer tutors help other students either on a one-to-one basis or in small groups by continuing classroom discussions, developing study skills, evaluating work, resolving specific problems and encouraging independent learning (Colvin 2007; Falchikov 2001; Goodlad 1998; Boud et al 2001).

This popularity of peer tutoring has produced guidance on the structuring and content of tutor training. This literature provides much advice on how to implement and manage schemes for them to work well, including an enthusiastic and committed approach from

teaching staff, good organisation and preparation, transparency, frequent formative feedback, fair assessment and built-in support for students (Parsloe & Wray 2001; Klasen 2002).

As courses increase their use of peer tutors so research studies are attempting to evaluate them. Thus far research into peer tutoring has taken a 'positivist' approach so that the benefits of peer teaching and learning have now been well documented. Research studies report that peer tutors show enhanced or increased personal development, motivation and confidence (Hammond et al, 2010). Biggs also noted students reported they liked the more friendly and relaxed learning environment provided by mentors and the opportunity to initiate friendships amongst their peer groups (1999). It has even been suggested that peer tutors are considered 'the most powerful influence in undergraduate education, even more so than advisors and instructors' (Colvin 2007:166). Given this buzz around peer tutoring and the desire to offer more schemes within curriculum design it is, arguably, important then for educators to gain a deeper understanding of the student experience of peer tutoring.

The majority of research on peer tutoring focuses on theoretical approaches, implementation and assessment (Falchikov 2001; Topping 2005). The methodology used to evaluate peer mentoring is normally through evaluative questionnaires, one-to-one interviews post-event and statistical analysis (Goodlad 1995; Colvin 2007; Brandwein 1985). There is much less literature on the nature of peer tutoring relationships, the approaches they take and the challenges they may face. Indeed few studies look at peer mentoring functions and the personal qualities best suited to performing them. There has been some attempt to look at the nature of this specific and important peer role. Colvin (2007) used data from self-reflective journals and interviews to illuminate inter-classroom relationships. More recent research (Colvin & Ashman, 2010) used observational and interview techniques to examine the role of peer mentors in and out of the classroom and the nature of the expectations of the instructors and the institution running the programmes. This research tells us of the importance of training peer mentor and supporting peer tutoring schemes throughout the programmes.

But the literature is, arguably, not telling us what it feels like to be a peer mentor for a student nor does it tell us of how they manage the challenges they face in the role. There is little telling us how students approach peer tutoring, how they cope with any issues arising and how they feel once they have been through the programme. The connection between peer mentoring and student confidence may be implied in research studies but the link with motivation and self-esteem has arguably not been thoroughly explored. Other educational study areas are concerned with motivation - usually finding that a key factor is the student's own self-belief (Zepke and Leach 2010) - but this is not showing up as a key area in peer learning research. An extensive literature review, which used groupings to find the key characteristics of the mentor role, found only 5.5% of articles reviewed concerned with sources of motivation. (Terrion and Leonard 2007). It is often thought that 'good' students (high achievers, good social skills, talented) should be rewarded with a mentoring role (Topping 2005) but this is telling us about how instructors choose mentors and nothing about the mentors' own incentives.

Further research that gives a clearer picture of the experience of being a peer mentor is clearly warranted then. Behind this are concerns raised in the literature about the authenticity and reliability of qualitative research methods commonly used to evaluate peer tutoring. Indeed much is dismissed as 'anecdotal and impressionistic' (Falchikov 2001:179) or 'the subjective interpretation of case studies' (Brandwein 1985).

The primary purpose of this study is to understand the student experience of being a peer tutor. The study further seeks to determine the nature of the interactions between a peer mentor and mentee. The secondary purpose of the study is to determine how stories (using a narrative inquiry) can, perhaps, show us more than evaluative questionnaires and interviews.

**The following three research questions guided the study:**

- What difference, if any, might there be in student performance of those students who have experienced being a peer mentor?
- What are the features/factors that influence a peer mentoring session?
- Are there benefits to peer mentoring that go beyond self-improvement?

**The Peer Tutoring Module**

The accredited course is open to final year Media Production students with TV studio knowledge and experience. The module is a mix of theory and practice. The first half of term develops the students' understanding of teaching methods and delivery underpinned by current pedagogical principles. The second half of term students gain practical tutoring experience running timetabled skills sessions.

The peer tutors were required to attend all training sessions and to gain a minimum of 5 hours tutoring practice. Each student was required to produce a self-reflective blog including postings on material presented in class and what they learnt from the practical sessions. They were also encouraged to complete tasks on the module electronic blackboard (Moodle) and take part in discussion forums.

Students then worked together in teaching teams of 3 or 4 with groups of 12-15 Level 1 students. Their role was mainly instructional; to teach how to use studio kit and supportive; passing on their experience of working in the TV studio. Some peer tutors liked to prepare their sessions, others preferred to make them less formal.

**Methodology**

Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used. Data collection occurred from January 2011 to March 2011. Data came from; a questionnaire and self-evaluation score sheet, and a narrative inquiry designed by the author using examples from the literature (as quoted above) as a guide.

All the participating students on this module were asked to complete the same questionnaire and a self-evaluation score sheet at the beginning and end of the module (Falchikov 2001). These were given out in class supervised by the author. The questionnaire

was designed primarily to assess improvements in confidence, presentational and professional skills. Students were asked to self-score their ability out of 5 in the following categories:

1. Self confidence in professional scenarios
2. Presenter skills – presenting to an audience
3. Presentation skills – articulacy, fluency
4. Presentations Skills – clarity, explanatory
5. Social skills – personable, popular
6. Organisational skills – preparation, instructional
7. Professional skills – negotiation, diplomacy

At the end of the module students were asked to write a narrative – a short ‘story’ of a mentoring experience that particularly stuck in their mind (Carter 1993:7). They worked individually and in quiet conditions and were given 15 minutes to complete their account. The students were asked to describe a short episode in the life of a peer tutor – to describe a common event that might happen, real or imagined (Weibe and Hoogland 2010). They wrote on paper and were invigilated by the author.

Coding was used to interpret the narratives. Overall 11 student stories were used for analysis. Coding took place after all the narratives had been collated. The initial codes looked at the type of story – subjective, objective, fiction, reflection etc. until themes began to develop. Then for consequences, lessons learnt, vulnerability and what worked (Yoder-Wise and Kowalski 2003). Finally codings were formed based on analysis of subtext, structure, rhetoric and figures of speech (Cousins 2009). Repeated reading finally led to the identification of the most significant codes.

#### STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Rate your current capabilities/ skills on a scale of 1-5 (poor to brilliant)

Student Name

Date

	Before Mentoring	After Mentoring
Self-confidence in professional scenarios		
Presenter skills – presenting to an audience		
Presentation skills – articulacy/ fluency		
Presentation skills – Clarity/ Explanatory		
Social skills – personable/popular		
Organisation skills – preparation + instructional		
Professional skills – negotiation + diplomacy		
Media Production knowledge (What aspects of your own studio knowledge have increased as a result of mentoring)		
Mentoring experience (What did you personally gain from the experience)		
How would you improve your mentoring style next time?		

#### NARRATIVE INQUIRY

The peer mentors were given a sheet of paper with the following instructions:

Write your response to the following statement: 'A true episode in the life of a student mentor...'

You can write about any aspect of mentoring, in any style you like. This does not have to be factual report.

Character – Describe you the mentor and your mentee

Plot – Describe a short episode in the life of a student mentor. A common event that might happen to a mentor.

Examples – Preparing a session; the giving of a useful piece of advice; making a mistake; an argument or misunderstanding; an achievement; avoiding a problem/ 'disaster'; giving feedback.

Conclusion – How does it all end? (Or what was the lesson learnt?)

This is a 15 minute exercise.

#### Findings

Findings of the self-evaluation scores:

**Table 1** shows individual students' confidence scores before and after the mentoring experience.

##### **TABLE 1 – Total of all self-evaluation scores out of a maximum 35**

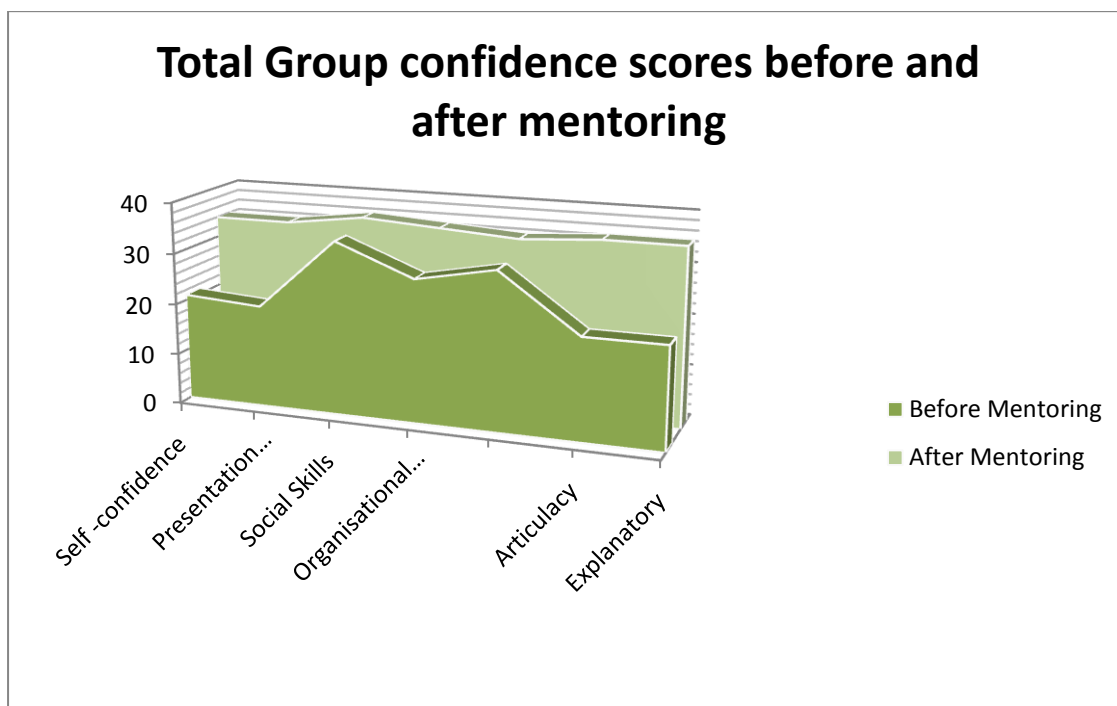
Students were asked to score their ability out of 5 in the following categories;

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7. Professional skills – negotiation, diplomacy

All students scored an increase in professional confidence

Those students with lower confidence scores at the outset all scored higher percentage change after mentoring (For example, Student 6 and 8). All students recorded an increased confidence in presentation skills (including articulacy and explanations). Students who began with high confidence reported the least change over time (For example; Student 1, 2 and 7).

Table 2 shows the total group confidence scores before and after the mentoring experience in graph form (total of group self-evaluation scores out of a maximum of 35).



**TABLE 2 – Total of group self-evaluation scores out of a maximum of 35 shown in graph form**

The group scored improved scores across the board after the mentoring experience.

Self-confidence, articulacy and explanatory skills improved the most.

Social and presentational skills improved the least.

The group scores were very variable before mentoring across the range.

The groups' scores were much less variable after mentoring across the range.

**Findings of the narrative inquiry:**

Table 3 shows the coding results of the narrative inquiry. Eleven accounts were completed by the peer tutors at the end of the module. Six (2 Female: 4 Male) chose to write subjectively, producing reflective or detailed event accounts. The rest (4 Female: 1 Male) wrote objectively or 'factionalized' accounts where they created a character to tell the story. Two males wrote about a 'total failure' but no girls did this.

**TABLE 3: Percentage change of group scores (shown in tabulated form)**

Category	TOTALS		% Change in Totals
	Before Mentoring	After Mentoring	
Self –confidence in professional scenarios	23 46%	38 76%	+30%
Presenter skills – presenting to an audience	21 42%	39 78%	+ 36%
Presentation skills – articulation/fluency	20 40%	35 70%	+ 30%
Presentation skills – Clarity/ explanatory	22 44%	35 70%	+ 26%
Social skills – personable/popular	34 68%	40 80%	+ 12%
Organisational skills – preparation + instructional	31 62%	38 76%	+ 14%
Professional skills – negotiation + diplomacy	33 66%	37 74%	+ 12%

**Table 3. Frequency of the most significant codes**

There was a near even split between negative and positive stories. Most students described the behaviour and/or characteristics of a perfect mentor. The most frequent negative codes reflect mistakes and powerlessness. The most frequent positive stories reflect confidence, empowerment, success and problem solving. Overall the stories of experience contained significantly more positivity than negativity.

### **Comment on the Narrative Inquiry**

The narrative accounts were generally good on description less so on reflection (though this may well have been a fault of the exercise which asked them for a ‘story’). However all the stories conveyed feelings and or emotions well. Some authors used the exercise to ‘confess’ to mistakes that had been made, usually by them. Overall a great sense of honesty, and even scrutiny of their failings, came through the narratives.

The coding identified six overarching themes to the narratives; which begin to give some definition and detail to the student experience of mentoring.

## Characteristics of the 'The Perfect Mentor'

Ethics

Power/Control

Personal Development

Characteristics

Empowerment

1. 'The Perfect Mentor' – Many of the students' stories talked about the ideal characteristics required to be a good mentor; where student mentors are presented as always knowing the right answers and the right way to behave. These revealed a detailed picture of their motivation and ambition.

For example:

She was calm and friendly and made sure that the other girl learning felt relaxed and unpressured. She said things like, don't worry if anything goes wrong and I'm not expecting you to be perfect first time. (Story 8)

Here the mentor, 'a girl' is represented as a perfect example – calm, supportive and caring. The mentor does nothing wrong, she is confident and able.

The mentor stayed with the girl as she practiced using it, helping and guiding her through each step. The girl was eventually able to use the equipment confidently, and thanked the mentor for her help. The mentor congratulated the girl and looked pleased with herself. (Story 8)

These 'perfect mentors' have time and patience to work one-to-one until the mentee has mastered the skill being taught. The teaching environment is assiduous and polite. Constructive feedback is insinuated and the session is concluded positively. Both mentee and mentor feel pride and achievement in their efforts.

One of the students was struggling with a role and asked me to take over, I suggested she carried on trying while I helped. I told her different ways in which she could approach the role, by either taking notes, practicing the role more will help basically organise yourself for the role the best way you can. (Story 10)

Here a 'perfect' mentor dealing with an unexpected problem – she attempts to give the right advice and various solutions to enable the mentee to overcome her lack of confidence and fear of failure.

4 mentors gathered in the TV studio. They had prepared a whole session for their mentees as then turned up the week before, they had high hopes...

Whilst here the story reveals how a 'perfect' needs to prepare for the mentoring sessions and have a good positive attitude.



These narratives produce a clear picture of the aims, ambitions and high expectations held by student mentors. They also demonstrate their understanding of the commitment and effort required to do well in this role.

2. Ethics – Nearly half the stories explored or tested the boundary of the student -mentee relationship and its perceived or real jurisdiction. When to intervene? When to be a friend? Is it ok to lie? These honest, confessional accounts highlight the necessity to support students throughout a mentoring programme:

Jurisdiction:

One of the students was struggling with a role and asked me to take over....As a mentor I didn't feel I should be the one to force a role up on someone. (Story 10)

And

Telling the truth:

A student asked me something and I didn't know the answer so I lied I felt so bad lol but I was lucky cuz I got help from a friend who even put things right. I learnt that is not bad to lie to students sometimes cuz a lil (sic) lie can push them to work harder and be all they can be. (Story 7)

The authors' confessions here maybe striking for their stark honesty but they reveal the vulnerability felt by mentors under pressure.

3. Challenges - Here the narratives tell us how bad things can really get:

I, the mentor with my crippling anxiety and sense of inferiority was approached by what seemed an obstacle of difficulty. How will I mentor a student? Why would they listen to me? (Story 6).

The evocative writing expresses the concerns and even fear about the first contact with mentees. Indeed the language of the narratives is often far more emotive when the recall is about a negative experience.

Here two narratives written by male authors give a sense of the despair that can be felt;

They had all been put into roles and the director of one of the groups was talking over everybody jobs he would not go into the gallery he kept flipping back and forth. He was lining up the cameras, he was telling the presenter how to present any problem he would just barge into the studio rather than telling the floor manager then at the end of the session he speeled (sic) off this really negative list of what people had done wrong when he was counting things in which is the PA jobs and he just wouldn't listen, he was quite happy to point out what other people where doing wrong but refused to listen. (Story 1)

And

9/3/11- 9AM. One person in the studio. Lucy the Bulgarian being the only one. Total Fail! Session abandoned. Huge fail! This is the morning I hated mentoring. Why is there no one here? After half an hour I retreated back to the site, in the doldrums, like a dead donkey. Epic fail! The whole day, a massive fail! (Story 9)

The point of interest here is how both authors use a writing style that dissociates from the 'bad behaviour'. In Story 1 by writing a detailed and descriptive list of 'errors' made by a mentee he is effectively absolving himself from any wrongdoing – none of this scenario is his fault and he feels no compulsion to change the mentees behaviour whilst in Story 9, the author writes subjectively using a much more sparse but intense writing style. The description is extreme; there is little sense of perspective. Again the author is adamant the fault lies with the mentees. In both case the authors offer no reflection or solution and feel powerless to change the scenario.

Whilst this narrative is of the same event but written by a girl author;

It was a warm morning in the month of March. 4 mentors gathered in the TV studio. Their names were Laura\*, Jason\*, Tim\* and Amy\*. They had prepared a whole session for their mentees as then turned up the week before, they had high hopes. The clock struck 9am, it was time to start....but no-one came. 5 minutes passed when one Bulgarian student peered round the door. She came and sat with the mentors and told them that the year group had a close deadline. 30 minutes passed and no one showed. The mentors made the best of a bad situation and answered anything the student wanted to know. After this, still no one showed so they all decided to call it a day and pick up what they were going to do this week, next week. They all parted ways with a thanks and a smile. (Story 3)

Rather than viewing the non-attendance of mentees as a 'total failure' (Story 9) this author looks at how to make the best of a bad situation. This belies a much sharper subtext – that it is the mentor's general attitude that affects the overall experience. And a sunny and optimistic approach provides a good coping strategy. The negative stories reveal the need to address feelings of inadequacy and lack of confidence in the mentor training.

4. Power/Control – Just under half of the stories examined the peer-tutoring role with a particular look at the feeling of 'power' it bestows on the student as a teacher. This sense of superiority, even dominance, reveals the need for mentors to discuss the role during the training phase.

A mentor named Jon was mentoring a young padawon on how to use the cameras in the TV studio. The padawon (mentee to you) wanted to know how to make the camera zoom focus and tilt. So Jon started to show them the way. (Story 2)

Here the author uses *Star Wars* analogy to express his belief in his mentoring ability. He sees himself as a master of the universe in an all powerful, all knowing role. No faults or mistakes are identified. This is a parallel universe, where mentors are great and mentees are

compliant but able. This suggests a hierarchical, commanding approach where success is measured as a cloning of the teacher.

The following excerpts reveal how naivety, responsibility and honesty can combine to reveal a power-play relationship and a new feeling of control. This arguably is fine when it boulders the peer tutor's self-confidence and self-belief;

This (mentoring) gave me a sense of responsibility and confidence and made me feel that I was doing a good thing (Story 4)

And

I was nervous but once the teaching began the class flowed smoothly and from it I gained confidence, belief in my own abilities. I was qualified to teach, I actually know the roles of the TV studio well, I'm experienced! I have no reason to not be confident. (Story 6)

But power is perhaps more concerning when it may lead to a sense of control and even exploitation:

Walking in the room seeing 8 people watching you, checking you out and you know they have a first impression of you instantly. It dawns on you that they are still watching you, waiting for some significant speech to come out of your mouth. When you speak you realise that they are really listening and taking seriously everything you say. Which is scary but empowering because you know that you have a certain level of control. (Story 11)

These descriptions reveal the recurring theme of power-play and give much greater clarity and understanding of the mentoring experience. In particular how it feels for students to be put into a position of authority over other students for the first time.

5. Personal development – mentoring is often cited in the literature as a transformative and successful experience. This view was supported by 6 positive narratives; revealing a sense of the mentor's progress (transformation and development) and success.

For example;

I found myself giving a lot more one to one conversations with the first years, and tried to give them as much knowledge as I could. This gave me a sense of responsibility and confidence and made me feel that I was doing a good thing by passing this onto the first years and also made me feel that I was also achieving something as well. (Story 4)

And

One day, Carly was in the T.V studio, mentoring students as she had been for the past few weeks. She had been working with the students for a while now, and could see that they were really starting to understand the studio and how to work within it. Previously Carly had showed them how to set the studio, in particular the talkback system. However, now they

were more confident, her and the other mentors let the students set up themselves, as this was something they would have to get used to. (Story 5)

The prose the authors have used here convey the sense of progression and personal development they have gained as mentors and the sense of achievement they gain.

6. Mutual benefits – The theme of ‘empowering’ featured in over half the stories. Following on from the idea of personal development but rather different in nuance is the sense of how the mentors view the responsibility of their role and how they wish to empower and enable the mentees. For students to grasp and disseminate in a relatively short time (just 5 mentoring sessions) this mutual concern is a pleasing outcome.

To see them then take on their roles in a new sense of confidence showed me that I was doing the right thing, and that my teaching method was obviously sticking with the first years. (Story 4)

As is how a beneficial reciprocal learning relationship can build between students, even if the mentor is very unsure at the beginning is;

I was nervous but once the teaching began the class flowed smoothly and from it I gained confidence, belief in my own abilities....maybe I was qualified to teach, I actually know the roles of the TV studio well, I’m experienced...fly students...fly. (Story 6)

This figure of speech, ‘fly students fly’, is arguably a key piece of data from the narrative inquiry. It neatly suggests the best of the reciprocal relationship that can be gained from a peer-tutoring programme – that is, mentors and mentees experiencing collaborative learning that is beneficial to them both. This phrase is put forward here as an example of the ambition and sense of enablement that student mentoring can stimulate.

## **Conclusion**

This study set out to understand the student experience of being a peer mentor, to determine the nature of the challenges and accomplishments they encounter. The secondary purpose of the study was to determine how stories (using a narrative inquiry) can, perhaps, show us more than evaluative questionnaires and interviews.

What difference, if any, might there be in student performance of those students who have experienced being a peer mentor?

The findings of this study confirm the often positive findings of the literature. Thus far research into peer tutoring report that peer tutors show enhanced or increased personal development, motivation and confidence (Hammond et al, 2010). Tables 2 and 3 show self-confidence, articulacy and explanatory skills are particularly improved.

A key result of the quantitative data here suggests how much greater the improvement in personal skills is for those lower scoring students. This arguably questions how student mentors should be appointed. It is often thought that ‘good’ students (high achievers, good

social skills, creatively 'talented') should be rewarded with a mentoring role. However this data suggests that good students with low self-esteem or confidence are more likely to gain more as peer tutors because they are putting more effort into each interaction and are therefore more motivated. Also they may bring humility to the role to which mentees are likely to be more receptive. This was evidenced by the professional, reciprocal relationships they established and the reported improvements to their personal development..

What are the features/factors that influence a peer mentoring session?

This study wished to look at the less explored nature of peer tutoring relationships, the approaches peer mentors take and the challenges they may face. In order to get beyond the oft-used evaluation and interview techniques used in peer mentoring research a narrative inquiry was also conducted. The narrative inquiry gave a rich seam of data and arguably, went further to give a clearer picture of the student experience. This qualitative data showed where and when students struggle as peer tutors. The stories revealed that peer mentors approach the role positively and with good will. They bring with them a good understanding of the skills and attitude required to be a good mentor. (This reflects the literature on the importance of training peer mentors. Falchichov 2007). However a key finding here is that students do not always know how to manage the complex inter-personal scenarios involved in peer tutoring. The stories tell of how they may struggle with how to act - specifically in areas of control, power-play and ethics in the classroom. So students might take a controlling approach to their mentees (do as I say...) or lie to cover up a lack of knowledge. They might not handle problems well and introduce a culture of blame – either the institution or other peers. The evidence here is rather compelling in its honesty and scrutiny and brings a different aspect to the literature in this area.

### **Are there benefits to peer mentoring that go beyond self-improvement?**

Following on from the literature on personal development but rather different in nuance is the sense of mutual concern that has come out of the narrative data here. An interesting finding of this study is the how quickly a beneficial reciprocal learning environment was established and maintained. Students may take on the peer mentor role to improve their own interpersonal skills but they can find that it's the enabling and empowering of others that gives them a greater sense of satisfaction. The figure of speech used by one student; 'fly students fly' is arguably a key piece of data from the narrative inquiry. It encapsulates how mentoring can benefit all students and is a good example of the ambition and enablement that mentoring can stimulate.

There are some limitations to this study. Firstly the students were from one university and one discipline therefore results may not be representative of other institutions or fields of study. Similarly this study was only conducted in the UK and may reflect cultural, educational practices that are not the same in other countries. This study used only a small number of participants and the peer mentoring here is concerned with Level 3 to Level 1 students. Larger student numbers and peer tutoring within year groups may well offer different results. Whilst care was taken to design a questionnaire and narrative inquiry that was sympathetic to recent research, the approach used is specific to this peer-mentoring programme. Caution should therefore be taken in generalising the findings from this study.

Future research then should look to repeat this study with a larger sample of peer tutors from across a range of disciplines. It would also be interesting to collaborate with colleagues running similar programmes in Universities outside of the UK. There is also the pertinent question of the reciprocal experience - what do the tutees gain from peer tutoring?

Overall, this study suggests that whilst the positivity around peer tutoring is not without foundation, the experience is not guaranteed to be an automatic success. Suggestions to improve the running of an accredited programme include; training that includes an understanding of relationship management; particularly addressing issues of ethics, boundaries, and power-play that students may face. And a robust, on-going support system must also be an integrated into the programme that gives students a place to discuss and find guidance on the challenges of position and influence (openly and inpunitive) they may face.

Peer tutoring is certainly not a teaching substitution. Peer tutors have their own community and their own identity. However if implemented well peer tutoring can yield tangible and positive results of significant benefit to student tutors and tutees alike.

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## **A consideration of peer support and peer mentoring within the Professional Teaching Scheme (PTS) at the University of Bedfordshire**

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The Professional Teaching Scheme (PTS) is the University of Bedfordshire's Higher Education Academy (HEA) accredited CPD Framework. The PTS is an evidence-based approach to

- a) demonstrating effective practice aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF);
- b) engaging in reflective practice related to student and peer feedback/support; and
- c) disseminating effective practice related to teaching and learning across an appropriate community, via a community activity.

The PTS requires academics to present a portfolio of evidence and a reflective narrative to a panel composed of internal peers, students, and an external reviewer. The PTS is designed, initially, to provide recognition and enhancement of HEA fellowship. However, in the longer term, the PTS is founded on principles of continuing professional development, fostering