CHAPTER THIRTEEN

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF PEER TUTORING IN THE CLASSROOM

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Objectives
At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:
1. Define peer tutoring
2. Discuss the different types of peer tutoring
3. State the advantages of peer tutoring
4. State the disadvantages of peer tutoring
5. Explain the strategies for using peer tutoring in the classroom

Introduction
Peer tutoring is a strategy that is used in teaching and learning. Peer learning is not a single, un-differential educational strategy. It comprises a comprehensive range of activities through which students learn. In peer-tutoring, students work together in groups to practice an activity or skills and provide each other with immediate response. Peer tutoring usually leads to better understanding of academic concepts but it is more fruitful when students that have different abilities level work together (Kunsch & Sood, 2007). Through this strategy, students can learn to a great extent by elaborating their views to others and as a result of this different view, students can understand a concept and learn better. It creates opportunity for the students to learn from one another by using their talents and it make students to practice and participate in many activities (students-centered) than the traditional teaching that only makes students to be passive in the classroom (teacher-centered).

This learning strategy is very effective for learning especially at a time when school resources are insufficient and the demand of staff is higher. Peer tutoring has a mutual benefits and it involves sharing of knowledge, experiences and ideas among the participants. Bruner viewed human beings as information processor, thinker and creator of ideas, with cognitive developments through the interaction and exploitation of the environment. Bruner assumed that learning is effective when students are given the opportunity to realize facts by themselves. (Ekwueme & Umoinyang, 2005). Peer-led guided inquiry is a method of enhancing problem solving skills that institute reform combining peer-led team learning with inquiry approach. This involves learning activities, designed to include peer and instructor discussion towards increasing students' interactive engagement and learning (Parr & Edward, 2004).

Definition of Peer Tutoring
Peer tutoring has been defined variously by different authors. According to Prezler, et al, (2007), peer tutoring is a systematic, peer-mediated teaching strategy or approach that involves students learning from each other in a way which is equally beneficial, and sharing knowledge, proficiencies, ideas among students. Prpric and Hadgraft, (2009) described Peer tutoring as a

flexible, peer-mediated strategy that involves students' serving as academic tutors and tutees. Mostly, a higher performing student is paired with a lower performing student to review critical educational or behavioral concept. From the above definitions, we can say that in in peer-tutoring, students work together in group to practice educational skills and provide each other with immediate and direct response, and the groups of learners can be homogenous or heterogeneous ability and age range. It is therefore a well-structured teaching plan that can dispute and improve the effectiveness of students in the classroom.

Types of Peer Tutoring

There are different types of peer tutoring. The major ones are:

1. Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)
2. Cross-Age tutoring (CAT)
3. Reciprocal-Peer Tutoring (RPT)
4. Class Wide-Peer Tutoring (CWPT)
5. Same-Age Peer tutoring (SAPT).

Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS): This type of teaching involves a teacher pairing students who need additional instruction or help with a peer who can assist (Scott & Jennifer, 2005). Individuals are flexible and change frequently across a variety of subject area or skills. Students are typically paired with other students who are at the same skill level without a large difference between abilities.

Cross-Age Peer-Tutoring (CAPT): In this type of peer-tutoring, older students are often paired with younger students to teach or review a skill. The older students serve as tutors and the younger student as the tutee. Both the younger and the older students can have similar or different skill levels.

Reciprocal Peer-Tutoring (RPT): In this type of peer-tutoring, two or more students act as the tutor and the remaining act as the tutee during each session with equitable time in each role. Higher performing students are often paired with lower performing students. Both group and individual rewards may be made to motivate and maximize learning.

Class Wide Peer-Tutoring (CWPT): This involves dividing the entire class into two groups of two or five students with different capabilities. These students act as tutors, tutees or both tutors and tutees. According to Hockings, De Angelis and Frey, (2008), CWPT involves highly structured procedure, direct rehearsal competitive terms and posting of scores while the procedure and a routine in CWPT remains the same, students pairing or grouping may change weekly or bi-weekly.

Same Age Peer Tutoring:(SAPT): This has to do with pairing students who are within the same age range to review key concepts. Students may have similar ability level or a more advanced student(tutor) can be paired with some less advanced students (tutees). Students with similar ability have in-depth understanding of the content material and concepts. The role of the tutor, a more advanced student, is to teach the less or less advanced student.

Advantages of Peer-tutoring

The following are the major advantages of peer-tutoring:

1. Students may listen, concentrate and contribute more on their friends' discussion than the teacher's.
2. It brings or makes the classroom to be alive with energy and positive attitudes.
3. Tutors and the tutees are more free with each one another than with the teacher.
4. Learners gain more feedback as they are working with a tutor to reinforce points.
5. Learning occurs across different domains that is cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains.
6. It encourages great transferability, that is, peer tutoring can be used in all subjects and lessons.
7. It makes students important in the class as this teaching style keeps them busy throughout the lesson.
8. Students become increasingly independent at performing the tasks and often become interested in taking on other leadership roles
9. Some become interested in pursuing careers that involve teaching and research.
10. It increases students content knowledge and hence, better success in higher level courses
11. It improves students' skills and relationship with the course instructor

Disadvantages of Peer-tutoring

The following are the major disadvantages of peer-tutoring:

1. Individual may not learn as much because tutors are not as experienced as the teacher
2. It does not promote positive relationship between students and teacher if they are only working with other students.
3. There could be lack of social development if students work with the same person every day.
4. Tutors must meet certain criteria to be appointed, meaning some students could miss out.
5. Students may go off task as they are working with their friends
6. Students who are normally the leaders within the groups may take charge too much, meaning others do not get a chance to take part in the teaching side.
7. It makes students who tutors others to develop a sense of pride and self-worth knowing, they are capable of making a positive difference in the lives of other students (tutee) than the teacher.
8. It makes the lazy teachers to become more reluctant by leaving the whole work for students.

Strategies for Peer Tutoring in the classroom

There are different strategies that can be used when planning a peer learning exercise for students. Teachers should consider and use the strategies that best suit them. The following are the major strategies for using peer tutoring in the classroom:

1. **Use Think-Pair-Share Activities**

   This activity presents three lesson-processing experiences to students namely; allowing them to work individually, and allowing them to work with a tutor or a tutee. First, as the strategy's name implies, ask students to think about a given topic or answer a specific question by themselves. Second, pair tutors and tutees together to discuss results and findings. Tutees and tutors focus on expanding their ideas, and thirdly, open a floor for questions and answers which can finally lead them to reliable answers.

2. **Role-play**

The teacher should give students clear examples and reference points about what he or she expects from the students which will help or assist them to do what is expected of them. For example, a teacher can tell the students to write A-Z and from these alphabets, write down ten (10) two letter words and ten (10) three letter words and he or she can go ahead to give them example of what should be done.

3. **Create a Reward System**

To capture or arrest the interest of students in the classroom, a teacher can openly recognize or mention the names of students that perform extremely good and present a little gift to such students. For example, when you have let's say six (6) groups in a class, each time a tutor in a group provides correct answer, give him or her a blank ticket. You can also give it to a tutee when they give a correct answer. At the end of each week or month, ask the students to submit their tickets and hold a pull. Leaders in the pull will get a small prize. This prize can make students to be motivated thus, making many to be more serious.

4. **Explain in Detail How You Want Your Feedback Before Dividing the Class**

Feedback is an essential aspect of peer teaching, meaning you should instruct students how to give it. Sometimes, students will give the correct answers and sometimes they will give positive answers. The difference between the two is that, correct answers help tutees revise their answers. When they make mistakes, tutors can explain what went wrong and determine or reveal how to get correct answers.

5. **Allow Students to Take Turns Teaching**

Combining mixed-ability students (class) can make the low students to be passive in the classroom, this is because the higher class will want to be the tutor and the low students' tutee, whereas having same-ability students work together adds variety to your peer teaching approach. This is called Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT). It is one of the types of peer tutoring which was explained earlier. Students can give each other praise and feedback when chances present themselves.

6. **Partner with Another Class**

You can also avoid dividing your students by working with an older or younger class, that is, those who are not their classmates. This is called cross-age peer tutoring. If your class is the higher grade, let them group themselves and be focused on their tutoring skills. If you teach the lower grade, let them not also merge with the higher grade. This is an advantageous way of motivating, encouraging and making each group to be interested in tutoring.

7. **Focus on Active Learning**

Exercises should constantly allow for active learning. After all, peer tutoring fundamentally relies upon communication and relationship between students. This means that exercises should indeed present chances for students to categorize issues, ask questions and describe what they understand about a particular concept.

Conclusion

In conclusion, peer tutoring is a two-way process which benefits both the tutor and the tutee. It is an effective strategy for students to learn from each other academically and also help students to develop their communication skills and relationship. Through organized and effective peer tutoring, the students can enrich their confidence level and be self-motivated and self-reliance.

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