



Tutoring at Higher Education Institution as an Element of Building Social Capital in Poland

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: The aim of the article is the analysis of tutoring as a method of education based on the master-student relationship, at universities as an element of building social capital.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS: One of the current higher education problems is the lack of a coherent system and culture of social capital development. It could be strengthened by using tutoring, an innovative method of learning, shaping the master-student relationship. The study has a theoretical and analytical character. The descriptive case study was used as the applied method.

THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION: Firstly, the concept of social capital and its importance for education will be approximated. Next, an attempt will be made to describe a case study of particular university in terms of implementing the tutoring principles. In this context, the importance of tutoring for building social capital will be analysed.

RESEARCH RESULTS: An analysis of the example of tutoring at the University of Gdańsk will allow to refer to the importance of the role played by tutoring in building social capital.

CONCLUSIONS, INNOVATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Tutoring supports developing social competencies and teaching the tutored students how to express their own opinions, to accept the interlocutor's arguments and refer to them. In order to be able to work on their own and establish a close relationship with the tutor, the students must be self-motivated and focused on self-development.

→ **KEYWORDS:** SOCIAL CAPITAL, TUTORING, EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY

STRESZCZENIE

Tutoring na uczelniach wyższych jako element budowania kapitału społecznego w Polsce

CEL NAUKOWY: Celem artykułu jest analiza tutoringu, będącego metodą nauczania opartą na relacji mistrz-uczeń, na uczelniach jako elementu budowania kapitału społecznego.

PROBLEM I METODY BADAWCZE: Jednym z obecnych problemów szkolnictwa wyższego jest brak spójnego systemu i kultury rozwoju kapitału społecznego. Obszary te można wzmocnić, stosując tutoring jako innowacyjną metodę edukacji, kształtującą relację mistrz – uczeń. Badanie ma charakter zarówno teoretyczny, jak i analityczny. Jako metodę badawczą zastosowano opisowe studium przypadku.

PROCES WYWODU: W pierwszej kolejności zostanie przybliżona koncepcja kapitału społecznego i jego znaczenie dla edukacji. Następnie zostanie podjęta próba analizy studium przypadku wybranej uczelni pod kątem wdrażania programów tutoringu. W tym kontekście opisane zostanie znaczenie tutoringu dla budowania kapitału społecznego.

WYNIKI ANALIZY NAUKOWEJ: Analiza programu tutoringowego na Uniwersytecie Gdańskim pozwoli na odniesienie się do roli, jaką odgrywa tutoring w budowaniu kapitału społecznego.

WNIOSKI, INNOWACJE, REKOMENDACJE: Tutoring wspiera rozwijanie kompetencji społecznych i uczy studentów, w jaki sposób wyrażać własne opinie, akceptować argumenty rozmówcy, czy też się do nich odwoływać. Aby móc pracować samodzielnie i nawiązać bliskie relacje z tutorem, studenci muszą być zmotywowani i skupieni na osobistym rozwoju.

→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** **KAPITAŁ SPOŁECZNY, TUTORING, EDUKACJA, UNIwersYTET**

1. Introduction

The notion of social capital was introduced on a broader scale by Putnam (Putnam, 1995, p. 65-78; 2008) and developed i.a. by Fukuyama (1997). According to the researchers, social capital is built in a long-time horizon, is considered to be public good and is used i.a. for social integration and solidarity, by counteracting exclusion and discrimination. It is demonstrated by the level of confidence and volunteer activity for the local community and in general, openness towards others (Czapiński, 2013, p. 285-297).

Referring to the mentioned scientific literature, it can be concluded that social capital refers to such features as: social trust, ability to cooperate, values and standards of conduct, network of contacts and a sense of community, solidarity, future orientation that can significantly affect increase in social and economic activity of people.

For the purposes of this study, the definition of social capital included in the strategy "Polska 2030 – trzecia fala nowoczesności" (2013, p. 122) was adopted. Social capital is defined there as the potential accumulated in societies and units in the form of institutions, norms, values, behaviours constituting the basis for building trust-based social relationships that foster creativity and knowledge exchange, contributing to achieving goals that individuals would not be able to accomplish by themselves (Tracz, 2013, p. 136).

Education is of primary importance in building social capital since education is decisive for the quality of the society's intellectual resources. The area of education provided grounds for the analyses of social capital, carried out by two key theorists of social capital, who interpret this notion in slightly different ways; Coleman and Bourdieu (1985, p. 46-48). Their research deals with the reasons for differing school records and shows the association between the operation of the school and its social environment.

The growing issues with the operation of the educational system and with the valid teaching programmes are still pointed by teaching practitioners (Giza-Poleszczuk, 2007, p. 19; Czekierda, 2007, p. 92-93; Słaboń, 2015, p. 183; Karpińska-Musiał, 2018, p. 17). The issues also affect pedagogical programmes at school, which seem to be not conducive to cooperation, building creativity and sharing knowledge among the students. Faults in educational programmes could be then imitated at further stages of education. These deficiencies have a negative impact on building social relations not only as regards studying, but also in respect of the individual's professional and personal life.

An analysis of the labour market and higher education sector indicates the dynamically changing environment and the needs of the developing economy. Owing to market expectations, higher education institutions pay more and more attention to improving the quality of education. Against this background, one of the educational methods should be stressed, namely academic tutoring. This is a tool which supports and boosts the educational process and, as a result, contributes to the improvement of social capital.

The paper refers to the case study of University of Gdansk, where tutoring was effectively applied with a view to fostering the ability to build social relations.

2. Research methods

An analysis of case study at one particular Polish state university in Gdansk, where the programme has been implemented, provides a basis for the further considerations. It has to be underline, that tutoring as a method was successfully introduced into and it exists also at such universities as: Kraków University of Economics, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University, University of Economics in Katowice or University of Warsaw. The choice of University of Gdansk is justified by the level of advancement in the implementation of the tutoring program. It should be emphasized that this is also one of the first cases in Poland of introducing tutoring into a public university, and pioneer in the field of geography.

Regarding to management science, the applied method, case study, is a detailed description in order to formulate conclusions about the causes and results of its course. This method is empirical owing to the fact it analyses and assesses the phenomena occurring in reality. The case study method is based then on the idiographic approach used in social qualitative research to provide an exhaustive description of a specific event in root-cause order (Ruane, 2005, p. 76-77).

According to Yin (2009), the case study method is applied to find answers to revealing questions, i.e. concerning the way in which a phenomenon occurs and the purpose why it occurs. The knowledge derived from the secondary sources in a form of literature review and web-based queries provides the basis for reflection on the importance of tutoring for building social capital.

3. The core part

It is commonly believed that low social capital means a small number of bonds or lack of trust between people. It results in not taking part in joint or individual actions aimed at improving the quality of life of the general public. This fact may affect the economic sphere in a situation where, for example, the state must play a greater role in creating large-scale economic enterprises (so-called transaction costs) (Tracz, 2013, p. 137).

In the social sphere, a low level of social capital or its lack results in social dysfunctions, including corruption or increase in the threat of terrorism (Fukuyama, 2003). A high level of social capital occurs when people establish relationships with other community units, trust each other and act together or individually to improve their living conditions. The result of this is the undertaking of joint and individual actions, for example in creating enterprises, a greater number of aid and charity organizations, and thus the mentioned transaction costs are lower. In other areas of life, a high level of social capital is also associated with the functioning of a "healthy" civic state and the creation of groups and associations that are filled between the state and the family (Fukuyama, 2003). Due to the fact that it is commonly indicated that education is one of the key factors in the growth of human and social capital (Borowiec et al., 2011; Kamińska & Hofer, 2012; Ziolo, 2009, p. 95-109), one of the tools of shaping social competences, as an element of social capital, seems to be a tutoring.

Tutoring as a method of learning supports building social competences, which are recognized by many scientists as factors determining the proper functioning of an individual in society, being a basic element of social capital (Argyle, 2002; Goleman, 1997; Bobrowska-Jabłońska, 2003; Borkowski, 2003; Żur, 2016, p. 139). Existing research suggests that social competences positively affect broadly understood adaptation and functioning in society, increasing the level of individuals engagement. They also form the basis for the desired entrepreneurial competences, understood as creativity and innovation, incorporating ideas into action, planning projects and achieving related objectives. Most authors include the most important social competences for

entrepreneurial competences (Wach, 2013, p. 246-258; 2014, p. 11-33). As method of individual care over the mentor, tutoring is based on a master-student relationship. Thanks to an integral view of human development, it allows for the full development of its potential (Czekierda, 2015, p. 20). It is a personalized education method intended to support students in their development in conformity with their talents, interests and abilities.

Tutoring is the basic form of education at two of the oldest English universities – Oxford and Cambridge – contributing to their success (Pelczyński, 2007, p. 31). The way of collaborating includes university-specific meetings of one or more students with an academic teacher, under whose direction they prepare a written work – essay, on a specific topic this interaction is therefore a form of formal education (Fijałkowski, 2009).

A tutorial plays a crucial role in the educational process, focusing on and improving social competences, contributing in this way to the increasing level of social capital. The meetings alone involve work consisting in close cooperation between a student and a tutor, based on the master-student principle. The master must be accepted and trusted by the students and must enjoy authority with them. As a result of tutoring, the students receive support in planning their own development and making decisions; in this way they become more independent and mature. They get to know themselves better including their strengths and weaknesses, and this is how they get ready for building relationships in their personal and professional lives. Students become more motivated, and they learn to appreciate the value of teamwork and networking, which ultimately provides a foundation for social capital.

A good example of Polish university, introducing tutoring into their organizational structures, is the University of Gdańsk, which has been launching an extensive tutoring programme. The initiative was driven by Norway Grants awarded to Beata Karpińska-Musiał, Ph.D. The project titled “Ideal Quality in Good Quantity – interdisciplinary developmental support of a foreign language student by the method of academic tutoring at the University of Gdańsk” was implemented between 2014 and 2016 (Karpińska-Musiał, 2016).

During two semesters in the academic year 2014/15, 222 students benefited from the programme within 1576 hours of individual tutorials. 29 academic tutors in various fields were trained during the programme.

The cooperation consisted of regular meetings of the tutor with the student. As a part of which the essays prepared by the mentees were discussed independently on the subject matter and other tasks were prepared by the students. It was reported that the tutor with the appropriate tools in a series of 8 meetings in the semester was able to implement an individual, tailored to the student's needs academic course. In addition, it was found that the didactic offer constructed in this way, taking into account the legal and organizational aspects of the University of Gdańsk, was able to have its official finale in the form of an entry on the student's diploma and, as agreed in April 2015, in the form of a certificate (with a description of the skills and demonstrated attitude of the student during tutoring) signed by a given tutor.

Although the grant has been completed, the project is continued by 12 tutors from the Faculty of Languages at the University of Gdańsk. In academic years 2015/16 and 2016/17, 420 tutorials in total were conducted, attended by 55-60 students. Professional tutoring is also applied at the Faculty of Oceanography and Geography of the University of Gdańsk. The programme comprised 990 hours of individual tutorials for 95 students and training for 42 tutors.

The tutoring initiatives take the form of individual work with the student during a series of regular meetings as well as the form of teamwork. Team learning involves a discussion dedicated to solving selected problems using the Problem Based Learning method (PBL) (Kiley et al., 2000). In the PBL method, the responsibility for the learning outcomes is distributed not only for the teacher, but also for the student who is allowed to greater independence of action. Independence in making decisions is connected with the way the tasks are implemented, so that students can develop valuable skills, improve strengths, discover predispositions, and also impose self-discipline. Due to this, the method makes it possible to develop social competencies such as finding the right arguments in support of one's stance, taking account of and making references to other people's point of view, leading a constructive discussion or mutual cooperation, which requires skilful division of labour in a group and mutual trust (Overton, Bers, & Seery, 2009, p. 43-60).

It should be noted that one of the outcomes of the "IQ Project" is the establishment of the interfaculty UG Tutor Centre, aimed at the development of interdisciplinary didactic cooperation of UG academic tutors based on the Design Thinking concept and its application at optional and seminar classes for language (both Polish and foreign languages), pedagogy, geography, spatial management, water management, geology and oceanography, biology and management students (Rogo, 2017). Design thinking can be defined as a method of creating innovative products and services, based on a deep understanding of users' problems and needs. The main purpose of this method is to create and implement innovative solutions, including in the form of new products, innovative technologies, services, strategies, processes, educational programs and even business models. This concept fits in to fill the gap related to the practical approach to stimulating and shaping the so-called social competences, often more formally identified with key competences. The scope of these competences can include: creativity, comprehensive approach, work in an interdisciplinary, often multicultural team, learning process, building motivation and empathy, openness to experiment and experience. Thus, the design thinking method, as one of the methods used in tutoring, additionally supports the development of soft skills (Kwieciński, 2016, p. 123-136).

What is more, in near future the University of Gdańsk plans to introduce a preparatory course for international students who have qualified to study in the Pomerania region. The course is called Gateway to Studies in Europe and was initiated by UG International Office.

4. Results of the scientific analysis

It should be stressed that a tutorial is aimed at a student's development. Students who read manuals and textbooks, and attend lectures definitely broaden their knowledge, yet knowledge is becoming universally accessible to everyone. Hence, students have to learn how to use the sources of information. What they need is critical analysis and verification of the acquired knowledge. Students need guidance so as to encourage their self-development and increase social engagement.

Tutorials teach them how to build their own opinions based on arguments and how to accept arguments from their interlocutors. The impact of tutorials will become particularly visible once the students start employment. They will be better prepared to work with people and more self-aware. It seems that tutoring helps also to shape the students entrepreneurial approach. By using didactic methods for effective education, focusing on content related to creativity and developing creative skills and increasing the emphasis on entrepreneurial competences and cross-functional and interdisciplinary skills, tutoring allows to improve the quality of relations made by would-be graduates with the subjects on a job market (Urbaniec, 2010, p. 178-189; 2016, p. 73-91).

Diploma and master's tutorials are an ideal place to nurture the master-student relationship. Another option is to take part in various contests where a problem is solved by a team of students led by a tutor. Nevertheless, this form of work is still uncommon. Therefore, the university authorities, first and foremost, ought to have the tutors trained. The next step is to work out a consistent, long-term tutoring programme. The programme launch should be monitored and streamlined on an ongoing basis. The tutors should encourage the students to participate in tutorials and make them aware that this model of work can be extremely interesting and valuable for both parties.

Tutoring method of learning, used at described in the article Polish university, supports building social capital. It seems to be a great opportunity to improve social skills of students, making their prosocial attitude more mature. Polish universities still have a great potential to develop. All types of studies should equip graduates with general soft competences that broaden horizons and allow them to function well in the society in a modern world. A graduate of a university should be a conscious and active citizen of a democratic state.

5. Conclusions

The greatest benefit of tutoring is a student's individual development as a member of the society. Owing to their cooperation with the tutor, students acquire knowledge and the ability to think independently, formulate views and put forward arguments during a discussion. Students also learn how to be open to other people's opinions, which is reflected in improved teamwork both in their professional and personal lives.

Students taking part in tutoring are more willing to take part in international exchange schemes offered by universities. They participate in national and international projects and conferences, as well as attend events promoting science among the youth. They become more active and engaged in life. Their attitude and actions contribute to building the social capital.

Tutoring is also a crucial teaching experience for academic staff. Tutoring motivates them to improve their qualifications and set objectives for themselves both in the teaching and scientific field. Being a tutor strengthens a lecturer's authority and takes didactic work to the next level. Tutors are obliged to raise their qualifications on an ongoing basis, among other things during workshops and meetings dedicated to the subject matter content. Thus, tutoring constitutes a valuable model of master-student cooperation. As part of their relationship, both the tutor and the student gain an intense experience of mutual learning and skills acquisition, what makes a solid basis for the future building relationships while living in the society.

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