

**Peer Tutoring at a Comprehensive
School in KwaZulu-Natal : Limits and Possibilities**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my work, all sources used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.



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ABSTRACT

In this study, an innovative 'peer tutoring' programme at a high school in KwaZulu-Natal was examined. The aim of the study was to explore the limits and possibilities of this approach to enhancing learning at the school from the perspective of teachers, tutors and tutees. 30 learners who were tutees in the programme, 10 tutors, and 5 educators were interviewed through semi-structured interviews in order to examine how they were experiencing the programme. In addition, the researcher conducted non-participant observations of selected peer tutoring sessions at the school. The findings revealed that overall peer tutoring has positive benefits for learners and has the potential to enhance learning and teaching at the school. Some of the benefits that emerged are: increased motivation; enhanced self-concept; reduced inhibition; learning in a supportive, enabling environment; increased communication and dialogue; development of learner autonomy and independence. The study revealed there are areas in the programme that need to be systematically monitored, for example, peer interactions to ensure that they are not at a purely concrete knowledge telling level. Training has to ensure that deep level thinking and problem solving occurs. The active involvement of teachers is necessary at all levels, in particular to monitor discipline. The findings also suggest that the success of a peer-tutoring programme may be linked to the culture and ethos of the school as a whole. A school that upholds the principles of inclusivity, values of caring and affirming others, collaboration, and an ethos of working together may be an environment in which a peer-tutoring programme will flourish. The whole school community needs to build this kind of an ethos and culture – teachers, learners, parents, school management.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. Brief Outline of the Topic

Township schools are facing serious challenges in meeting the goal of quality education 'Education for All' – a principle embedded in all our education legislation and policy documents that have emerged since 1994 (South African Schools Act of 1996; Education White Paper on Education and Training, March 1995; Education White Paper 6, July 2001). Teachers are seeking strategies that will help children feel academically competent and make achievement gains. Peer tutoring is an instructional system in which students are encouraged to support each other. It has been found to be an effective way to encourage learners to engage with and learn school-related material (Allen, 1976). Attempts to determine why and how tutoring is effective have pointed to the role of specific interactions in promoting learning during tutoring and other peer -directed small group learning.

More recently, the function of education has been seen as not only one of imparting knowledge, but also are helping students to learn about themselves as learners (Perkins, 1992; Donald, Lazarus, Lolwana, 2002; Kierman; 1990). Peer tutoring is seen to have this potential through harnessing social relations among learners to support effective learning. The view is that thinking and learning should be shared in the classroom (Perkins, 1992). Peer tutoring could be located within a pastoral care programme of the

school (Best, 1999; Collins, 1990). Teaching learners to 'learn how to learn' should be a key goal of schooling.

An innovative peer tutoring initiative has been embarked on in a high school in KwaZulu-Natal. This study aims to document this initiative to ascertain how the various participants are experiencing it. Siyafunda Comprehensive High School (a pseudonym is used to protect the identity of the school, the teachers and learners) is situated on the outskirts of a large township, Umlazi which lies South of Durban. The majority of the learners are residents of Umlazi. This section borders a fast growing informal settlement. Most of the people moving into this settlement come from the rural areas.

A peer tutoring programme was first introduced at Makhumbuza High School, a neighbouring school to Siyafunda, by one of the teachers in 1999. In 2001, it was introduced by the same teacher at Siyafunda Comprehensive High. The peer tutoring programme is a youth empowerment and capacity building programme. Although there are some obstacles, since schooling is structured around the traditional belief that knowledge is best transmitted from adult to child in a linear fashion. Factors such as cultural context, teacher resistance, possible disadvantages accruing to the tutor, possible tutor impatience, tutor selection, parent cautiousness, implications for school organisation, variable suitability of different subjects to peer tutoring and possible lack of expertise on the tutors part, may impact the success of such a programme.

This study explored the following question:

How is Siyafunda Comprehensive High School experiencing their peer tutoring programme?

Arising from this critical question, various sub questions were identified,

- What are the educator's experiences of the peer tutoring programme at Siyafunda high school?
- What are learners' views of the peer tutoring programme?
- How do the peer tutors experience the programme?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A growing body of international literature shows how researchers are using peer influence to produce effective classroom-based learning interventions in settings (Slavin, Karweit & Madden, 1989; Fantuzzo & Polite & Grayson, 1990; Cohen & Kulik, 1981). As a whole, these collaborative learning interventions have shown promising results in increasing student achievement for low-income, low-achieving students (Fantuzzo & Polite & Grayson, 1990; Greenwood, Terry, Utley, Montagna & Walker, 1989). In addition to gains in achievement, collaborative learning interventions have resulted in improved classroom behaviour and peer relationships. According to Fantuzzo, King, Heller (1992) cited in King, Stafferi & Adelgais (1998), peers can serve as resources for one another with respect to cognitive development (Piaget, 1959). This view differs from the common attitude that peers are the source of "only" social skills, or only inferior intellectual and linguistic stimulation (Cooper, Marquis and Ayers-Lopez, 1982).

According to Bassano and Christison (1988) peer tutoring refers to any activity involving students helping one another to understand, review, practice, and remember. Peer tutoring provides an opportunity for students to talk more and to learn by teaching. Peer tutoring involves using learners as models, sources of information and interactants for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken by a formally

trained teacher (Gaies, 1985). In using peer tutoring, the teacher sub-contracts, as it were, some of his or her prerogatives to pairs or small groups of students headed by what Sionis (1990) cited in Kamwangalu (1997) has termed "surrogate teachers".

Furthermore, Damon and Phelps (1989) assert that peer tutoring is an approach in which one child instructs another in material on which the first is an expert, and the second is a novice. However, despite the multiple definitions of peer tutoring that exist, all are not consistent, since for example, in Damon and Phelps's (1989) definition not all tutors are experts and not all receiving learners are novice. Sometimes, tutors are randomly assigned to duties. Despite the differing types of tutoring methods and tutoring definitions, one fact remains, that is, peer tutoring has the potential to enhance learning.

2.3 Empirical Studies on Peer Tutoring

The use of peer tutors is a much publicised practice in contemporary education in the U.K. The appeal of using children to teach other children was due to the very promising reports about the academic and social effects of tutoring programmes Gartner, Kohler and Reismann (1971). Results showed that the peer tutor and the learner did not only gain in academic achievement, but there was also improvement in social behaviour, attitudes and self-esteem. Therefore, in entrusting the tutors with the task of tutoring their fellow pupils, the teacher acknowledges that the tutors are good at what they are doing. This will most certainly instil confidence in the tutors and inspire them to work harder in their studies. Along these lines, Long and Porter (1985) suggest that peer tutoring also promotes a positive affective climate for the peer tutors, as it provides a relatively

intimate setting and, usually, a more supportive environment in which to try out embryonic skills. After extensive research in British primary and secondary schools, Barnes (1973) wrote of student experience in the peer group setting:

“An intimate group which allows us to be relatively inexplicit and incoherent. What we say may not amount to much but our confidence in our friends allows us to take the first groping steps towards sorting out our thoughts and feelings.... (p. 43)

For most students, early adolescence is a time of change and transition. Within respect to interpersonal relationships and social adjustment, these changes reflect a growing psychological and emotional independence from adults, and a corresponding dependence on peer relationships to establish and maintain positive perceptions of the self (Ryan, 2000).

Seiber (1979) cited in Wentzel (1999) explains that peer tutoring has been associated with classroom motivation in several ways. At times, the larger peer group can be the source for behavioural standards, as well as the mechanism whereby classroom rules are monitored and enforced. This is especially the case when students as a group are held accountable for the behaviour of group members or when teachers use peer leaders to monitor the class when they must leave their classrooms. Students also have been observed to monitor each other by ignoring non-instructional behaviour and response during group instruction, and by engaging in private sanctioning of inappropriate conduct

(Eder & Felmler, 1984; Sieber, 1979 cited in Wentzel, 1999).

The socio-affective benefits include; increased motivation, strengthened cross-cultural understanding, strengthened self-concept and sense of self-direction, reduced inhibition (Sionis, 1990).

Research by Beach (1974) and Littlejohn (1982) argues for the value of peer involvement in increasing motivation. The more proficient learner provides real evidence that the learner's goals are attainable, and the result is often increased motivation to persevere. Even if peer tutoring is used occasionally in the classroom, it can inject variety into classroom activity, and therefore, a higher level of student motivation can be maintained. Research conducted by Littlejohn (1982) found that learners felt less inhibited and free to make mistakes in the small group than in the teacher-led class.

There are many studies that have focussed on examining the peer tutoring process. A major concern in designing a peer tutoring is the degree to which the interaction among learners can be structured without constraining discussion and thinking and, therefore learning. Research has clearly shown that when peer interaction is left unstructured, students tend to interact only at a basic concrete knowledge-retelling level (Wood & Ahead, 1990).

Peer tutoring activities in the classroom can be categorised according to the role played in the overall teaching and learning process. Gaies (1985) suggests that teachers and their students should decide whether such tutoring activities are intended for periodic use in

the classroom, as an occasional change of pace to teacher, directed activity or as ongoing activity, or as a cultural feature of the classroom organisation and learning process. The teacher can no longer assume the role of transmitter of information. The teacher must become a facilitator. Teachers must move away from the fear that peer-led activity will generate too many errors, and consequently will produce too much mis-learning (Gaies, 1985). The use of peer tutoring allows learners to rely on their peers and it allows tutors to develop a sense of responsibility to their tutees. Research shows that peer tutoring activities can provide a number of benefits for learners (Cooper et al., 1982). All students enjoy variety and the opportunity to interact with peers can relieve some of the monotony that students and their teachers are faced with in the classroom.

Peer tutoring seems flourish in settings where there is an already established system for staff and students working together and in cooperation with one another (Carr, 1994 cited in Cowie & Sharp, 1996), and where pupils support the values of caring about others and helping people to help them. Carr (1994) explains that peers assess needs, they listen, they involve, they support, they encourage, and they rebuild. Helpers are usually selected on the basis of their characteristics and willingness to help others. Depending on the nature of the programme, they may be the same age peers or slightly older.

Greater involvement of peers in each other's learning can provide a rich and productive supplement to the classroom experience (Gaies, 1985). Peer tutoring cast learners and their teachers into new roles that may lead to a number of pedagogical and socio-affective benefits. According to Gaies (1985), the pedagogical benefits include: increased

individualisation, and increased communication opportunities

One of the benefits of peer tutoring is the effect it has on both the tutees and the tutor's self-concept and self-direction. Tutees benefit from being able to communicate with a peer model, someone who have been there before, understands the difficulty that the tutee faces. An equally important benefit of peer tutoring is the effect produced on the tutor. In this regard an ancient dictum holds true, "Qui docet discit - he who teaches learns" (Allen 1976:10). Quite simply, one learns a great deal in helping another to learn. In a review of research on cross-age tutoring, Sarbin (1976) reports that the tutor's academic performance also improved. Thus, peer tutoring has positive results for the tutee and the tutor, because often students feel uncomfortable in the large-group, "public" classroom. Some students may also feel inhibited by the dominating presence of the teacher or by the presence of a large number of classmates and may open up in the more intimate, nurturing atmosphere of small-group or one-to-one peer tutoring.

There have been a few studies documented within the South African context. Letsebe (1985) undertook a study into the feasibility of the designing, implementing and testing a training model to prepare young people in a helping role as peer tutors in Soweto and Alexandra townships. The study was conducted in 1984 with a group of thirty-six young people from youth clubs. . While the setting of the original study was the youth clubs, the findings from the research indicated that the knowledge and skills acquired through the training program could be used in many other settings where young people interact with their peers. Such settings include schools, churches, world of work, and at home with

parents and siblings.

Virasamy (1999) conducted a study at Southlands secondary in Durban. The subjects who participated in his study include twenty-five teachers and eighty-six Zulu speaking and Indian pupils. Of the twenty-five teachers, three were interviewed for the study. The research found that in classes where peer tutoring was used, there were gains not only in academic achievement but improvements in social behaviour, attitude and self-esteem.

The study also showed that the use of Zulu mother-tongue peer tutoring can inject variety into teacher-dominated lessons and can also lead to increased pupil participation.

Previously passive Zulu-speaking pupils began to participate in the lessons.

2.4 Conclusion

In South Africa, life skills comprise one of the eight learning areas in The Revised National Curriculum Statement. The focus is on building interpersonal skills, and cultivating leadership is an integral goal of the life skills curriculum. The peer tutoring programme is a non-threatening and non-stigmatised mode of intervention that can meet these goals, and where students are assisted to develop resilient qualities. Such a programme has the potential to promote positive outlooks, improved self esteem, strong problem solving skills, and healthy relationships with significant others. It was envisaged that the present study would contribute to the small body of research in South Africa.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

As stated earlier, this study aimed to document a peer tutoring initiative in KwaZulu-Natal. The aim was to ascertain how participants are experiencing it the Siyafunda Comprehensive School. An investigation of an issue such as this has to include the experiences and views of educators and learners towards peer tutoring. This chapter presents the research methodology and the design of the study, and this includes the context of the study, the rationale, research aims, and the data collection techniques used. Issues of ethics will also be discussed.

3.2. Motivation for a qualitative research approach

The central focus of this research was the context of teaching and learning, in particular, the interactional process in classroom, and the ways in which pupils and the teacher experienced the learning environment. Therefore, I opted for qualitative research for it is holistic in the sense that it attempts to provide a rich understanding of the complex interrelationships of relating to a specific situated context. (Brack-Unte, 1996).

In this study, qualitative research involves the interpretive study of specified issue in to which the researcher is central to the sense that is made (Banister, 1994). This defines the

centrality of the researcher to the problem. In comparison to quantitative methodologies, qualitative research involves the observation of naturally occurring phenomena, uncontrolled by the researcher, and is concerned more with observing and exploring. Furthermore, Foster and Parker (1995) argue that the qualitative approach offers insights into action and experience that can enrich our understanding of findings.

3.3. Context of the study

This study took place at the Siyafunda Comprehensive High School situated on the outskirts of a large township, Umlazi that lies South of Durban. The majority of the learners are residents of Umlazi. This section borders a fast growing informal settlement. Most of the people moving into this settlement come from the rural areas. Siyafunda has 2500 learners and 50 educators 90% of them are Africans. Peer tutoring was first introduced in 2001 at Siyafunda Comprehensive High. The peer tutoring programme is a youth empowerment and capacity building programme.

The study had 35 participants who were interviewed: educators, 10 peer tutors and 20 tutees. There were 5 out of the 50 teachers who participated in the study. These teachers were randomly selected to participate and permission was obtained from each of them. Five educators were interviewed and these interviews were audio taped. The total duration of interviews was two weeks, and they occurred after school hours as agreed upon by the researcher and educators.

I interviewed 10 peer tutors from classroom in which I had observed and audio taped

lessons. These interviews took place over one month, and they were also conducted after school hours. I also interviewed 20 peer tutees. These interviews took a month. They took place at the school, after classes had ended for each day. Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about the aims of research, their rights to withdraw at any stage. Further, I sought permission both to interview and to audio record the interviews for the purpose of data transcription. Confidentiality with respect to the data obtained was assured.

3.4 Research Questions

As stated earlier, this study explored the following research question:

How is Siyafunda Comprehensive High School experiencing their peer tutoring program?

Arising from this critical question various sub questions were identified:

- What are the educator's experiences of the peer tutoring program at Siyafunda High School?
- What are learner's views of the peer tutoring program?
- How do peer tutors experience the program?

3.5. Data collection methods

3.5.1. Semi- structured interviews

In my study, I chose the semi-structured interview in order to corroborate my observation of classroom interactions. Cresswell (1998) explain that interviews are useful for understanding how participants view their worlds, and that deeper understandings are often developed through the dialogue. The interviewer and participant construct meaning. In the semi-structured interview, all respondents are asked the same questions and probes are used for all respondents but the order in which they are asked could be changed, according to how the individual reacts. The researcher can alter the sequences in order to probe more deeply, and thus overcome the tendency for respondents to anticipate questions. In this way, some kind of balance between the interviewer and the interviewee can develop, which can provide room for further negotiation, discussion and expansion of the interviewees responses.

3.5.2. Non-Participant observation

In this investigation, I used non-participant observation as I did not take part in the lesson but listened and observed the classroom situation. The purpose was to uncover learner constructions and facilitate immersing myself in, and understanding the context (Ely, 1991). In that way, I attained an in depth understanding of classroom dynamics during peer tutoring.

Collecting data through non-participant observation differs from participant observation in significant ways. Non-participant observation requires a detached, neutral and unobstructive way observer (Goetz & LeCouple, 1984). Social exchange with participants in a setting becomes distracting and may lead to distortions in the recording

of data. Consequently, non-participant observers seek minimal involvement in whatever is being recorded. The challenge is to fade into a scene while remaining separate (Goetz and LeCouple, 1984).

Non-participant observation is suitable when the researcher requires comprehensive, detailed and representative accounts of behaviour. The first time will probably arouse curiosity of the pupils and possibly the teacher. As a rule, therefore, the observer should be as unobstructive as possible, he/she should not comment or participate in any way in the classroom activity. According to Pelto (1978) cited in Borg (1981), participant observation involves merely watching what is happening and recording events on the spot. Wolcott (1988) identifies three types of participant observer's styles: active, privileged and limited. To develop into a discussion of each is not necessary. Suffice is to say that I saw myself adopting a both privileged and limited style. This was possible because a privileged observer is someone who is known and trusted in the setting. This was because the school used in the study is a neighbouring school and the school at which I teach is a feeder school to the high school. Learners were from my school, and I naturally became privileged. Since my role was to only observe the functioning of the peer tutoring programme, and not to participate in the lesson my style was limited. I observed classroom interactions as they occurred in the various classrooms at site.

3.5.3 Data recording

Following Swanns (1994) suggestions, I used on the spot observation which involved observing in detail while someone else was teaching. I also used field notes to

record details about classroom interaction. My note-taking was constantly guided by the main research question, which helped in identifying salient features. One such salient feature was the peer tutors and tutees non-verbal gestures during the lesson which, of course could not be solicited from the tape recording. Hence, on the spot observation and field notes provided useful evidence about the quality of an interaction, and about broad patterns in the distribution of talk between participants.

The tape recording lessons produced the most complete record of what was said. However, I recognised certain drawbacks of using the tape recorder. When a researcher makes use of machines such as tape recorders, much depends on his/her handling of the situation and the rapport that is created with the participants. There are also practical issues to consider when using mechanical devices such as placing the record in an obstructive position, problems of interference, possible breakdown of recording equipment - all of which was kept on the corner of the desk together with my notebook as well as pens. I believed that would make the pupils self-conscious which in turn had some effect on the data collected. The recording proved to be valuable in obtaining rich data. I had to obtain the permission of individuals to tape their lessons. In this study the initial presence of an observer in the classes led to some comments from the pupils who were eager to know the reason for my presence. However, this did not seem to impact on the classroom interaction because of their familiarity with me.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented procedures that were undertaken in the study. These included

the various data collection techniques that were used, that is, observations, interviews and data recording. The method of sampling used was random sampling. Finally, the participants were informed about the aims of the study, their role, rights, issues of confidentiality.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

After data has been collected and analysed it is necessary that the researcher moves on to the next phase, interpreting the data and thus formulating a discussion on the information obtained. This chapter is aimed at discussing the interpretation and findings of the study. I will begin the discussion by providing a background to the school, and an introduction to when and how peer tutoring was started and how it operates. Secondly, I will discuss the programme from the perspective of teachers and the other participants.

4.2. The Peer Tutoring programme at Siyafunda High School

In this section, I shall present the insights I gained, as the researcher, into the nature of the peer tutoring programme at the school. These insights were gained from my observation of the process and from my interviews with the participants.

Siyafunda High School is situated at the outskirts of Umlazi Township which lies South of Durban, which borders a fast growing informal settlement. Siyafunda has been part of a political struggle towards better education. Historically, this school was a school for only African learners and the quality of education was poor. The Bantu Education Act had as key objectives the promotion of the use of Afrikaans Language and a reduction in influence of English in African schools, to impose these schools with the use of both

English and Afrikaans on equal basis as the media of instruction, and thirdly, to extend mother tongue education from grade 4 to grade 8.

The Bantu Education Act was one of many factors that contributed to the poor academic performance of African learners in South Africa. It was difficult for children to conceptualise the different languages that were not their mother tongue all at once. At Syafunda, since 2001 teachers have been trying to adopt alternate strategies to enhance learning such as peer tutoring.

The tutoring session begins with a peer tutor taking charge of the class in the absence of the teacher. He/she then leads the discussion to the class. These discussions are usually on what the teacher had taught them previously. Learners are divided into groups. In view of the large class size at the school. The peer tutoring sessions are conducted in Zulu and English. The tutor guides the class in a discussion on a particular topic. Tutoring sessions run for 45 minutes and each session consists of 35 to 40 learners depending on the size of the class. The tutoring sessions take place in the learner's classroom after school.

The teachers support the programme. Firstly, they take extra time to elaborate to tutors, thus ensuring that tutors have a clear understanding of the topic. The teacher needs to ensure that tutors are adequately prepared for each tutoring session. Secondly, teachers assist tutors with issues of discipline and misconduct of learners.

4.3 Experiencing Peer Tutoring at Siyafunda High School

In this section, I will discuss the programme from the perspectives of teachers, the tutors, and the tutees.

4.3.1 Making meaning together

Three lessons were observed. They all took 45 minutes and were held in classrooms.

There were 40 learners in the English Lesson. The topic was 'Animal Farm' which is a prescribed text for the English Language.

In this lesson, the tutor began by introducing the topic and it was observed that the tutor does not simply give answers to the class. The tutor seemed to reveal good questioning skills, as she asks questions and probes responses further. The tutor also demands of learners more in depth responses. The vignette below provides insight into interactions during a session with 40 grade 11 students.

After reading the passage from a novel, the tutor asks the class to consider the central theme of the lesson.

Tutor : *Now I want you to concentrate on the paragraph and tell me what it reveals to us about Major's character.*

Tutor: *Right, do you have any ideas? Put up your hands, anybody, what does it tell us about Marco's character? Yes!*

Girl 1: He was a pig.

Tutor: Is that all you can say?

Girl 1: He can't (inaudible)

Girl 2: (interrupting) What I can say about Major is that he was a twelve year old pig. He was stout, he was a majestic looking pig with a wise and benevolent appearance.

Tutor : Good. Is there anything left about Major?

Boy 1: His tushes had never been cut (laughing)

Tutor: Why was Major calling all the animals? Yes boy!

Boy 2: He had a strange dream.

Boy 3: (interrupting) and then...

Boy 2: Oh he wished to communicate or to share it with other animal that is why he called "imbizo" you know.

Girl 3: (Raising her hand) Sorry Sir do you think this is a true story?

Tutor: Who can help us answer that one?

Boy 4: Hey you! Can't you see this is not a true story, have you heard of animals talking? There is no such.

Tutor: Okay lets proceed, but if you take this story into a real life situation you can see that it is what is happening in our days.

Tutor: Whom is referred as the enemy by the animals?

Boy 5: I think is the man.

Boy 6: The animals describe 'man' as the only real enemy and that if you can remove 'man' from the scene, the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished for ever.

Tutor: You mean animals thought that men are responsible for slavery?

Boy 6: Sure Sir.

Tutor: Ok, another thing animals argue that man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, and he is the lord of all animals. There are lots of things which the animals complain about if you can read page 4 paragraph 2. Alright lets proceed. Who was Napoleon? Yes!

This lesson was based on identifying the different characters in the novel Animal Farm by George Orwell. The tutor probes the learners to identify the different qualities in these characters. The learners seemed to be eager to participate in the discussions more easily. It seemed that a large number of learners were willing to participate in class discussion in the tutorial than they would normally do in class with a teacher. It was found that tutors show a great deal of professionalism, not only in effectively running discussions but also in creating an environment in which all learners feel free to participate.

According to Gaies (1985), peer tutoring provides an opportunity for students to talk more and to learn by teaching. Peer tutoring involves using learners as models, sources of information, and interactions are such that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken by a formally trained teacher.

Although to me, the discussions seemed to be pitched at a low level for grade 11 students, I had to keep in mind that the learners were English second language speakers. It is likely that peer tutoring caters for the needs of these learners in terms of their English language proficiency, and that interactions are occurring at the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). A tutee commented,

We gain a lot from the programme, we get to identify our mistakes easily and make them right. My English has improved and I find it easier to speak in class.

The fact that students draw on the first language as support is interesting:

Oh he wished to communicate or to share it with other animal that is why he called "imbizo" you know.

This student seems to suggest that her needs are addressed,

I benefit a lot because you are free to ask anything that you want to ask in the peer tutor, like if lets say when a teacher taught you something last week and there is something that you want to ask and you go to the teacher he or she will say we have passed in the thing I cant go back and answer that question, he or she proceed, but the peer tutor help you. We gain a lot from peer tutors.

However, there is a need to heed the warning of Wood & Ahead (1990) that when peer interactions are left unstructured and unsupervised, students tend to interact only at a basis of concrete knowledge-telling level. The possibility that this may occurring at Siyfunda needs to be critically examined by teachers, and steps taken to train tutors more adequately to address the problem.

4.3.2. Learner reflections on the process

30 learners were interviewed, 10 of which were tutors and 20 tutees. The tutees and tutors seemed comfortable with their position and their roles. They also seemed to be enjoying

the role of peer tutoring. This is what some tutees had to say about the benefits of peer tutoring,

Yes, I benefit from peer tutors. I ask where I don't understand, I get clear understanding on what I learned from class.

Yes, we do benefit from the programme, when one of us understands something in any subject then we all go and ask that person and she or he explains to us until we all understand, we are not afraid to tell peer educators that we do not understand.

Yes, a lot because our tutors teach us in a simpler way than teachers do, and it's where we express our feelings freely as we are friends. Another thing my results have improved because of the help from my peer tutors.

I benefit a lot because you are free to ask anything that you want to ask in the peer tutor. The tutors make us free to talk and laugh so it's a lot of fun but we learn at the same time.

I find it helpful and the environment is conducive to active learning, peer educators must keep it up

Yes I understand better and voice out my views whenever I get a chance.

Most of the comments focus on understanding and meaning making, increased

communication opportunities, and the fact that they are in a supportive environment where they feel free to talk and engage with issues. Similar findings were reported by Sarbin (1976), Gaies (1985) and Littlejohn (1982).

The tutors' views on the benefits to learners echoed the comments of learners above.

Yes, I think they benefit, as I said before the teachers sometimes come in class with negative attitude and the peer tutor is someone who is familiar to them. They come to tutors easily to ask for help.

The learners benefit a lot because they gain more from tutor than educators. They learn more relaxed knowing that they can ask questions and they understand us because we are the same age.

Yes, because learners come to us when they need help they feel free to ask since we are of the same age.

The tutoring programme helps us to understand things we are afraid to ask the teachers, It great as we share ideas and problems in this programme

I think it is a good way to help us learn and encourage each other.

The tutors also emphasised the benefits in peer involvement in increasing motivation. Beach (1974) stressed that peer tutoring often results increased motivation to persevere.

The tutors were requested to comment on the benefits of peer tutoring to them as learners.

These were some of the responses,

It is good because it helps me to weigh myself on how much I know.

I've experienced a lot because I have a lot of input in learners and myself confidence is boosted.

I think it is a wonderful experience because now I become more confident of myself.

Yes we benefit - the tutees are not the only ones who benefit. We are given time to plan our lessons, and this reinforces what the teacher has taught us.

All tutors agreed that they learn a great deal by helping their peers. They are forced to interrogate their own understandings, and their own learning is reinforced.

The tutoring programme assists tutors to improve their own understanding if they teach others. Further, they found that the environment encourages learning by both the tutor and the learner. The environment where the teacher was not present was noted as the key to the learners experiencing a sense of being comfortable in the classroom.

The findings reveal that peer tutoring motivates them to work independently. These findings correlated with the findings of one notable study by Cloward (1976) focused on a group of underachieving New York City high school students and involved them in

tutoring elementary students in remedial reading. The results showed that in just six months the reading scores of the tutors jumped to an equivalent of two years. This growth was much more significant than the growth shown by the students that they were not tutored.

In another cross-age tutoring program for struggling learners, significant growth in reading skills and attitudes by seventh grade tutees was realised (Jacobson, Thorpe, Fisher, Lapp, Frey & Flood, 2001). The same study suggested that “the tutors consistently reported that the cross-age experience was beneficial, motivating, and enjoyable”(p. 528).

Furthermore, the present study reveals that learners are empowered, their self-esteem was enhanced, and as with outcomes Based Education (OBE) it encourages active, reflective learning not generally evident in African schools. Integrating peer tutoring with the strategy of OBE can be effective and a motivating combination (Wan, 2000).

One of the main problems outlined by some tutees as well as tutors was the lack of discipline from some of the students. This limits the effectiveness of peer tutoring and prevents other learners from accessing knowledge. Sometimes, the tutors do not get adequate respect from tutees. This has a negative impact on the success of the programme. Comments from learners were,

It is nice but sometimes it wastes our time if tutors don't know all the work.

It depends, some students don't listen to us as peer tutors, they us for granted because we are of the same age.

They should be respected as the original teachers during the periods.

This seems point to issues such as the training and commitment of tutors, and accountability of both tutors and tutees as stressed by Bein (1999). . Furthermore, building a culture of working together and cooperating with one another is a key to a successful peer tutoring programme.

4.3.3 Educators voices on peer tutoring

The school comprises of 50 educators, for the purpose of this study 5 were randomly selected for the interviews. The teachers are responsible for scheduling tutoring sessions and some teachers stay in the venue for monitoring and ensuring that discipline is maintained. However, some educators play an evaluative role drawing on the tutor feedback, and do not attend the tutoring sessions. The teachers decide what areas of focus the tutor needs pay attention to, and the tutoring schedule is organised by teachers.

The educators at Siyafunda revealed some good experiences with the peer tutoring programme,

It a good method of empowering learners, it promotes self esteem, it facilitates the use of language so it's another way of encouraging self confidence and the use of second language which is English.

I believe its okay especially because the kids, you can see that some of them panic to ask questions from the teacher, as they can ask as many questions as they like, and they even communicate in Zulu, as it is their mother tongue. We also appreciate and encourage them to use English - that is why we have peer tutoring programme where they are free and relaxed to learn.

The educators revealed the following strengths of the programme. They agreed that the lessons are supportive and the learners are more at ease to ask questions of their peers. The tutoring lessons allow them to use their mother tongue as to support the building of understanding.

Peer tutoring is also beneficial to teachers who may not have the time to spend with each of their students one-on-one. In the sessions, learners work in small groups with a tutor. Students have the chance to learn in a more intimate environment, which allows them to take more initiative. For example, students ask more questions at the tutorials and that hardly happen in lectures where there are over 80 students sitting in the lecture theatre, according to Wosley (1999) who examined peer tutoring at college level.

The teachers stated that the programme also improves social skills and promotes tolerance among learners. It develops problem-solving skills and promotes independence amongst learners.

The teachers pointed out that one has to remember that tutors are also students and may not have all the answers, and are of the same age as the tutees. One of the educators made a critical point regarding parental involvement of support of the programme. His view was that the support from parents was missing, and often tutoring is seen as the teacher relegating his/her duties and pushing the workload onto children. The teachers felt that this issue needs to be engaged with in the near future. The need for communication amongst all relevant stakeholders in a school is necessary, that is, parents, students, teachers, and the school governing body.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The small-scale study examined a peer tutoring programme at a high school in KwaZulu-Natal. The study revealed that the tutors, tutees and educators of Siyafunda Comprehensive School were of the opinion that the peer tutoring has the potential to enhance learning. Some of the benefits that emerged are: increased motivation, enhanced self-concept, a reduced inhibition, learning in a supportive, enabling environment, development of learner autonomy and independence.

The classroom observations point to the need for peer interactions to be monitored to ensure that they are not at a purely concrete knowledge telling level. Dialogue does not necessary imply competency in learning, Training has to ensure that deep level thinking and problem solving occurs.

Teachers need to systematically monitor the peer tutoring sessions, both formally and informally. The active involvement of teachers is necessary at all levels, in particular to monitor discipline. Teachers should understand that in the final analysis learning and teaching is their responsibility.

The findings also suggest that the success of a peer tutoring programme may be linked to the culture and ethos of the school as a whole. A school that upholds the principles of inclusivity, values of caring and affirming others, resiliency building (Henderson & Milstein (1996), collaboration, and an ethos of working together may be an environment

in which a peer tutoring programme will flourish. The whole school community needs to build this kind of an ethos and culture – teachers, learners, parents, school management.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

8 Endel Place
Seaview
DURBAN
4094
20 August 2003

THE MANAGER
PHUMELELA CIRCUIT
EMAWELENI
UMLAZI
4031

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a student at the School of Education, studying for a Masters Degree in Education.
Kindly allow me to undertake research in an educational context.

I am now in the dissertation stage of my programme. My aim is to examine the peer tutoring programme that is taking place at Ogwini Comprehensive High school. I believe the research will be an important contribution to education, in particular to the whole school development.

I shall be grateful if you will grant me the permission to undertake the study at the above mentioned school.

Yours Sincerely

S. G. Xulu (Mrs)



APPENDIX B: EDUCATOR INTERVIEW

E =Educator I= Interviewer

- I : Good Afternoon
- E : Good Afternoon
- I : Where did you train as a teacher?
- E : I trained at Esikhawini College of Education, which is at Empangeni in 1996 – 1998
- I : What qualifications do you have?
- E : Diploma in Education Secondary phase
- I : How long have you been teaching at Ogwini?
- E : This is my second year, I joined the staff last year.
- I : Is that when you joined the field?
- E : No, no no, In 2001 I was teaching at Mondlezizwe in Bulwer
- I : When was peer tutoring introduced?
- E : I found it here at Ogwini when I came
- I : Do you use it all the time in class?
- E : EH, not all the time but I do use it.
- I : Why not all the time
- E : I find that sometimes the learners I use as tutors have too much to do
- I : How are tutors selected?
- E : On the basis of being bright and able to speak up and explain things to others
- I : How good are they?
- E : They are good they get a good response and we get better results.
- I : Does the teacher monitor the process
- E : Some of us do, but not always as often our presence intimidates the class
- I : Do you take them as a group, large groups or the whole class
- E : No, I normally divide them into small groups because I believe that if they are in small groups that is when they concentrate because if they are in large groups they can start to be chaotic and all that stuff.
- I : How do you feel about using peer tutoring in the classroom?

E : I believe its okay especially because the kids, you can see that some of them panic to ask questions from the teacher, so they ask many questions as they can ask as many questions as they like and they even communicate in Zulu, as it is their mother tongue. We also appreciate and encourage them to use English that is why we have peer tutoring programme where they are free and relaxed to learn.

I : What are the benefits of peer tutoring to learners?

E : As I have said, If they are being taught, some of the learners ask questions easily whilst others do not find it easy to ask the teacher. Therefore peer tutoring is good and its one of the ways to see if learners understand you as a teacher and apart from that it also motivate them to do things on their own rather than all the time standing in front of them and teach them, spoon feed them.

I : What are some of the difficulties or problems you find with the programme?

E : Lack of respect amongst tutees and tutors, learners often show little respect for tutors. Secondly the community sees us as teachers who don't want to do their job.

I : What are the implications of peer tutoring?

E : The implications, I think maybe it can be that if you not in class may be the Learners can start not to concentrate. If one learner can understand and teach the other so others can learn than its good maybe that the one you have chosen, he or she could be not that not that good enough so I mean he can not express themselves to other kids.

I : How is your relationship with learners?

E : Its good and we have that mutual bond.

I : Do learners interact actively with you in class?

E : Yes the reason for that it's because they raise their hands when I ask questions, they even raise arguments as they have different points to raise, so they are quite interactive. The interesting fact is that because they are science learners they do not take everything you tell them, they question a lot and they think about things. Science does that to them it needs a lot of application and experiments.

I : Is there anything you would like to add?

E : Yes, I will be very glad if next time you visit you can provide our school with

APPENDIX C: PEER TUTOR INTERVIEW

Peer Tutor = PT Interviewer = I

I : Good Afternoon

PT : Good Afternoon

I : What grade are you doing?

PT : I am doing grade 11

I : When have you started being a student at this school ?

PT : Since 2000

I : What purpose does peer tutoring serve in the classroom?

PT : If ever a student did not understand the question s/he get an opportunity to ask the peer that s/he what s/he did not understand.

I : Which language would you prefer to use in the classroom and why?

PT : I think its English because it's an international language and it's almost known by many people in South Africa.

I : Are you concern that some learners may not understand the concept that you present in English?

PT : Ja, there is a possibility

I : What do you do in situations like that?

PT : I try to make them to understand me by all means.

I : You don't switch in Zulu?

PT : No I don't

I : How is your relationship with your educators?

PT : They do appreciate what we are doing in class. They pay more attention when we are presenting because we are doing their job.

I : What is the role of peer tutoring?

PT : I think peer tutoring is to make every student to be free and active and ask without shyness.

I : What are your views of peer tutoring?

PT : It is the best programme for those who are shy to ask questions from the teacher to feel free when I am standing in front of them as the classmates its where we

share ideas and solve problems.

I : Do learners interact actively with you in class?

PT : Yes, they are more active they feel free to express themselves and it becomes easier to touch those areas we need to develop.

I : Is there anything you want to add?

PT : Yes, each and every learner must have a turn, they must be given an opportunity to be tutors.

I : Thank you

APPENDIX D: TUTEE INTERVIEW

Tutee = T Interviewer =I

I : Good Afternoon

T : Good Afternoon, Ma'am

I : What grade are you in?

T : I am in grade 10.

I :What purpose does peer tutoring serve in the classroom?

T : It serve as an alternative way of understanding what I have learned in classroom.

I : Which language would you prefer to use in the classroom?

T : English just because it is an international language of communication.

I : How is your relationship with your educators?

T : Not that good neither bad because there are teachers who we easily ask questions when we have problems but then it could be hard sometimes to ask other teachers.

I : Do you benefits from peer tutoring how?

T : Yes, because I tend to understand better and expose my views freely.

I : What are your views of peer tutoring programme?

T : It is great, it promotes socialisation, we work as brothers and sisters to improve our skills and knowledge.

I : Do you interact actively with your peer tutors?

T : Yes, there is that bond because there are pupils of my own age and some of them actually have the same problem that I have.

I : How do you as a learner experiences the programme?

T : I find it great because it helps me to express myself freely and to cope with my studies.

I : Is there anything you want to add?

T : Yes, we must interact in class because that helps us understand more and to cope with our daily life situations.

I : Thank you

strategies of how to improve our peer tutoring programme. Especially issues such as those of addressing laziness of both scholars and educators. As we are now using OBE which requires the teacher to be the facilitator and the learners to active, I mean our kids are not used to it in our black schools, In the end they end up coping okay because of peer tutoring. I hope that in future you will come to teach in our school, as we can benefit from what you learn.

I : Thank you very much, have a lovely day

E : Same to you