

AT STUDENTS' SERVICE – TUTORING AND COACHING AS INNOVATIVE METHODS OF ACADEMIC EDUCATION IN POLAND

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Abstract

A proposed paper presents academic Tutoring and Coaching as innovative methods of personalized teaching and learning, aimed at maintaining/preserving and developing high quality education at the contemporary university. Both methods constitute a didactic offer which apparently seems contradictory with the assumptions of Higher Education (HE) reforms, conducted recently in Poland and in Europe and directed at marketisation and commodification of education. This impression might be caused by the fact that Tutoring and Coaching refer back to the rooted in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of individualized teaching by a Tutor or Coach, who cares for a complex intellectual, cognitive and psycho-social (i.e. also emotional) development of his/her student. The idea of re-introducing elements of personalized education in the formula of Tutoring, Coaching and even Mentoring occur in progressive academic milieus as an alternative to purely pragmatic and depersonalized relationship between students and teachers. They evoke curiosity among academic researchers, as they assume unique, slightly forgotten in the contemporary practice of mass education ties between Master and Pupil, being *per se* a primary form of reciprocal stimulation of passion, interests and exchange of knowledge between two Subjects.

As both discussed methods are directed at raising the efficacy of a teaching/learning process, they shall also be analyzed in the context of restructuring educational systems and changing requirements as for human/intellectual capital, driven by the processes of Europeanization and globalization of university/tertiary education. When professionally applied, Tutoring and Coaching stand a chance to become the best, if not the only tools to preserve the elite level of HE for those individuals (both teachers and students) who are ready to face an intellectual challenge, and who want to continue their personal development instead of only getting a diploma to fit the labor market. In this approach, Tutoring and Coaching turn into the measurable/institutionalized instruments to raise the quality of HE, and their application can be viewed as a factor which decides about the Institution's competitiveness.

In the proposed article, general features of Tutoring as an academic method shall be enlisted alongside the assumptions of Coaching, the objective of which is, as it shall be argued, deepening of personalized teaching efficiency. The purpose of this juxtaposition shall be highlighting the points at which both approaches complement each other in order to provide a student with optimal conditions not only to widen his declarative or pragmatic knowledge, but also to develop his/her cognitive and emotional attitudes. The latter constitute the basis for successful learning and knowledge processing (re.: S. Krashen's *Emotional Filter Hypothesis*). Thus, Coaching shall be presented as an effective way of drawing students to their highest cognitive potentials by means of awakening their self-reflection over own goals, aptitudes and weaknesses meaningful to their learning process. Reaching this level of reflectivity is indispensable to successively build their knowledge capital, which in turn takes place in the personalized didactic dialogue with a Tutor: a leader, a coordinator and a source of professional knowledge in one.

The authors also assume that combining Tutoring and Coaching as methods of teaching constitutes a highly competitive offer for HE pushed into the frames of European Qualification Framework. The objective will be to insert a postulated didactic approach in the administrative triple division of educational goals and effects formulated as *knowledge*, *skills* and *attitudes* (social skills). Accordingly, it shall be argued that personalized education may go in line with administrative rules of democratic education, and simultaneously serve the individual, autonomous student.

Keywords: tutoring, coaching, innovative teaching methods, change in academic education in Poland.

1 INTRODUCTION

The article presents academic Tutoring and Coaching as two separate, albeit interconnected innovative methods of personalized teaching and learning, aimed at the assurance of high quality education at the contemporary university in Poland. Both methods apparently contradict the regulations of Higher Education (HE) reforms, conducted recently as the outcome of the Lisbon strategy and Bologna process in Europe. Political and socio-economic transformations brought about by the aforementioned systemic processes caused fundamental change in the field of Higher Education. The change initially originated in the necessity to adapt to free market economy, but with time it was simply necessary to meet the external demands put forward by European integration. Among symptoms of change one could find the growth in students numbers, privatization in higher education system, commercialization of studies and diversification of higher education institutions, but also growing contradictions between the tendency for quantitative growth and the need to maintain quality standards [1]. From this perspective, Tutoring rooted in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of one-to-one teaching by a tutor who cares for a complex intellectual, cognitive and psycho-social development of his/her student, appears unrealistic in mass education. Coaching, in turn, based on the method of asking questions and leading a student to his/her own discovery of own potentials, appears equally rare in didactics applied in overcrowded groups or classes. Nevertheless, we shall argue in this article that due to a high diversification of students' expectations, resulting from massification of HE, there should be an equally diverse offer for students of different capacities, potentials and individual career plans. If HE institutions are at the crossroads of either becoming vocational schools for professionals or remaining an anchorage of elite values of liberal arts, they should avoid introducing monolithic solutions in methodology. If Tutoring and Coaching could turn into the institutionalized instruments to raise the **quality of teaching and learning**, their application could be viewed as a factor which adds to the Institution's competitive advantage.

2 IDEOLOGICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND FOR INTRODUCING TUTORING AND COACHING AS INNOVATIVE DIDACTIC METHODS

The whole revolution in education induced by globalization and Europeanization is more complex than just the introduction of new administrative solutions and normative standards. It is also a highly discursive phenomenon, which may perfectly suit a contemporary Critical Discourse Analysis. It is widely accepted that in a discussion about education the observed mechanisms, problems and tendencies are a sign of economizing education and putting it in the frames of market driven forces. The major objective in this kind of discourse is the already mentioned **efficacy of education**, which in the long run is to serve the interests of the Human, as well as Social Capital, i. e. economic objectives. Tomasz Szkuclarek [2] sees in the very term 'efficacy' a misleading, hidden discourse of economic neo-liberalism, which stands in contrast with traditional pedagogical liberalism. This renown Polish critical pedagogue claims that pedagogical liberalism, rooted in ethical and axiological values, cares for Human Capital, whereas contemporary economical neo-liberalism aims at the development of Social Capital with its all socio-metric and socializing, as well as emancipatory features [2]. Following M. Foucault's idea, Szkuclarek observes a double meaning of this reciprocal relationship. Investing in an individual by developing his/her individual interests and potentials, which liberal education promoted, 'defines a man by giving him a rank of being a meaningful factor of growth, *charges* [a term used by T. S.] with a specific potential (Human Potential but understood in terms of economic potential of growth), making him at the same time responsible for utilizing the invested forces and means.' This perspective would suggest that even the liberal educational investment in an individual serves, again, the hegemony of economic growth and market driven efficacy.

It is our belief, however, that this dubious process can be viewed more positively as well. Not by negation of the previously mentioned interdependencies, but by focusing on **the very nature** of raising the effectiveness of education: achieving it and measuring not by applying standards of market driven norms, but by axiological norms that do not disregard ethical issues. In that sense, personalized education based on Tutoring and Coaching has a chance to bring **effective** final outcomes: raising the standards of education not for external statistics, but rather for internal competencies of future workers **for their own good**. Personalized teaching has a good chance to teach competencies which are transferrable and permanent (a word disliked by the post-modern liquidity) in the sense of learners' self-confidence, reflexivity, auto-evaluation skills, inquisitiveness, cognitive development and readiness for lifelong learning. This kind of investment is not dependent on state governed administrative rules, so it can be said to be free from the dominant influence of economic neo-liberalism.

2.1 HE reform in Poland as the example of restructuring educational system and background for Tutoring/Coaching application in the academic context

In Poland, during the process of building a new socio-political and economic order after the year 1989, Higher Education had no alternative against the new neoliberal ideology, based on supply and demand basis (TINA doctrine). This tendency spread over education as well [3]. The educational system in Poland relatively easily adapted to the new ideology by introducing in 1990 a possibility to open the abundance of private educational institutions and to start up extramural paid studies in public universities. This phenomenon was parallel to the growth of educational ambitions of the Polish society. Poland can be viewed as the best example of a country where mass education has become a recognizable feature, and where a public discussion over lowering quality of education has occupied a well established position among issues in the debate about HE. Especially because the quality of education – a specific measuring device of Human Capital – is perceived by the rules of the Bologna Process and strategy Europe 2020 through the lenses of job preparation and so called *employability*. Consequently, due to the Europeanization processes, National Qualification Framework has been implemented in Poland. It aims at teaching students for particular effects in the spheres of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Such target areas of education and teaching require more sublimate didactic methods than those applied traditionally in huge classes and lecture halls. Is there space in the Polish HE system for innovative methods which can be directed at supporting students' active learning and help them to develop high competences in all the three NQF dimensions?

As Bruce Macfarlane [4] remarks, in mass education systems, one-to-one tutoring constitutes a costly use of teaching resources, which only a few HE institutions can afford. He adds, however that in GB, where tutoring is a formal way of teaching and learning, education seems to be aimed at developing employment-related skills of students. It seems, thus, to provide the quality of education which is expected not only on the labor market, but also in other spheres of life.

3 ACADEMIA AS A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FOR TUTORING AND COACHING.

In terms of the Bologna Process, competition is seen as one of the most effective ways to keep high standards of teaching thanks to the popular ranking exercises and standardized assessment criteria. The question arises, however, what sorts of pedagogical actions may lead to this high, competitive quality? Hereby we shall argue that academic Tutoring deserves a revival in the academic context of contemporary HE as a highly humanistic and developmental methodological tool. It deserves special attention due to its clear reference to Liberal Education, focused originally on developing critical thinking, global understanding of oneself and of the world. Additionally, as Whitehead put it in his works over the aims of university education, it may be helpful to 'preserve the connection between knowledge and the zest of life, by uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning.' [5], as well as induce 'intellectual freedom' [6]. In order to support this argument, let us look at the very meaning of **higher education**, how it fits with concept of **liberal tradition in pedagogy** and, finally, at the specificity of tutoring as the example of **personalized education**.

3.1 Academic tutoring as the echo of *liberal arts*

David Palfreyman remarks that '*As such higher education is liberal education and goes beyond vocational education as something that is also worthy but whose remit is 'merely' to impart specific knowledge and particular skills for a defined job (plumber, hairdresser) or a predetermined career (...). Higher education is not 'training'*'. Numerous scholars enlisted by Palfreyman have also written about education being *liberal* in the sense of '*directed to general intellectual enlargement and refinement; not narrowly restricted to the requirements of technical or professional training*' [7]. All of them emphasized critical reflection on experience, 'higher-order states of mind' [8], or the predominant role of the 'spirit in which the study is conducted' [9]. According to Axelrod [10], '*liberal education in the university refers to activities that are designed to cultivate intellectual creativity, autonomy, and resilience; critical thinking; a combination of intellectual breadth and specialized knowledge*', whereas Walker already in 1673 claimed that '*true learning is not about memory, but is about the ability 'to digest what is read, and to be able to know where a difficulty lies, and how to solve it.. [to] discourse, doubt, argue upon and against..'*' [7]. All of the scholars underlined students' participation in academic discourse, engagement, reflexivity and analytical skills as prerequisites of liberal university education.

Academic Tutoring seems to meet all the above requirements. It is about refinement, critical “higher-order state of mind”, and intellectual adventure. Knowledge and thinking which are expanded during individual tutorials are supposed to create the climate for facts and theories’ digestion, expressions of doubts, argumentation and a discursive debate. All this happens in a friendly, open psychological environment, which makes a student feel at ease with their emotions, thus helping the thoughts to flourish. Academic tutoring is a highly personalized method of teaching, which does not mean the same as individualized. *Personalisation* and *individualisation* are two terms with a distinct pedagogical meaning. A major difference concerns the objectives of teaching and learning. *Individualisation* refers to the set of didactic strategies aiming to guarantee all students the achievement of **the same learning objectives**, using different (i.e. individualized) approaches, methods, styles of teaching etc. *Personalisation*, on the other hand, focuses on the strengths of the learner and their individual aspirations. **Learning objectives differ** from learner to learner, and teaching, just like in case of tutoring, is a continuous process heavily dependent on the teacher’s and learner’s negotiables. What is crucial, is that the learner is an active co-designer of his own learning, as he/she becomes emotionally involved in the process and motivated to meet his personal goals. If *personalisation* may also provide learners with the opportunity to learn in ways that suit their individual learning styles and multiple intelligences [11], it means that Tutoring, as an inspiring, trustful face-to face partnership between Master and Pupil, fits with this concept fully.

3.2 Coaching as a supportive, pro-developmental technique of instruction

Tutoring is usually referred to academic teaching and education directly, whereas Coaching is not related to educational context in a straightforward manner. It originates, as well as draws on psychological concepts and theories, such as theories of learning, theory of motivation and attitude. A coaching specialist Ho Law [12] suggests to situate coaching in a 3-dimensional triad together with mentoring and psychology of learning, and highlights the connections of coaching with positive psychology. Generally, coaching has been observed in three areas: psychotherapy, sport and education (in Oxbridge known already in the beginning of the XIX c.). Contemporarily, application of coaching methods is heavily grounded in psychology, and found in business and management, where it became a popular method of personal development for employees in the 80s and 90s of the previous century.

From a business perspective, coaching can be viewed as a complex, interdisciplinary approach to a client, aimed at supporting his development by means of versatile techniques, i.e mainly active listening and asking questions. The objectives to reach are to strengthen the potential skills, help in acquiring new knowledge and improve actions [13]. Jenny Rogers, a British author of a frequently published *Coaching Skills. A Handbook* [14] defines coaching as *partnership of equals whose aim is to achieve speedy, increased and sustainable effectiveness through focused learning in every aspect of the client’s life*.

A stepping stone for coaching seen from a psychological perspective, where it is understood as *the facilitation of well-being and optimal functioning in various life domains*, is Carl Roger’s concept of a “helping relationship” based on *person-centered approach* [15]. It is also widely discussed and promoted in education methodology and research, e.g. as a *student-centered learning* described by Rogers in the 80-ties in his book ‘Freedom to Learn’, where it means *the shift in power from the expert to the student learner* [16]. *Student-centered learning* (SCL) focuses on self-awareness and responsibility of the student, who decides about his/her own learning, seeks knowledge and develops skills with direct support of the coach, but eventually doing it on his/her own. In adult education, both tutoring and coaching are seen as vital in so called *Stage Self-Directed Learning Model (SSDL Model)*, although related by Gerald O. Grow [17] to the first of four stages on the way from dependent to more self-directed learning performed by learners of low self-direction. The fourth stage of the SSDL model, reserved to the learners of high self-direction, has been declared to be in the hand of a teacher viewed as a consultant and delegator. Coaching has nowadays been categorized as a method typical for *Self-Directed Learning (SDL)*, as opposed to the former *Teacher-Directed Learning (TDL)*. TDL is efficient way to present new bodies of knowledge and practice, whereas SDL enables students to customize their approach to learning tasks, combines the development of skills with the development of character, and prepares them for learning throughout their lives [18].

In spite of its popularity and academic roots, coaching has not yet been grounded in the educational systems neither permanently, nor widely. According to Christian van Nieuwerburgh [19], it was recognized in education Just around the year 2000 in Anglo-Saxon educational milieu. In Poland it was given more attention only one decade later. In educational context it is mainly used as a useful

form of supporting Tyree groups of „receivers/clients“: students, teachers and administrative workers. Teachers gain by developing their didactic skills and successful actions in HE institutions. For students it is generally a helping device to learn how to study and pass examinations. This approach makes coaching a method focused mainly on developing emotional and social skills (attitudes). The aforementioned author quotes, however, that coaching is rather a method *helping a person to achieve their goals or improve their performance through structured one-to-one conversations* [19]. Additionally, Light, Cox and Calkins [20] claim the method to be in an academic context a highly supportive, and at the same time highly directive one, with a strong verbal incentive to self-steered learning featured by a strong contribution of a student in the process. This is why it is more and more frequently perceived as a *valuable tool in HE classrooms and a natural part of the HE teacher's role* [21].

4 TUTORING & COACHING AS A COMPLEMENTARY DIDACTIC OFFER

Both Tutoring and Coaching refer to individual form of academic work, which obviously necessitates a personalized relations between tutor and student based to a great extend on listening and asking questions. Both listening and asking belong to a basic set of academic teacher's professional competencies [22]. The similarities between both methods appear exceptionally visible at the crossroad of Personal Coaching in education, focused on help rather than instruction [23], and Personal Tutoring (PT), focused on Personal Development Planning (PDP), fostering *„a more proactive and mature approach to academic work, reducing support needs and making tutorials more purposeful and enjoyable“* [21]. It is worthy to point to similarities, as well as the occurring differences between Tutoring and Coaching, in order to come to a conclusion that they both complement each other and create a unique offer to a student and a teacher who wish to reach high standards of university education.

4.1 Similarities and differences in the context of teaching

Any differentiation between Tutoring and Coaching refers to the type of support given to a student. Generally, Tutoring aims at academic, intellectual development, whereas Coaching is focused on personal development. Tutor helps the student to widen his/her content knowledge, usually within tutor's field of specialization, while a Coach works on student's ability to be self-steering in his action and learning, regardless of the topics studied. The objective in the second case is rather to help to use the knowledge for a future career and to function in an academic environment. Coach is not expected to be an expert in the field of a student, but is required to be professional in asking adequate questions. Consequently, Tutoring and Coaching focus on developing different skills in a student: tutoring pertains to strengthen cognitive and intellectual skills, while coaching – social and emotional capacities. Another field of comparison concerns the type of relationship between a teacher and a student in the light of both methods. Tutoring assumes so called “unequal partnership” and a type of authority based on a Master-Pupil relationship. Coaching is grounded in less hierarchical and more partner-like behaviors.

There is no final agreement as for defining the relation between tutoring and coaching in HE. Due to a different target of support and quality of knowledge, but at the same time similarity in application techniques, coaching seems to be treated more often as an element of tutoring, and not vice-versa. Probably this is the reason why both methods are located parallel to each other on a scale of innovations in academic didactics, pertaining to develop student's autonomy. Their complementary application might constitute a complex, institutional support for students' learning and thus realize *the principles of good teaching, which promotes student learning* [24]. Tutoring and Coaching should be treated as the tools to promote not only teaching excellence in higher education, but first of all to care for student learning excellence, followed by the management of learning [25].

4.2 At student's service – Tutoring and Coaching as a high quality educational offer

If we follow the assumption that contemporary HE has been discursively perceived as the act of “service” exchanged between the institution (university) and student (a consumer), it is possible to analyze the mechanisms of this exchange in terms of quality assurance and quality service. Although the understanding of high quality of service will never be the same in the case of commercial goods and of education [26], there is no reason to avoid the comparison of the two by certain formal, definitional criteria. Their substance will differ, but it seems to be reasonable to consider, for instance,

the determinants of quality service, the mechanism of its assessment (as the difference between the quality expected and experienced) [27] or so called *gaps model* [28] in the process of finding similarities and differences. Tutoring & Coaching have a reasonable chance to become a tool to restore high quality of academic teaching and learning, no matter if we look at it from the perspective of liberal or neoliberal forces in education. Personalized method of developing the potential of an individual is marked with the features of both approaches. For the final recapitulation of this plot it would be interesting to reconsider the *Five Gaps Model of Quality Service* which highlights the reasons why there occurs mismatch between Expectation and Performance. Accordingly, by each there has been formulated a potential positive role of methodology of Tutoring and Coaching in the process of BRIDGING the gaps. The gaps can occur between [29]:

1 – consumer expectations and management perception (in education – the needs of students not understood by teachers and university governors). T & C offer a much higher level of mutual trust and reciprocal awareness of expectations.

2 – recognizing the needs of a consumer correctly and even though wrong specification of service (in education – low standard of educational offer). T & C provide a high quality offer of personalized teaching and learning, individual intellectual development and adjusts the level to specific needs of a student.

3 – good quality specification and actual performance by a worker (in education – lack of professionalism, low work dynamics, missing self-study projects and LLL courses for academic staff). T & C pushes teachers to hard work, teaches self-discipline, openness, flexibility and develops their personalities as much as of students.

4 – level of services delivered and external communication (real standard and excessive promotion). T & C do not need much external promotion, as they promote themselves by the growing positive feedback and self-development of students and teachers.

5 – service offered and received (acc. to Parasuraman, Zeitham, Berry [28] this gap is of a pivotal meaning, as usually service quality needs to exceed the consumer's expectations in order to be noticed: in education it may refer to university's ranking position, renown academic staff, a respectful attitude towards students). Tutoring and Coaching allow to bridge this gap by letting observe and personally touch **the process** of building final quality in personal education.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN POLISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Polish HE institutions have rather little experience in applying Tutoring and Coaching as supportive didactic methods for students. Coaching appears usually as a subject or post-diploma courses offered by academic institutions in order to prepare future coaches for their jobs. What can be found are also business offers for students or academic teachers aimed at developing their academic or business careers. Very rarely do the methods occur as supportive methods for regular students of universities, and if they do, they are usually conducted as a result of grants or projects financed from external European sources. One of such projects, in which coaching was applied in order to develop social skills in students of University of Lodz, was the project *Employability & Entrepreneurship. Tuning Universities & Enterprises*, conducted within Erasmus program in 2009 by Entrepreneurship Development Foundation in Łódź, in which one of the authors of this text – Agnieszka Dziedziczak-Foltyn participated as a coordinator of the program “Coaching Model in Poland”. A Janusz Korczak Pedagogical University in Warsaw has once conducted a project entitled “A modern lecturer – tutor and coach”, which resulted in a few publications and was a real chance to apply the methods in academic teaching. Jerzy Axer, a Polish professor who has been trying to implement the idea institutionally in Poland, has contributed to the organization of cross-faculty Interdisciplinary Humanistic studies at a few Polish universities, as well as the *Academia Artes Liberales* and *Collegium Invisible* functioning since 1995 in Warsaw. Another educational institution: Collegium Wratislaviense, teaches courses in academic tutoring both in a form of a quasi-formal education, and in international projects conducted at some universities. Collegium Wratislaviense has trained academic tutors in a project at the Wrocław University, and in spring 2014 carried out two cycles of training sessions for academic teachers at the University of Gdańsk. The project entitled: *Ideal Quality in Good Quantity - interdisciplinary developmental support of a foreign language student by the method of academic tutoring at the University of Gdansk*, coordinated by another co-author of this text, Beata Karpińska-Musiał, is the first project in Poland which except for training sessions, incorporates

the immediate application of tutorials in the academic teaching. Thus, Tutoring and Coaching have a good chance to flourish, gradually but persistently, in the academic learning and teaching environment. They deserve attention as the forms of educational dialogue, in which, after Rogers, 'one of the participants intends that there should come about in one or both parties, more appreciation of, more expression of, more functional use of the latent inner resources of the individual' [30].

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