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Building Competence Through Critical Moments: How Challenges Shape a Peer Tutor's Skills

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As a collaborative learning approach, peer tutoring strives to aid both the tutors and the tutees to develop their academic, interpersonal and organisational skills. Considering the variety of skills required to be a successful peer tutor, it doesn't come off as a surprise that tutors, although highly educated, still face numerous challenges. Regardless of the tutor's preparedness and the generally smooth flow of the session itself, obstacles can occur. Those so-called “critical moments“ can affect the entire session, rendering it ultimately futile. They can therefore act as a good indicator of the tutor's ability to utilise their theoretical knowledge in a practical manner to manage real-life situations.

The objective of this study is to assess the types of adversities experienced by participants of the Peer EDU tutoring programme. Following that idea, an online questionnaire was created for the purpose of gathering responses of the students involved in the programme. The questionnaire consisted of three types of questions. The first type, which included six statements accompanied by a Likert scale, took into consideration tutors' opinions regarding their own abilities, their rapport with the tutees, and the session as a whole. The second type covered the tutors' immediate reaction to their own errors, as well as the types of challenges reported. The final one was comprised of two open-ended questions which allowed tutors to exemplify in greater detail based on their experience.

The answers portrayed the participants' attitudes towards their perceived struggles, both expected and unexpected. The most commonly reported challenges were academic/cognitive, closely followed by interpersonal challenges. Equal percentage of participants reported facing motivational and communication challenges, with the next most reported type of challenges being emotional ones. Evidently, organisational challenges appeared to a far lesser extent.