

Embodiment of academic excellence and autonomy through academic tutoring implementation – models and examples from the ‘heartland’ at the University of Gdańsk

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The complexity of academic tutoring implementation at Polish universities grows once we consider a ‘critical juncture’ (Tripp 1993), which is a global Covid-19 pandemic that intervened with the running of Masters of Didactics Project (MofD) in Poland. An unexpected switch towards online teaching and learning on all levels of education has induced both acceleration of particular skills development in teachers and, on the other hand, perturbed to some extent the process of project realization. Nevertheless, most of the project beneficiaries have managed to successfully cope with the crisis. The University of Gdańsk, as a kind of “heartland” of academic tutoring among academic institutions implementing tutoring anew since 2015, has also found its ways to prove that academic community of tutors appreciate the value of this type of academic quality assurance and all the more the participation in the Masters of Didactics.

The proposed presentation will be divided into two parts. The first, more theoretical but setting grounds for praxis, will look at tutoring as an exceptional type of education leading both tutors and tutees to so called ‘sensed moments of embodiments’ (Ergas 2020). The authors who are tutors, academic teachers and – one of us – researchers on education want to share our conviction that tutoring helps to reach subjective academic excellence thanks to a remarkable dose of autonomy given to this process. Hence, some thoughts over such categories as elitism vs democracy, freedom vs duty, individual vs community in the context of tutoring will be exemplified.

The second part will refer to institutional setting and cover several examples of gradual tutoring implementation at the University of Gdańsk since 2015 till 2021. We have a story to tell about how tutors who participated before in other internal projects (e.g. ‘IQ’ Project run in cooperation with National Foundation for the Development of Educational System – FRSE - and financed by Norway Grants) developed their competencies further by taking part in the MofD Project. This is the story of true passion and contagious energy shared with “new” tutors to motivate them to develop their skills and go for study visits to partner institutions. Thus, we shall discover to the audience: (1) models of tutoring that function at the University of Gdańsk before and after study visits within MofD, (2) ways of supporting our students in studying and teachers in their further didactic development and (3) institutional solutions to make tutoring (various forms) a permanent academic brand. As both authors represent a fresh-new institutional body appointed at our University in January 2021: ‘Center of Didactic Excellence and Tutoring’, we look in hope at this new space to crystallize the effects of MofD Project. We would also like to share our plans of doing it horizontally and by criteria of so called ecological and sustainable university (Barnett, Peters 2018).