Tutoring in University Education as an Extended Perspective (Reality) and an Element of Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT

Tutoring as a certain architecture of academic excellence is a method of preparing students for work, creating conditions for further research activities, and restoring the personal growth function of university education, whose goal is to foster attitudes and values that are understood as universal goods (Dziedziczak-Foltyn et al., 2020). The article consists of the following parts: an introduction and the main sections, presenting successively the basic theories, the applied methodology, the main analysis, and the conclusions. The main objective of this paper is to organize the theoretical foundations of tutoring and present the results of a study conducted by a team of researchers from the Faculty of Arts and Educational Science at the University of Silesia in Katowice. The members of the above-mentioned tutoring research team are the authors of this article. The research concerned the ways of defining tutoring by students of pedagogical fields of study who carry out tutoring in inclusive education institutions. In the course of the research, it turned out that tutoring is defined as a method, support, practice, teaching, experience, development, relationship, work, and observation. The method applied in their research is qualitative analysis.

Keywords: tutoring; university education; student; inclusive education.

INTRODUCTION

Tutoring is a process that allows students to get a better understanding of themselves through work with their charges (tutees). It enables students to discover their professional aptitudes, talents, and abilities as well as to define and develop their strengths. By pursuing their interests, students build skills related to personal development planning. Through tutoring, students establish and explore social relationships. The method of tutoring is a form of reflecting on one's values. Moreover, under the supervision of their mentors, students shape their personalities and learn independent thinking, deploying arguments, and – above all – making informed decisions.

Tutoring is addressed to a broad target group, including students and graduates entering the labor market. Using tutoring, students can discover their strengths as well as their charges' strengths. This discovery may have an impact on their life and induce change. What is more, tutoring activities allow students to establish a personal relationship with the members of the organization they cooperate with, which may result in further cooperation.

The goal of this paper is to organize the theoretical foundations of tutoring and present the results of a tutoring study conducted by a team of researchers from the Faculty of Arts and Educational Science at the University of Silesia in Katowice. The main sections of the article concern theory and methodology. In the first part, the basic theories related to tutoring are described. In the second part, the results of the study conducted by the University of Silesia's tutoring research are presented. The method applied in the study is the qualitative analysis and membership categorization analysis.

Determinants of the tutoring method
Tutoring is a method of individualized education founded on long-term, systematic work with a student. Its purpose is to support the student's development in accordance with his/her interests, capabilities, and predispositions. Tutoring meetings involve two people: a tutor, who serves as a mentor, a guardian, and a guide, drawing from personal knowledge and life experience; and a student, who is open to collaboration and work on personal development. The student's development, accompanied by the preparation of the student's education and career path, is one of the main assumptions behind tutoring. As such, tutoring combines two processes: didactics and education. It is applied to perceive a human being holistic, as a member of numerous communities. Hence, this approach is correlated with the trend of personalized learning.

The essence of tutoring is its social elitism. This feature is especially visible from the historical perspective of its determinants. Additionally, it is reinforced by the fact that tutoring usually involves a small number of selected people, who can be referred to as privileged (due to a variety of reasons, normally connected with the field or discipline that are the subject of a given tutoring relationship) or chosen (meeting certain criteria or thematic requirements of a given tutoring relationship). Historically, tutoring originated in 17th-century England as a response to the lack of universal access to education there. It must be emphasized, however, that the method itself was developed outside of university influence and conditioning (Pełczyński, 2007).

The basic principles and definitions of tutoring
Apart from the above-mentioned notion of elitism, tutoring is characterized by a personal approach to the student and a close relationship between the teacher and the learner. Metaphorically, tutoring can be compared to tennis. The tutor serves the ball and the student returns it, learning how to do this better and better over time. This analogy highlights another characteristic feature of a tutoring relationship, i.e. partnership. This feature is naturally related to the student's high level of autonomy. The tutor (a professor, or a teacher) supplies a subject matter – usually formulated as a problem to solve – and proposes relevant source literature. The tutee (a student, or a learner) is supposed to find an individual perspective of the problem at hand. This approach nurtures mutual influence, as both the tutor and the tutee benefit from the relationship, jointly learning and developing each person's potential (Pełczyński, 2007).

Tutoring is usually interpreted as a planned development process that occurs as part of an individual and supportive relationship with another person – the tutor. It can also take the form of more advanced meetings and consultations in small groups. Tutoring means "accompanying a person in the development process: the leader chooses a path, meets a tutor there, stops for a moment to see the path behind and ahead and to take a closer look at the present circumstances, and to find out what has already been learned and what has yet to be learned, to continue the path in a more conscious manner" (Czayka-Chełmińska, 2007, p. 38).

The key objectives of tutoring include the full use of the participants' potential and fostering their independence in learning and self-development. Thanks to the relationship with the tutor, students reinforce their role as local leaders, by gaining or developing particular skills

and competencies, making sure that they are in the right place, and expanding their range of activities in a given community. They gain awareness of their talents and learn how to make use of them. As part of the relationship with the tutor, the leaders gain experience in terms of planning and conscious shaping of their personal development (Czayka-Chełmińska, 2007).

In Poland, the notion of tutoring began to refer to actual educational activities in 1989. Political pluralism, which was a result of the transformation that took place then, affected the system of education and higher education in Poland. The freedom of searching for new methods of education and teaching, suitable for the new times, made it possible not only to draw from the methods that had not been previously applied but also to use them directly. The same concerning methods were completely unknown or had never been implemented owing to the conditions of the ideology of real socialism. At first, tutoring was introduced in the domain of higher education. This is particularly visible in the Polish definition of the word "tutor": "after 1990 – a guardian of a student who follows a special programme" (Markowski & Pawelec, 2007).

Tutoring as an inter-partner relationship

Nowadays, tutoring is practiced at all levels of education. The role of tutors is often assumed by people who are not teachers by profession: they may be volunteering students or parents. Nevertheless, what all the definitions of tutoring have in common is the presence of an individual tutoring relationship between a guardian (who is usually also a teacher) and a learner. This relationship helps expand the participants' knowledge and skills, as a formal and goal-oriented activity, and develop social competencies, at the same time serving as a culture carrier, in an informal relationship (Sarnat-Ciastko, 2015).

Therefore, tutoring is grounded on the tutor's focus on the tutee's needs and potential. However, this is only possible if a natural relationship based on a dialogue emerges between the participants in the process. Although the relationship usually occurs between a master and an apprentice, partnership and mutual respect play crucial roles at all its stages. Both the tutor and the tutee have a right to consider their needs and are obliged to respect them mutually (Pereświet-Sołtan, 2011).

Tutorial sessions should follow a sequence of stages. The first stage, aimed at the initiation of the relationship, concerns the aspect of getting to know the tutee. This stage has a fundamental meaning to the whole process, as it gives room for diagnosing the tutee's needs and po-

tential. The information obtained at this level opens the door to the next phase, which refers to cooperating in setting educational goals and planning activities aimed at reaching these goals. Precisely and accurately defined goals determine the success of the third stage, which is also the most extensive element of tutoring. This stage is often referred to as the implementation of the accepted cooperation plan. Then, the fourth and final stage sums up the cooperation and its outcome. The summary should be carried out by both participants – the tutor and the tutee (Traczyński, 2019).

Tutoring prioritizes the relationship between the participants, which is based on communication. Through the relationship, the communication between the participants develops systematically as well. The elements of relationship and communication interact, creating a so-called social area. The partners in this social area become familiar with each other and learn what their needs are and how to communicate their mutual expectations to adapt to the other person. The aspects of relationship and communication should develop consistently throughout the process, referring to all the fields of activity and enhancing the tutee's social competencies. The social area is of particular importance at the first stage of the process, when the tutor learns the partner's interests and potential, so that the tutee concentrates on the goals set as part of the tutoring relationship. Defining adequate educational goals has an impact on the tutee's motivation to work. Well-selected objectives increase internal motivation, which helps the tutee activate the types of energy that are inaccessible when external motivation is at work (usually institution-based). Internal motivation prompts a person to take action because the action itself seems attractive and satisfactory rather than to do so in anticipation of gratification or to avoid punishment. A high level of the tutee's engagement will also enhance the tutee's cognitive development. In this respect, tutoring is usually comprised of the so-called tutoring essay and tutoring conversation (Pereświet-Sołtan, 2011).

The development of the cognitive area determines the development of the metacognitive area. In a successful tutoring process, an environment that fosters the development of the metacognitive area is created. This area is stimulated by cognitive processes as well as attitudes and values. The tutoring relationship is a meeting of two partners. Therefore, the tutor must become more than a teacher, a guide, or a master. Fundamentally, this is a meeting of a student with another human being. Hence, the other human being should also be open to the relationship and present his/her views, attitudes, and values.

Consequently, the tutor's opinions, life stances, and values may serve as a basis for the tutee's reflection on his/herself and a point of reference for the (re)construction of his/her values or attitudes (Pereświet-Sołtan, 2011). Moreover, the tutor's views expand the tutees' knowledge of a given social situation and extend their educational reality (Bielańska, 2009)[1]. It is worth remembering here that the tutees are usually students that will become employees in the future.

There are two distinct approaches to tutoring: scientific tutoring and developmental tutoring. They can complement each other or be used alternately. Scientific tutoring is applied primarily when the tutee declares he/she knows where his/her interests lie and in what direction he/she would like to follow. On the contrary, developmental tutoring is used when the tutee is not fully aware of the direction that he/she would like to pursue but feels and declares the overall need to develop (Długoń, 2017).

Other approaches to tutoring have been enumerated in literature as well. In academic tutoring, the focus is on identifying the crucial issues which help in understanding a given scope of knowledge. Students create structures of knowledge through their ideas and constructions. Academic tutoring allows the teacher to build several original, individual variants of detailed plans of action, considering the idea that the same destination may be reached using a variety of ways (Brzezińska & Rycielska, 2009). Academic tutoring aims to expand the scope of knowledge, build the passion for learning, and move the focus to selected issues in a given field. The tutor must get to know the tutee by collecting information about his/her strengths and weaknesses, motivations, objectives, and learning styles to define the tutee's actual needs and capabilities as well as future goals and tasks. The tutor should prepare an achievement plan with the tutee. Next, the tutor should listen to the perspective of the tutee and serve as a role model with considerable coaching competencies. Then, the previously defined goals and tasks must be implemented, monitored, and completed. This serves as a source of motivation for further work. Finally, the tutoring process should be summarised (Czekierda, 2015).

In this paper, based on the reference literature and the authors' experience, tutoring is defined as a process whose main participants are the tutor and the tutee – the tutee may be a person, a group of persons, or society as a whole. This is a mutual, bilateral relationship between the tutor and the tutee in various constellations, based on

experience, i.e. on experiencing knowledge and skills and reflecting on this experience at meetings between the participants. This reciprocal relationship stresses the strong points of the participants. The goal of tutoring is to build standards of knowledge and elementary skills as well as to define basic scientific terms, introducing them to the language used by the participants. Tutoring is aimed at helping individuals to work out their professional identity under the care of an experienced teacher – a tutor who plays the role of a master in this relationship. Through personal insights, the master initiates an individual or society into an exploration of ideas and a search for new solutions.

Education is a subject of reflection for numerous theoreticians and practitioners whose research interests revolve around various branches of science. The multiple perspectives on inclusive education that characterize these reflections as well as the resulting conclusions demonstrate the complexity of tasks and activities aimed at monitoring the processes of teaching, learning, and educating. Furthermore, they reinforce progress, which – based on the achievements of civilization – shapes the form, quality, and degree of the use of didactic materials (Rostańska, 2016). The most sought-after methods are those that prove useful in day-to-day practice. The trend of including persons with disabilities in universal education is widespread in Poland nowadays. In 2012, the Polish government ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Inclusive education involves situations in which students with disabilities or special education needs attend mainstream schools and spend most of their school time in classes where students without disabilities are the majority (Chrzanowska & Szumski, 2019).

According to Gajdzica (2020) "educational inclusion of students with disabilities is a process drawing on the accomplishments in various disciplines of social sciences and the humanities, including education sciences and its subdiscipline, special education. The existing methods are reconstructed to create optimum development conditions for students with special needs in general education institutions. They also comprise the creation of favorable social behaviors of all students and the construction of authentic school culture on that basis"[2].

Nonetheless, Mitchell (2016) points to the conditions which determine what strategies for introducing or implementing inclusive education are adopted in various

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[1] The notion of "surplus reality" was created by Jacob Moreno.

[2] The quotations of Polish sources in the paper have been translated into English by the authors of the paper, unless stated otherwise.

countries (Chrzanowska, Szumski, 2019). In Poland, the existing model entails several different education paths. Children may attend general schools, integrated schools, or special schools. University students taking part in educational programmes undergo training in these schools, thus expanding their knowledge concerning special educational needs. Due to the limited scope of this article, we present only selected definitions of inclusive education, which justify the use of tutoring[3] and refer to the conducted study, taking the needs of the above-mentioned groups into account.

ADOPTED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY APPLIED IN THE STUDY

The pilot study presented in this paper serves as a prelude and an introduction to an in-depth exploration of the subject. It is a preliminary investigation aimed at identifying the basic information concerning a given community. This type of information is uncertain by nature; however, it supplies the researcher with basic assumptions that may be used for developing further research questions. The goal of this type of reconnaissance study is to give the final shape to human curiosity through contact with the phenomena which are the object of this curiosity. As a result, the elements that are relevant for the further course of research are selected and the irrelevant elements are eliminated (Nowak, 2012).

The main objective of this pilot study is to recognize and analyze the definitions of tutoring provided by students of education science programmes who undergo training as tutors at inclusive education institutions. The study was performed to investigate the responses given by the students of pedagogy at the Faculty of Arts and Educational Sciences at the University of Silesia in Katowice. The students were asked to define the notion of tutoring. The students surveyed attend classes in which the method of tutoring is used. What is more, they are participants in the tutoring process in inclusive education institutions, which contribute to the growth of educational practices that include children with various needs in Poland. The main research problem was defined in the following research question: "How do students of education science programmes define tutoring?".

To obtain the responses from the students, a questionnaire was prepared, including the basic questions concerning tutoring. A questionnaire is a technique belonging to the paradigm of a diagnostic survey. Survey-based research consists in asking questions to respondents who provide written answers to the questions. The set of questions is also presented in writing, in a printed form. A study of this kind is usually anonymous (Łobocki, 2003).

Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, the tutoring questionnaire was available online. In April 2020, it was distributed among the students of pedagogy at the Faculty of Arts and Educational Sciences at the University of Silesia in Katowice. As a result, responses from 52 students were acquired. Due to the limited scope of this paper, we only analyzed the responses to one open question: "According to you, tutoring is…?". Although the method of diagnostic survey is primarily associated with the quantitative approach, the research material gathered using this method underwent qualitative analysis at the stage of the pilot study.

The qualitative method of data analysis originates from social research. However, data in this method is not limited to numbers. This approach was established earlier than typical quantity-based analysis and is still considered a useful method of data analysis (Babbie, 2013). Hence, qualitative inquiry is a method of interpreting data other than quantitative data. It is chiefly aimed at discovering basic meanings and structures (Babbie, 2013).

Another method applied in the study conducted for the purpose of this paper is membership categorization analysis. This concept was put forward by American sociologist Harvey Sacks (Peräkylä, 2014). For Sacks, the sociological description was a key analytical notion. It was based on the focus on the conditions of description creation, i.e. on the factors that enable a person to understand the descriptions of other people and their actions. People use categories constantly. It is assumed that all events and persons can be described with the use of diverse categories. Additionally, according to Sacks, categories are arranged in sets so some groups of categories are connected. Moreover, categories can be classified through so-called actions. They establish the boundaries of categories about the actions that members of a given community believe to be typical of one or more categories of people (Peräkylä, 2014).

The students' responses to the question concerning the definition of tutoring were analyzed from this perspective. Following the analysis, the responses were assigned to higher areas related to the broad understanding of the concept of tutoring. The in-depth analysis of reference literature on tutoring as a method of teaching was very helpful in the identification of these areas. The cate-

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[3] For more information about this subject see Mitchell, 2016.

gorized responses presenting the analyzed students' definitions of tutoring were assigned to the main areas. Some of them were very closely related to each other in terms of meaning. Thus, the analysis presented in this article is arbitrary by nature. The selected responses are frequently analogous or ambiguous. As a result, they often belong to more than one category. The boundaries between the students' responses and the emerging categories related to tutoring are blurred and overlapping. This analysis is our interpretation of the responses; hence, we accept other interpretations of the analyzed subject.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The growing popularity of tutoring at universities in Poland encourages an empirical view of its value as a tool for shaping the personal and praxeological competencies of participants. Most frequently, it takes place in the space of relationships, challenges and expectations, structures, formulas, laws, or didactics. Tutoring in literature is perceived in various ways (Krzychała, 2018).

The main research problem was defined in the research question: "How do students of education science programmes define tutoring?"

The selected components of tutoring indicated by the students surveyed are presented in the chart below. Fig. 1.

The students of pedagogy at the University of Silesia in Katowice defined the process of tutoring also from the perspective of didactics. This perspective may serve as an extension to the previously described practical approach as well as its detailed form. The respondents stressed the educational utility of tutoring in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills, both in the course of studying and later, in the labor market. Participation in the process of tutoring contributed to the students' development in terms of acquiring and improving their didactic competence, which can be particularly useful in their work as pedagogues.

These views are in line with the idea of didactics, which is referred to as a science that investigates the processes of teaching and learning in terms of goals, contents, methods, forms of organization, measures, and outcomes at all levels of education (Kupisiewicz, 2014). The specific categories that emerged following the analysis of the students' responses about the didactic utility of tutoring are teaching and practice.

Teaching is understood as the planned and systematized work of a teacher with a student, aimed at effectuating certain changes in both of them, regarding their personality, behavior, and disposition. The transformation happens as a result of learning and acquiring knowledge, experiencing values, and practical activities. The act of learning itself is believed to be intentional. An important element of learning is the information exchange between the teacher and the student, including other sources as well. This enables the learner to obtain scientific knowledge or acquire information (Okoń, 2001).

The basic assumptions of teaching correspond with selected responses of the students asked to define tutor-
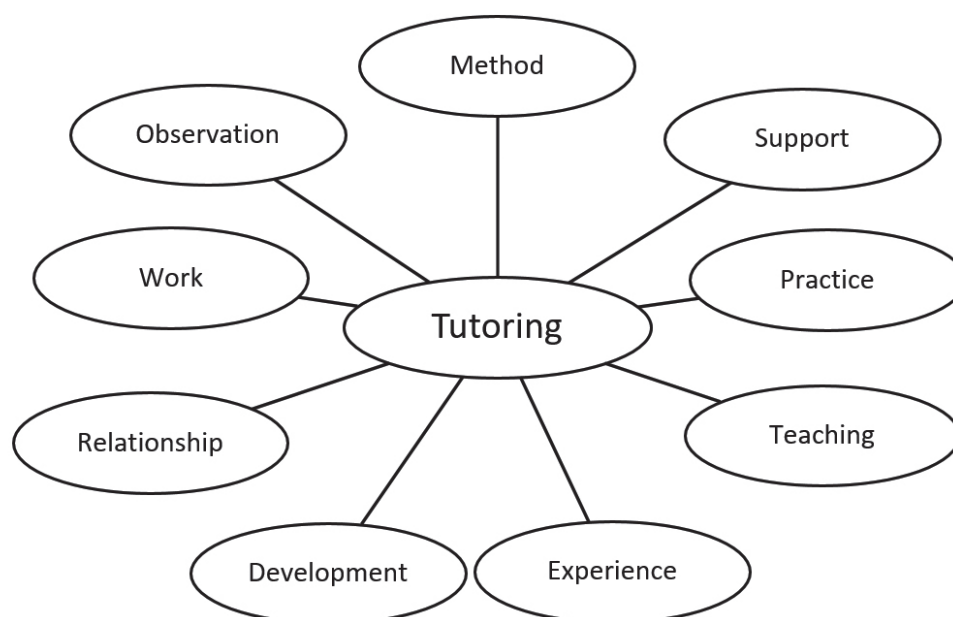

Fig. 1. Tutoring components
Source: the authors of the paper.

ing. The survey revealed that the category of teaching both refers to and complements the principles of tutoring, interpreted in terms of methodological utility. For example, the students defined tutoring as:[4]

- "a meeting with another person through which I can acquire new skills, supervised by a specialist";
- "an individual form of help, teaching another person";
- "I think it is about teaching";
- "a form of teaching students, usually through practice; a form of didactic and educational activity in which there is a relationship between the tutor (an instructor who supports, motivates, and verifies) and the students".

What is particularly interesting in the responses above is that teaching (a typical element of the didactic approach) is also present in the process of tutoring. Hence, tutoring can be applied to broaden the knowledge of both the tutee and the tutor, which is made possible by the planned or unplanned situations that emerge in its course. Tutoring shapes the personality of the involved persons, expands their knowledge, provides them with new skills, and eventually – leads to an enduring change in the previous attitudes. This is often manifested in increased openness or new social competencies, which are also useful in day-to-day life, not only in typically work-related situations.

Another category of the didactic utility of tutoring which emerged in the students' responses is the **practice**. Practice is regarded as social, historical, and material activity of people. In its course, the natural and social reality is shaped, in accordance with specific needs. Simultaneously, people apply the practice to transform themselves and produce certain goods that help them satisfy their basic needs (Okoń, 2001).

In the process of tutoring, practice plays a significant role as well, which was highlighted by the respondents. For example:

- "tutoring is a form of practice-oriented towards a specific person";
- "it is a form of (long-term) practice through observation, working with a child in a specific institution, supervised by a tutor";
- "practice through which we can learn the principles of our future profession";
- "in my opinion, tutoring refers to practical activities based on the observation of problems and difficulties, and more; it also refers to expanding one's knowledge

and skills, to analyzing and searching";
- "tutoring refers to practical classes based on observation and activity in a specific environment".

These examples of the students' responses indicate that they perceive tutoring mainly as a practical activity. Normally, it is field practice: in a certain educational, care, or therapy center, which is regularly attended by students to work with their tutees. This is where they learn about the details of its operation and daily functioning. By observing a particular child with a disability, they can become familiar with the child's problems and deficits as well as resources and skills or methods of work related to rehabilitation. Moreover, as a result of their observations, they become more focused on noticing seemingly irrelevant nuances, characteristic of children with specific disabilities. They become aware that such unconventional behaviors may be a form of expressing certain emotional states by a disabled child. Then, at university, students can consult their ideas and hypotheses with their tutor (an academic teacher) and design a plan of working with, helping, or supporting the person they are cooperating with, upon the approval of that person's carer from a given institution.

Another important aspect of the students' responses is that they highlight that tutoring as a practice is not just about fieldwork but also about learning certain competencies and skills in the process. This reinforces the didactic utility of tutoring and enables the students to test their knowledge acquired at university in real-life everyday situations. A valuable factor of such an approach is that tutoring develops not only didactic or methodical competencies but also those based on persistence in searching for the necessary information and solutions, patience, and predicting the outcomes and consequences of one's actions. As far as working with people with additional needs is concerned, these elements are particularly important.

The didactic utility of tutoring analyzed in the paradigm of practice has another advantage that is worth mentioning. Namely, it is characterized by the gradual involvement of the student in practical activities. Initially, the student remains in the background, so to speak: observing the environment, learning its characteristics, and making conclusions based on these observations, to notice patterns that can be further discussed with a tutor or with a career working in a given institution. With time, the student becomes increasingly involved in prac-

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[4] The listed quotations are translations of the responses of the students to the questions from the survey, which referred to their ways of defining tutoring. The students' responses are presented as bullet-point lists in the following parts of the paper as well.

tical activities, which may be manifested in active participation in classes or face-to-face work with a given pupil who needs support. Then, the student's observations are made from the perspective of a person actively involved in the practice, which helps in developing the skills of divided attention or better flexibility at work (these elements are also determinants of effective didactics).

The students surveyed defined the tutoring process as, among others: method, observation, and work. Thus, they acknowledged its practical utility in these fields.

The category of the **method** is understood in various ways, for example as "a way of doing something, selection of an approach (the choice and sequence of particular steps of a complex action) applied consciously and repeatable in all similar cases; a set of actions and measures applied in a given manner to achieve a specific goal; a way of performing a practical task or solving a theoretical problem; a set of general assumptions accepted as a framework or guidelines for a study" (Encyklopedia PWN, 2021).

The students referred to tutoring as:
- "a method that prepares for practical work"
- "a method of working based on the cooperation between the instructor and the learner".

What emerges from the interpretation of the above-mentioned responses is that the students defined tutoring as a selection of a form of work that they can reproduce and use in their future work. Tutoring perceived as a method can also serve as a way of reaching a goal; e.g. receiving a dream job, raising qualifications, or developing certain personality traits. It is defined as a method of cooperation between the instructor and the learner, where cooperation is based not only on tasks but also on understanding, mutual relations, and experience building.

Another emerging category is **observation**, understood as "the act of watching somebody/something carefully for some time; a result of observing" (Słownik języka polskiego PWN, 2021).

In the research material acquired from the respondents, tutoring is referred to as:
- "an opportunity to observe a child with a certain disability over several terms, to observe the child's transformation, growth, progression, regression, in all spheres of development";
- "observing a student during classes and writing the observations down";
- "observation of a given phenomenon, active and passive practice, a method of working, largely individual, between the teacher and the student".

The responses above suggest the following interpretation: long-term observation plays a crucial part in tutoring. Observing a pupil throughout several terms means more than watching; it refers to analyzing and scrutinizing developmental changes as well as making conclusions while building general conclusions based on all the observations. The practice (passive and active) acquired through this approach builds the educator's personality and experience.

Another category analyzed here is **work**, understood as "collective or individual activity aimed at obtaining a certain material or non-material product. Based on the importance of the product to the individual or the society and the necessary effort, the process of work is usually accompanied by the belief in its usability as well as an internal obligation – imposed by the individual – or external obligation – imposed by the social conditions of community life" (Okoń, 2001).

The students expressed their ideas in the following manner:
- "in my opinion, tutoring refers to individual work between the teacher and the learner, aimed at developing the learner's skills and potential";
- "it depends on the form of tutoring: in general, it refers to a method of working with a person, where both participants gain a lot and learn from each other";
- "tutoring is individual work of the teacher – the tutor – with a tutee";
- "documented work with a child".

The students' responses confirm that work oriented towards the learner's development plays an essential role in tutoring. Tutoring refers also to the selection of a suitable education path, beneficial to both participants, who learn from each other. Documented work is used for analyzing, making conclusions, and consolidating the acquired knowledge to build the necessary experience. This activity brings originally intangible profits.

The three categories enumerated above all belong to the area of practical utility, which means conscious, goal-oriented work and gaining ample experience students.

Another category identified through the analysis of the students' responses is **support**. The students have distinct interpretations of tutoring, defining it in an individual and personal manner as support in the process of acquiring knowledge and new practical skills. They see huge potential in the gradual acquisition of skills that are necessary to carry out their work in the future.

In the reference literature, social support is divided into functional and structural support. From the func-

tional perspective (Sęk, 2001), the emphasis is placed on social interactions undertaken by one or both participants of a problematic, difficult, stressful, or critical situation, as a result of which emotions, information, methods of working, or material goods are transferred (unilateral interaction) or exchanged (bilateral interaction). In this dynamic system of interactions, some participants give support, and those who seek, take or receive support. The roles of the giver and the taker may be constant or changing. This type of social exchange can be effective as long as the provided support is adjusted to the taker's needs in terms of form and size. It is successful when the goals of supportive interaction have been achieved, namely: general support, stress release, crisis control through a company, creating a sense of belonging, safety, and hope, and approaching the solution of the problem and overcoming the difficulty. Depending on the content of the social exchange in the course of supportive interaction, several types of support may be distinguished:

- emotional support,
- reinforcing support,
- instrumental support,
- substantive support,
- informational support,
- spiritual support (psychological and developmental)[5].

A support-related category that came into view as a result of the analysis of the students' responses is the **relationship** (Reber & Reber, 2005), which can be identified with emotional support. The students who interpreted tutoring as a relationship pointed to the connection between two or more events, objects, or persons. This is exemplified by one of the responses:

- "tutoring is a relationship between a master and a student, people, institutions".

Moreover, the students indicated a relationship between two variables, where changes referring to one variable are accompanied by changes concerning the other variable. Both the tutee and the tutor transform. There is a correlation through:

- "the relationship between the teacher and the student: the teacher tries to push the students towards knowledge of various kinds".

The sample responses show that the notion of relationship (as an element of support) is visibly present in the process of tutoring. Students, as participants in tutoring, are eyewitnesses to certain events which they subsequently recount. By experiencing an event, they learn how to behave in analogous situations. The first event may effectuate a durable behavioral change.

Another category related to broadly understood support is **development**, or self-development, as indicated by the students surveyed. Tutoring is perceived as a process of channeled changes, as part of which objects (systems) of a given sort move from simpler, lower, less excellent forms or states to those more complex, higher, and more excellent in some respect (Encyklopedia PWN, 2021). This is exemplified by the responses below, in which tutoring is:

- "the development of independent creation, independent thinking, overseen by an assigned person"
- "individual examination and development support".

Tutoring effectuates development in the long-term process of goal-oriented changes. It is based on subsequent stages of transformation (development stages) of a given object or system, which show a confirmed difference in the developed object or system in some respect (Encyklopedia PWN, 2021). This refers to the development of events over time.

As previously demonstrated, based on the students' responses, tutoring is perceived as a didactic and practical activity founded on **experience**. This activity of experience is usually a form of field practice: in a certain educational, care, or therapy center, which is regularly attended by students. The above conclusion can be inferred from the following responses:

Tutoring is:

- "a good opportunity to get deeper into an educational institution; to learn how it functions; and additionally, to take a closer look at a specific child and that child's functioning";
- "the only and special practice which – adding to the standard monthly professional training – broadens our experience, providing us with an opportunity to observe and notice the course of the development of a disabled person as well as to learn the details of a particular case and describe individual areas of development";
- "verification of one's knowledge and experience".

To sum up, the students surveyed define tutoring as a method of preparation for work with the help of or under the supervision of competent teachers. Furthermore, tutoring is a process of organized, conscious work, which they can experience as participants and observers of educational practice, acquiring relevant competencies. The process fosters transformation, as it includes an element

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[5] See also: Sęk & Cieślak, 2011, p. 19; Kawula, 2005, pp. 127–128; Dołęga, 2001, p. 549.

of support based on shaping reality according to particular needs and transforming the persons involved through a relationship.

CONCLUSIONS

Tutoring dates back to antiquity and the origins of the master-apprentice relationship. The method of university tutoring is at the same time characterized by and aimed at personalized cooperation between the teacher and the student. As part of this form of work and education, the student draws from the teacher's knowledge and experience as well as from sincere and insightful debate, based on reflection and in-depth analysis of the problem at hand.

Tutoring may serve as an appropriate and worthwhile method of achieving academic excellence. The road to quality and professionalism in the field of education, development, obtaining useful practical skills, and raising qualifications is based on a dialogue with the master, and self-fulfillment. The obtained information provides valuable insights about tutoring from the perspective of students of educational science. Simultaneously, it presents an extended perspective (reality) in university education on the use of tutoring in the framework of inclusive education.

It is worth emphasizing that students' participation in tutoring not only equips them with new competencies but also changes their previous attitudes and life stances regarding persons with special needs, with whom they establish direct relationships. This may serve as a contribution to the development and in-depth exploration of a new research perspective concerning the role and relevance of tutoring activities in inclusive education.

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