

Accessibility Centres in Higher Education Institutions: Inclusiveness and Peer Tutoring Programmes

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Abstract : A growing number of students with disabilities attend institutions of higher education, and according to evidenced-based data, it seems that they face many obstacles regarding their academic access and inclusion. The fact that more and more students decide to actively participate in higher education, on the one hand, empowers and strengthens inclusiveness in tertiary education, but on the other hand, it brings new challenges to their access to scientific content as well as to their interactions with other students and faculty members. For this, accessibility centres have come to the fore in many higher education institutions, in order to respond to the needs of students with disabilities. In this paper, we present a study regarding the peer tutoring program, which is a service delivered by the Accessibility Centre at the University of Thessaly in Greece. Specifically, the current paper aims to describe the experiences of tutees and tutors regarding their relationships developed throughout the peer tutoring program. Twelve tutors and eight tutees with disabilities participated in the study, whose experiences were explored through interviews and were analyzed in a qualitative way. In our study, all tutees and most of the tutors described their relationship as friendly, while a few tutors preferred a more formal relationship. Also, both tutors and tutees described some of the challenges, such as setting limits or arranging an appointment. Finally, peer tutoring programs seem very promising, but in order to be effective, there is a need for training and supporting students regarding their role as well as monitoring the progress of the peer tutoring program, ensuring its smooth operation and success for both tutors and tutees.

Keywords : disability, higher education institutions, interviews, peer tutoring, inclusiveness

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