

## HELPING HANDS: THE BEAUTY OF PEER TEACHING

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Abu Hurairah (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said:

“Whoever relieves a Muslim of a burden from the burdens of the world, Allah will relieve him of a burden from the burdens on the Day of Judgement. And whoever helps ease a difficulty in the world, Allah will grant him ease from a difficulty in the world and in the Hereafter. And whoever covers (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will cover (his faults) for him in the world and the Hereafter. And Allah is engaged in helping the worshipper as long as the worshipper is engaged in helping his brother.”

Jami` at-Tirmidhi 1930, Book 27, Hadith 36

Helping a person in need for his own sake or to remove his troubles and worries is a deed which has been promised much reward by the Prophet. Moreover, giving a helping hand without asking for return also reflects what the ideal and harmonious society should look like. This society in which its members help, support, and encourage one another to become better and avoid helping others in acts that would displease Allah.

Learning is an integral part of students' life in higher education institutions. Their main objective is to excel in their studies and use the knowledge learnt while working and help promote a better life in society. Higher education is a rich cultural and scientific asset which supports personal development and promotes economic, technological, and social shifts. The exchange of knowledge, research and innovation are promoted, and students are equipped with the skills needed to meet fast changing labor markets (UNESCO, 2023).

How can the concept of helping hands for betterment be applied in this learning environment?

An increased interest in involving students as partners in learning and teaching has emerged, in order to meet the dual requirement of improving teaching and learning quality while doing more with less (Stigmar, 2016). Several strategies have been introduced and adopted in the learning and teaching process to encourage students to strive for excellence in their study and their life, such as peer teaching and peer learning.

This article will explore one main strategy known as 'Peer teaching' which is useful in applying the concept of helping 'students with students' and highlight the great beauty or advantages to them in terms of academic performance and non-academic performance.

Peer teaching is described as 'people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers helping each other to learn and learning themselves by teaching (Arisoy, 2021; Rahman et al., 2022). Peer teaching is one of the greatest ways to master a certain subject. It is a method of teaching, by which a student (known as student-teacher) instructs another student (student-learner), wherein the former will be an expert and the latter a novice. An expert student who is usually a senior or advanced student who takes on a limited instructional role is not expected to teach and present new material as they are not teachers, but they help to facilitate the learning of their peers. (Stigmar, 2016; Rahman et al., 2022).

Peer-teaching permits students to impart knowledge and skills to their classmates. Therefore, they must understand the material at a deeper level to be effective teachers (Tsai et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2022). Let's explore the advantages gained by the 'student-teacher' when learners shift from being students as recipients to being productive teachers.



## **The Advantages of Peer Teaching**

### **1. Improve communication and presentation skills.**

According to Rahman et al. (2022) acquiring vital communication skills such as confidence in teaching, explaining complex concepts, and better understanding of the topic emerged as primary benefits that the 'student-teachers' obtained from the peer teaching programs. In the context of providing and presenting information accurately and efficiently, all the 'student-teachers' need to develop strategies that would make a complex and niche topic understandable to their novice audiences. Meanwhile a study done by Tsai et al. (2021) found that 'student-learners' expressed that their individualized sessions with the 'student-teachers' were beneficial in developing their presentation skills and confidence levels.

### **2. Value-added experience for future development.**

Peer teaching promotes a culture of intrinsic motivation and perhaps assists to develop a skill set essential for lifelong learning (Tsai et al., 2021). In addition, according to Rahman et al. (2022), the 'student – teachers' found that they are gaining advantages to their futures by getting valuable life experience where able improve their own depth of knowledge in the topic by educating others, upgrading their resume with their teaching experience which help their career path later, and obtaining recognition letters or certificates expressing gratitude for their service as value-added features of participating in peer teaching programs.

### **3. Expertise shared efficiently to larger audience.**

Peer teaching programs provide the opportunity to efficiently share their expertise in delivering their knowledge to a larger group of people instead of spending valuable time in unsustainable one-on-one interactions (Rahman et al., 2022). Thus the 'student-teachers' are able to gain experience in conducting larger groups interactions and present their lessons and ideas well to their peers.

### **4. Increase flexibility in teaching methods.**

A study by Rahman et al. (2022) found that an advantage of peer teaching emerges in increased flexibility in teaching methods where the 'student-teachers' indicated that they learned how to tactfully move individual issues to the end of the session to get the group through the planned content. The importance of having backup plans ready if technical issues occur also are discovered. This ability for teaching flexibility shows the potential of conducting peer teaching to be a key tool of professional development for the peer teachers.

### **5. Lead to better student engagement.**

Peer teaching involves direct interaction between the 'student-learner' and the 'student-teacher' in contrast to traditional classes that consist mostly of lectures from teacher to student. Therefore, it shows that peer teaching can lead to better student engagement (Stigmar, 2016).

When both students and teachers feel at ease in their interactions, this permits student-learner to focus better on the lesson's tasks and leads to higher accomplishments in the future. Moreover, student-learners are able boost their knowledge limit and thus allow a greater level of understanding while enabling them to improve their critical thinking.

## Conclusion

Peer teaching is a learning-teaching strategy that provides benefits especially to students, 'student-teachers' and the education institutions in the long-term. Besides the benefits of sharing knowledge with peers, students that participate as teachers in the peer teaching program also gain many advantages such as improving communication and presentation skills, providing value-added experience for future professional development, sharing expertise efficiently to larger audience, increasing flexibility in teaching methods, and leading to better student engagement (Rahman et al., 2022, Tsai et al., 2021, Stigmar, 2016). Moreover, they can develop their empathy, motivation, communication, group-work, and time-management skills. On the other hands the teacher's burden of responsibility is eased by sharing her duties while educating students to become independent. Thus, the teacher's role in monitoring and administering the students to ensure the peer teaching program's success will increase.

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