

# Peer teaching to Facilitate the Democratic Classroom

K. Steen, *LUCSUS Lund University*

**ABSTRACT:** The classroom environment is one of many conditions that effects students' ability to learn. In order for the student to use his or her full capacity the environment must be a 'democratic classroom', where all students can feel safe, included and acknowledged. Thus a democratic classroom demands that the teacher caters for geographical, disciplinary and gender differences and marginalization (Davis 2008; Rowe, Fitness & Wood 2015; Schunk & Zimmerman 2008), as well as for differences in learning styles and in types of knowledge (Kolb 1984; Kugel 1993).

In my scholarship of teaching and learning I practice peer teaching as a strategy to facilitate a democratic classroom and to improve students learning. Evidence suggest that peer teaching benefits both the tutor and the tutee in improved understanding and performance in the subject area, improved confidence, improved study skills as well as improved friendships (Beasley 1997; Goodlad & Hirst 1990; McKeachie 1986; Topping 1996). Moreover, I aim at practicing an intersectional perspective on teaching and learning, which is part of feminist theory and anti-oppressive pedagogy (Davis 2008; Freire 1998), as a way to actively promote change towards a democratic classroom.

In this presentation I draw on experiences from being course coordinator and teacher in two international master courses at Lund University where peer teaching is practiced throughout the courses. I will exemplify, and theorise challenges and possibilities that peer teaching offers for achieving a democratic classroom, such as motivating students to accept anti-oppressive pedagogy, to rely on peers, and to constructively encounter others' values.

## REFERENCES

- Beasley, C. (1997). Students as teachers: the benefit of peer tutoring. <http://lsn.curtin.edu.au/tlf/tlf1997/beasley.html>
- Davis, C. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword. A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful, *Feminist Theory*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 67-85.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Lanham: Roman & Littlefields Publishers.
- Goodlad, S., Hirst, B. (Eds.) (1990). *Explorations in peer tutoring*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experiences as a source of learning and development*. Engelwood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Kugel, P. (1993). How professors develop as teachers, *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 315-328.
- McKeachie, W., Pintrich, P., Lin, Y. G., Smith, D. (1986). *Teaching and learning in the college classroom*. Lansing, MI.: University of Michigan.
- Rowe, A., Fitness, B., Wood, L. (2015). University students and lecturer perception of positive emotions in learning, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 1-20.
- Schunk, D., Zimmerman, B. (2008). *Motivation and self-regulated learning. Theory, research, and applications*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Topping, K. J. (1996). The effectiveness of peer tutoring in further and higher education: A typology and review of the literature, *Higher Education*, Vol. 32, pp. 321-345.