Saggi e ricerche

What Worked? A Qualitative Study on the Tutor-Tutee Relationship in the Tutoring Online Program (TOP)

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Abstract
The transformative processes that have involved the academic world for more than two decades have been accelerated and renewed in the wake of the Sars Covid-19 Pandemic. Universities, already oriented towards the promotion of smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth, have nevertheless been called upon to rethink and reshape the services, projects and methodological approaches previously developed. The aim of this paper is to describe a qualitative study carried out within the Tutoring Online Program (TOP), designed to respond to the new demands brought to light by the pandemic. After outlining the innovative characteristics of TOP, where the tutors are volunteer university students and the tutees are secondary school students, the results of the qualitative research are presented. The aim of the survey is to identify the elements which, in the perception of the tutors and tutees, may have supported, or on the contrary limited, the creation of a meaningful relationship developed entirely online.

Keywords*:* Higher Education, Covid-19 Pandemic, online tutoring, learning loss, school demotivation.

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Transformative processes in academia: tutoring

The SARS COVID-19 pandemic has brought academia and schools face to face with new problems triggering, on the one hand, unprecedented transformative processes and reinforcing, on the other, changes that were already taking place.

Since the 1999 "Bologna Process" – which laid the foundation for the construction of a European Higher Education Area – and in compliance with the goals set by the "Lisbon Strategy" (Colarusso, Giancola, 2020), and the Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2020), academic institutions have been geared toward achieving goals such as promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, which can be achieved through several targets, including lowering school dropout (less than 10 percent) and increasing the number of young Europeans with college degrees (at least 40 percent). To achieve these goals, universities have put policies and practices into place that address inequality in access conditions and discrimination among students to ensure ever-expanding educational and academic success. In particular, the various forms of tutoring (tutoring and peer tutoring) have been activated, both to develop skills and competencies useful for the study career and to limit the dropout rate, appear to be a particularly effective pedagogical device (Passalacqua, Zuccoli, 2021; Galliani, 2019; Biasin, 2018; Chianese, 2018; Claris, 2018; Gray, Osborne, 2018; Oggionni, Palma, Stiozzi, 2018).

> Tutoring is referred to as a primary pedagogical device to foster students' empowerment, to help them make study, personal, and professional choices. At the same time, tutoring constitutes one of the main strategies of Italian universities to limit academic drop-out, so much so that it is an indicator of the quality of teaching action and the inclusion of services put in place by a university system (Biasin, 2018, p 150).

However, tutoring or peer tutoring projects that had just started or were long-established – where the building of an educational relationship, based on the reciprocity of the interaction and sharing between tutor and tutee, constituted the essence of the educational process – were disrupted by the forced closure of universities following the pandemic. The transformative processes already in place were therefore necessarily strengthened and reshaped in light of the new social conditions.

Transformative processes during lockdown

In Italy, the almost total closure of all educational services (from ECECs to

universities) for a very long period (from March to September 2020) was, in fact, a unique event in our century that caught all those involved unprepared: students, teachers and families. The distance learning that was activated in order to maintain the educational relationship and learning achievement required not only the presence of infrastructure, PCs and other devices but also specific training in the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) (Pastori, Pagani, Mangiatordi & Pepe, 2021). In the face of what can be called the largest homeschooling experiment of our century, research has shown how distance learning has had a concerning impact both in terms of student learning and academic achievement (Hoffman & Miller, 2020; Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020) and in relation to the social development of children and youth unable to attend school (Bhamani et al., 2020). Moreover, Distance Learning (DaD) has increased levels of educational poverty, school dropout, which are directly proportional to the socioeconomic status of families (Nuzzaci, Minello, Di Genova & Madia, 2020; Bonal & González, 2021).

Faced with this alarming scenario, universities have questioned themselves with respect to sustainable policies and practices to implement or reshape in light of the new social conditions, in order to support the most fragile students in terms of motivation and school learning. Some universities have responded by activating distance tutoring projects aimed at freshmen (Passalacqua, Zuccoli, 2021), peer tutoring to support those students who, due to the pandemic, have considerably slowed down their studies (Di Vita, 2021) or online supervision of internship experiences (Giuliani, 2021).

Precisely within this framework, with the aim of mitigating the inequalities in educational opportunities generated by the pandemic, the "Tutoring Online Program" (TOP) project was established, characterized by distinctive and innovative characteristics that responded to the priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth described by the European Strategy 2020 (European Commission, 2020).

Tutoring between university and school: Tutoring Online Program

To counteract growing learning loss resulting from school closures that occurred in Italy in March 2020, the University of Harvard (Massachusetts) and Bocconi University (Milan) designed and piloted an innovative Online Tutoring Program for Secondary School students on whom the effects of the pandemic have been particularly substantial, in both psychological and learning terms. After the first edition, held from April to June 2020, two more were launched: one started in October 2020 and ended in May 2021 and one is currently underway.

The innovative character of the project, besides the fact that it is totally provided online, regards the configuration of the tutor (volunteer university students) and tutee (secondary school students) pair. The latter were identified through the collaboration of the educational institutions and families that participated in the project; the selected pre-teens, who encountered significant difficulties following the activation of DaD, were found to belong to economically, culturally and socially disadvantaged families who, as previously mentioned, are among those most affected by the pandemic and lockdown. A total of 1,059 applications were received from 76 different secondary schools throughout Italy: the schools indicated the subject (choosing between Italian, mathematics and English) the student most needed help; for 81% of the pupils, help was required in more than one subject (Carlana & La Ferrara, 2021).

The tutors, on the other hand, were enrolled in the various bachelor's and master's degree programs at different universities, aged between 20 and 25, and were recruited voluntarily through project sponsorship within the universities; they were required to be available 3-6 hours per week to support online tutees in carrying out tasks or in the disciplines they indicated. The number of applications reached 2,000; however, for organizational reasons related to tutor training, 530 tutors were chosen. The assignment of tutors to tutees was made by considering, as a basic criterion, the correspondence between the discipline requested by the tutee and the one for which the tutors had given their availability.

Given the voluntary and heterogeneous nature of the tutors (with very different training and prior work experience in education), the project was implemented with pedagogical supervision by a group of experts from the University of Milano-Bicocca to train and support the tutors with respect to pedagogical-didactic and methodological issues. A special course was established within the e-learning platform of the University of Milano-Bicocca in which all tutors were enrolled. Online self-training modules were designed aimed at providing tutors with the main theoretical concepts of tutoring (following the socio-constructivist and Brunerian matrix) and their methodological and didactic implications. In addition, the group of experts offered specific training related to the didactics of the disciplines which they would work on with the tutees (Italian, mathematics, English), as well as insights into the use of technologies in distance education and concepts and methodologies related to teaching students with Special Educational Needs and, in particular, with Specific Learning Disorders. Supervision took place throughout the course of the project through online meetings with groups of tutors or individuals to address specific problems encountered in the relationship or teaching with individual tutees; in particular, there were

numerous requests to delve into aspects related to teaching with students with Specific Learning Disorders or foreigners. This was due to the fact that only 4% of the tutors had training related to the topic of specific learning disorders while 32% of the tutees had such disorders; furthermore, only 1% of the tutors had prior training specifically for working with immigrant pupils who, on the other hand, were found to be quite numerous (22% of the sample), (Carlana & La Ferrara, 2021).

According to a survey conducted at the end of the program, 80% of the tutors used the platform, 50% watched the video tutorials and followed the online training, 36% participated in group meetings and 12% in individual meetings (Carlana & La Ferrara, 2021).

Finally, with respect to the objectives of the Program, as previously mentioned, an immediate response to counteract, in terms of learning, the effects of school closures and the activation of DaD following the health emergency was activated. While the main objective was to support and enhance tutees' learning in the above-mentioned disciplines, the relationship and rapport established between tutors and tutees allowed for the improvement of the pre-teens' psychological well-being, their aspirations as well as their social-emotional skills (Carlana & La Ferrara, 2021). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between tutor and tutee and to assess aspects that may have fostered or hindered the relationship, qualitative research was conducted.

Which tutoring model was implemented in TOP

The tutoring model that inspired the entire project can be traced back to the Brunerian matrix according to which tutoring strategies intercept not only cognitive dimensions but also emotional, motivational and metacognitive ones (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976; Devescovi, Marchione, Capobianco & Bentrovato, 2003). In this framework, the role of the tutor is configured, therefore, as a facilitator, organizer and guide to learning (D'Alessio, Laghi, Giacalone, 2010) enhancing the tutee's resources in order to make him or her more and more autonomous in their own learning process (Scandella, 2007). The role of emotional scaffolding that the tutor is able to provide by prioritizing the relational-communicative dimension in order to enhance the tutee's motivation, self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy turns out to be decisive. Alongside this, the cognitive scaffolding function that the tutor is able to provide takes the form of both lightening the cognitive load and simplifying the task, so that it can be attainable for the tutee (reduction of degrees of freedom), and identifying, together with the tutee, the crucial and relevant aspects of the task to be performed by posing as a "model" for problem solving. Finally,

according to this tutorship approach, the tutor's intervention turns out to be aimed at making the tutee become aware of his or her own learning process; the tutor thus plays a metacognitive scaffolding role by guiding the tutee to assess whether the strategies used in solving a task are effective, helping him or her to adjust, therefore, his or her own cognitive functioning in situations where problem solving is required.

The intertwining of these functions outlined the tutorship model that inspired the Tutoring Online Program to facilitate the establishment of an effective educational relationship aimed at achieving the program's intended goals.

The qualitative study

Speaking of an educational relationship within a tutoring project developed entirely online may seem, apparently, an oxymoron. However, if every formative process is always mediated by the places, tools and times that constitute it (Potestio, 2003), this means that even online tutoring, although characterized by different times, spaces and means, can trigger formative processes that will be all the more effective the more an educational relationship can be established, even at a distance. It is precisely within this relationship that the tutor can accompany tutees, facilitate the acquisition and development of new knowledge and skills through a non-directive helping style. Starting from these assumptions, within TOP we wanted to investigate, through qualitative research, what dimensions in the perception of tutors and tutees may have supported, or on the contrary limited, the creation of a meaningful relationship: aspects inherent to the educational relationship, the training support given and received, the advantages and critical issues with respect to distance learning. The ultimate goal of this work was to improve the orientation and quality of the educational processes, as well as an advancement of pedagogical, methodological and didactic supervision aimed at tutors in view of future editions of the project.

All the tutors and tutees who were part of the TOP project received an invitation to participate in the study via email, requesting their willingness to participate in a series of interviews aimed at understanding some aspects of the experience carried out. The total number of subjects who concluded all the interviews was 16 tutors and 9 tutees (3 from class 1, 3 from class 2, and 3 from class 3). The interview was administered remotely using Google Meet at the end of the school year (June 2021), also when the TOP project concluded.

Methodology: theoretical assumptions, interview themes and techniques

Given the characteristics of the subjects involved in the research and considering the age and scholastic difficulties of the tutees, the choice was made to develop a semi-structured interview that, despite providing an outline to be followed – albeit in a non-rigid manner – flexibly adapted to the content and thoughts proposed by the interviewee, leaving him or her more free in the formulation of their responses (Cardano, 2003; Pastori, 2017). The interview was structured from Pianta's (1997) Teacher-Child Relationship Interview (TRI), used to assess teachers' ideas of themselves and their relationships with students and the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) (Main & Goldwyn, 1994). These instruments, although developed for subjects other than tutors/tutees, made it possible to identify some fundamental dimensions referring to the educational relationship by also requiring tutors to describe, through concrete examples, their mental representations with respect to their relationship with tutees.

In order to achieve the objectives described above, 14 questions were formulated for tutors and 12 for tutees; for the latter, the questions were simplified both in the design phase and in itinere after the first interviews were conducted, as they were evaluated as too complex. The questions, consistent with the purposes of the research, investigated:

- The relationship between tutor and tutee: tutors had to choose three words to the relationship with their tutee. This request, however, proved too complex for the tutees so it was decided, using the Photolangage method (Frison, 2016; Pastori, 2017) to have them choose a few pictures (from those presented) that best described their relationship with the tutor and explain why. Both were also asked to indicate moments when they felt particularly connected.
- Expectations and emotions, indicating what they were at the beginning and end of the course and what motivations had led them to participate in the program (tutors only).
- The goals the tutor intended to achieve with the tutee.
- Self-perception with respect to one's role as tutor/tutee: the former was asked about their perceptions with respect to their doubts, abilities and skills; the latter how they perceived themselves in relation to studying (Do you feel able to study? Why?).
- The critical issues and advantages with respect to the distance relationship and strategies used.
- The support received: for the tutors, we referred to pedagogical supervision and materials viewed while for the tutees we asked whether the tutor's support was useful and whether it affected their perception of school.

- A general evaluation: tutors were asked about possible changes that occurred in the tutee and tutees were asked to recommend/not recommend to a friend both the tutoring course and the tutor they had.

Data analysis

All interviews were recorded, and the audio was transcribed and analyzed using the reflexive thematic analysis (TA) method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Within the text corpus, recurrent and significant patterns were identified through text coding. The definition of the themes did not take place a priori but through a bottom- up inductive mode: in fact, the code grid was created a posteriori after careful reading and familiarization with the text, which allowed for the identification of relevant concepts to describe the phenomenon under investigation (Auerbach & Silvestrein, 2003; Pastori, 2017). Micro-codes were also identified for each macro-code to further detail the responses, capturing the specificities of both groups interviewed (tutors/tutees). Below are the extrapolated codes with their respective sub-codes.

a. Emotional-relational:
   a.1. Self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy (tutor);
   a.2. Interpersonal confidence (tutor);
   a.3. Motivation and self-esteem (tutee);
   a.4 Relationship symmetry/asymmetry (both).

b. Learning:
   b.1 Cognitive and metacognitive learning (tutee);
   b.2 Teaching support (tutee).

c. Online tutoring
   c.1 Advantages and disadvantages of online tutoring (both)

d. Objectives (only in tutor responses)
   d.1 Educational goals vs. relational goals.

Results

The analysis of all the interviews led to the detection of the components that determined the quality of the relationship, which occurred entirely at a distance, between tutors and tutees. The three dimensions that influenced the quality of the relationship, grouped into macro-categories, are presented below.

The emotional-relational components

As with tutoring actions that occur in-person, in online tutoring the emotional-relational components also influenced the quality of the interpersonal relationship between tutor and tutee. In particular, the management of emotional components such as interpersonal trust and esteem appear to be the most noticeable in respondents' answers, as can be seen from the excerpts below.

> Tutor: so in general I think the connection was created the moment she started to trust me because very often it happened that even outside of class she would ask me for opinions on certain papers that she had to do or at least things that we had not seen together. [...] During the final period when we talked about her new school, she really opened up [...] and I understood that she trusted me and there was syntony.

Trust, however, was not easy to gain, especially for particularly shy tutees who, even for a lengthy time, kept the camera off or showed only part of their face. The following tutee admits his initial shyness and subsequent confidence in the tutor.

> Tutee: well, the first time I was very nervous, not showing myself, more or less just showing my eyes and then instead seeing even more, I mean, I realized that anyway she was nice, intelligent and I liked her character in general and so I tried to open up more and I found that anyway she was nice and sweet intelligent um, I really like this thing about her because she helps people a lot.

Establishing a climate of trust created a virtuous circle that increased both self-esteem in the tutee and, consequently, a sense of self-efficacy in the tutor.

> Tutor: yes, he improved so much from the point of view of self-esteem, in the sense that I really feel that I encountered him up as a boy who had lost his will to act after flunking out. By helping him and making him realize that he was able to do things anyway, his self-esteem grew so much [...] For me it was a great satisfaction.

The focus on these emotional-relational components occurred when the tutor was able to balance the asymmetry/symmetry inherent in playing a more formal role (relatable to the figure of the teacher) and a more informal one (relatable to the role of an “older friend”). In some cases, as in the examples below, the tutor’s sharing of experiences similar to those the tutee was experiencing, or his/her willingness to listen, facilitated the establishment of a good educational relationship that was essential for managing the learning process.

Tutor: there were moments when I felt connected with her, she is also Muslim and I am too; so, we also got to talk. There was Ramadan during class: I was tired, she was tired because we were fasting; so, she was a little lost and I said, “look, I know very well what it means!” and so there was more of a connection there.

Tutee: when we finished the meeting we talked a little bit about our life; yes, there it was very nice; in fact, because I hadn’t talked to anyone about these things, I mean, about my life in general for a long time. Actually because I don't have many friends, I only talk to my family, and however, instead with her I found myself just... I wanted to tell her that she was just like a friend, I was talking to a friend.

However, if the tutee continued to perceive the tutor’s role as formal, the asymmetry between the two roles grew, affecting the quality of the relationship.

Tutor: then she opened up a little bit, a little bit more, but never letting go, feeling really comfortable; in fact, this really bothered me, she always felt a little bit like I was not her equal, because I kept saying, “look I study just like you,” and instead she always felt like I was the tutor, that’s it.

Thus, in those tutor/tutee pairs where the relationship was characterized by mutual trust and esteem, a helpful relationship seems to have been established that enabled the tutee to receive support not only regarding the disciplinary learning dimension, but also the social-emotional one.

Cognitive development and the acquisition of new knowledge

Since the main goal of the project was to help tutees in doing their homework and consequently to enhance their learning, the interviews also investigated the quality of the methodological and didactic support the tutees received. The interviews revealed differences with respect to the characteristics of the help offered, which, in some cases, was perceived as a “simple support in doing homework” while, in others, it was experienced as a real intervention aimed at teaching-learning strategies to improve their study method.

Tutee: so I changed my study method; the tutor helped me, that is, she told me study methods that could be helpful to me, I tried them and eventually I found that it isn’t so difficult to study, that is, it can be a nice thing.

Tutee: When I would study the most boring subjects I used to study alone, because alone you have the mind-set: there’s no one to explain it to you, you have to study it by yourself and if you’re with your phone you’ll get a four (a failing mark) for sure. But now, even when I didn’t study geography, history with her, those subjects

that are more monotonous, more boring, I got 7, 6, 9, however she also helped me a lot, gave me tips on how to study.

The most effective interventions in terms of learning, therefore, appear to be those in which tutors have set themselves the goal of developing functional strategies for the method of study in the tutee, regardless of the subject and the tasks at hand. It is precisely this focus that has led to a change in the attitude of tutees who, from being passive and often unmotivated learners, began to take a more active role regarding individual discipline or study in general.

Tutee: I felt particularly in tune when I had understood what she was explaining to me and so I could keep up with it [...] When she gave me maybe a math problem to do I would tell her what to do and she didn't have to explain anymore. We felt a little bit better, I mean we also enjoyed it, because you could see that she had taught well and I had understood well.

This interview excerpt is particularly significant because it highlights how a good relationship between tutor and tutee ("we felt good") was determined by the tutee taking an active role in his own learning process ("I would tell her what to do") to the extent that the tutee was able to explain the process needed to solve the task. The work of tutors, not only focused on the product (the tasks), but also on the learning process and the acquisition of new strategies through metacognitive teaching, also proved to be instrumental in increasing motivation and improving the quality of the relationship, as also evidenced by studies on metacognition (Dettori & Letteri, 2021; De Beni & Moè, 2000). In the following interview excerpt, the tutor states that "something changed" after introducing the tutee to the GeoGuessr game (consisting of moving within virtual maps using the Google Maps application) to support him in studying geography.

Tutor: I think the point that made things change was just introducing him to this game, because from there we started a second word, "curiosity" let's say, which really marked this experience so much because in my opinion he is not stimulated at all in school [...]. He's a boy who, with the right topics explained in the right way, is very curious, asks a lot of questions and is interested in finding out things about the world [...]. From that moment he was asking, asking, so definitely curiosity!

Finding a tool in harmony with the tutee's cognitive style and learning mode not only increased the student's curiosity by making him proactive in studying, but it also initiated a new learning strategy – based on the posing of questions – which is fundamental in understanding a text (Cardarello & Bertolini, 2020).

Tutor interventions aimed at acquiring new knowledge and supporting the cognitive process to increase tutee awareness of their own learning strategies and study method (and especially for students with Specific Learning Disorders) can be considered the best compensatory strategy (Bianchi, Rossi & Ventriglia, 2011).

Managing online "space"

The quality of the relationship is also inevitably influenced by the space where tutor and tutee interact; if, in person, the space takes shape according to the people and objects that inhabit it, online, the absence of physical space can have different repercussions depending on the characteristics, including emotional ones, of the subjects. In fact, discordant opinions emerged from the interviews with respect to the online learning environment: while for some it was precisely the distance that ensured a relationship, especially with those tutees who were particularly shy, for others managing this space was a barrier.

> Tutor: the big advantage was the lack of human contact, because starting a long-distance relationship with a very shy guy made things easier in my opinion [...] Directly and physically dealing with a person who you haven't had a chance to familiarize with is a little bit "too much" [...] He felt a little more secure at a distance, in his little room – with time, he came out of his shell.

The distance, in this case, proved to be a kind of protection that allowed a gradual mutual approach leading the tutee to coming out "from his shell." However, in other situations, the tutee took advantage of the possibility to turn off their camera to make "their space" unreachable.

> Tutor: since she had control over the audio and video, during the last two months she decided not to show up anymore, so we basically did the video calls with no camera. [...] without the camera on, she would get a snack, come back and say "yes yes I'm doing the assignment, I'm doing it."

Technology provided the tutee with the freedom, unthinkable in a face-to-face relationship, to manage the learning space and determine the timing of his or her own attention; this created an obstacle for tutors in building a meaningful relationship. The potential of technology, however, was also positively exploited to broaden "educational offerings" as tutors made use of the web (using, for example, You Tube or Netflix), as well as digital applications and tools to increase tutee attention or to better adapt the lesson to the cognitive characteristics of the students. The digital environment made it possible to vary the means of representation, necessary to provide tutees with different ways of

acquiring information and knowledge (Cottini, 2019): the possibility of having different mediators (visual, auditory, textual) to support comprehension "just a few clicks away" had positive effects on the relationship with the tutee, increasing his or her motivation to learn.

> Tutor: we explored New York together and after that Texas and I said, "Anyway look, this is the same country, I mean we're still in the United States, look how different it is!" So then he started asking me, "What about this other place, what's it like?" And then I showed him all the parts of America, how it changes, and that time was maybe the most fun because it was just one question after another.

Finally, both tutors and tutees highlighted the greater flexibility, in terms of time and space, that online tutoring allowed compared to face-to-face tutoring. The time savings afforded by being able to connect from home and the cancellation of distance – which allowed tutors and tutees from all over Italy to work together – were rated positively by interviewees.

Conclusions

Through the qualitative research conducted within the Tutoring Online Program and described here, it was possible to analyze the relationship established during online tutoring between tutors and tutees in-depth.

Although the number of respondents was small, the analysis of the semi-structured interviews made it possible to bring out those factors that, in the eyes of the tutors and tutees, made the tutoring relationship functional even at a distance.

In fact, the tutor's ability to pay attention to communication and the creation of a climate of mutual trust and esteem, even before focusing on the educational objectives, seems to have been a discriminating element. The support of the emotional dimensions occurred as tutors managed to balance the asymmetry inherent in their role with more informal attitudes aimed at accommodating the tutee's needs, resulting in a more "horizontal" relationship.

In addition, comparing the tutees' interviews with those of the tutors, it emerges how the latter's focus on cognitive processes, on the tutee's search for functional strategies and on the activation of metacognitive strategies, was instrumental not only in improving the younger student's knowledge but also in forging an effective relationship, improving the tutee's method of study and, in general, the tutee's attitude toward school.

Finally, regarding online tutoring management, the digital environment and tools affected the effectiveness of the intervention where tutors were able to

take advantage of the potential offered by technology: having a multiplicity of tools and applications readily available proved to be strategic in increasing the tutee's engagement or motivation.

If, therefore, emotional and metacognitive valence, as well as digital skills, appear to be key elements in establishing a good online relationship between tutor and tutee, it follows that tutor training for the new editions of the project should follow these trajectories; on the one hand, it is necessary to design training paths aimed at preparing tutors for a metacognitive approach to teaching, aimed at promoting awareness of learning and the strategies implemented in tutees, in order to be able to use them in other contexts as well; aa well as, on the other hand, training paths that outline the identity of the tutor and his or her scaffolding functions, including emotional ones, in order to stimulate the tutee to learn, acting on motivation, self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy. All this must necessarily be rooted in good knowledge and skills with respect to digital environments that can foster learning.

Taking into consideration the outcomes of the quantitative study conducted on TOP (Carlana & La Ferrara, 2021), the tutoring program established does not represent merely a formative and educational investment for universities, but also an ethical and social one. The distinctive and innovative feature of TOP, where university students provide their time and knowledge to support younger and struggling students, contributes to the promotion of a civic sense among older students. Thus, the Tutoring Online Program represents an inclusive and sustainable model – in line with the goals universities should strive for – which will hopefully equip future generations with a higher capital, not only a cultural one but also human and social.

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