Competences of academic tutors – research among participants of the project "Masters of Didactics"

Kompetencje tutorów akademickich – badania wśród uczestników projektu „Mistrzowie dydaktyki"[1]

Happy are those who have someone near them who acts for their good,
who offers his time and can lead to interesting places!
(Czekierda 2018, 9)

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Abstract: The aim of the research was to identify and then characterize the self-assessment of the level of tutoring competences of academic teachers participating in the project "*Masters of Didactics" – implementation of the tutoring model*. The tutoring competences were described on the basis of the "European competence matrix for tutors" developed as part of the Certification for Mentors and Tutors (Certi.MenTu) project which focused on the certification of the competences of mentors and tutors according to the European Standard EN ISO 17024. The selected tutoring competences described in this project were applied to the academic environment. The competences were grouped into seven areas. These included: communication and relationships, cooperation with tutees and provision of support for them, effective learning, monitoring tutees' progress, evaluation of tutoring. The research questions concerned the overall picture of the tutoring competences and the developmental nature of these areas. We were also interested in socio-demographic factors that may differentiate the level of competence of tutors. The method used was a diagnostic survey and the technique was an online survey with open and closed questions. The research was conducted among 78 lecturers from the Polish academic community. The results indicate that academic teachers perceive themselves as adequately prepared to carry out the tutoring process, while being aware of the need to improve, especially in terms of knowledge, organization and evaluation of the tutoring programme at the university. Tutoring competences are independent of gender and academic degree of academic teachers but differentiated by academic discipline.

Keywords: academic education, adult learning, tutoring competences, tutoring

Abstrakt: Celem przeprowadzonych badań było rozpoznanie, a następnie dokonanie charakterystyki samooceny poziomu kompetencji tutorskich nauczycieli akademickich uczestniczących w projekcie „*Mistrzowie Dydaktyki" – wdrożenie modelu tutoringu*. Podstawę opisu kompetencji tutorskich stanowiła „Europejska matryca kompetencji dla tutora" opracowana w ramach projektu Certification for Mentors and Tutors (Certi.MenTu) ukierunkowanego na certyfikację kompetencji mentorów i tutorów według Europejskiej Normy EN ISO 17024. Wybrane kompetencje tutorskie opisane w tym projekcie aplikowano do środowiska akademickiego. Stworzono siedem obszarów tych kompetencji. Były to m.in: komunikacja i relacje, współpraca z tutees i ich wspieranie, efektywne uczenie się, monitorowanie postępów tutees, ewaluacja tutoringu. Pytania badawcze dotyczyły ogólnego obrazu kompetencji tutorskich, rozwojowości tychże obszarów. Interesowały nas również czynniki socjo-demograficzne mogące różnicować poziom kompetencji tutorów. Zastosowaną metodą był sondaż diagnostyczny, a techniką ankieta internetowa zawierająca pytania otwarte i zamknięte. Badania przeprowadziłyśmy wśród 78 wykładowców z polskiego środowiska akademickiego. Wyniki wskazują, że nauczyciele akademiccy postrzegają siebie jako właściwie przygotowanych do realizacji procesu tutoringowego, mając jednocześnie świadomość konieczności doskonalenia, zwłaszcza kompetencji w zakresie wiedzy, organizacji oraz ewaluacji programu tutoringu na uczelni. Kompetencje tutorskie są niezależne od płci oraz stopnia naukowego nauczycieli akademickich, ale zróżnicowane ze względu na dyscyplinę naukową.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja akademicka, kompetencje tutorskie, tutoring, uczenie się dorosłych

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1   Artykuł w języku polskim: https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-2Duda.pdf

Introduction

Looking into the issue of *academic tutoring*, we refer to the idea that assumes an individualized and personalized[2] approach to the student. In tutoring, the student is called a tutee. In terms of form, tutoring means working together in a way adapted to the student's abilities (by discussing the reading materials that the student has read, the essays that he or she has written or research and artistic projects created and completed by the student, etc.) in a one-tutor – one or several tutees settings. The relationship between the teacher (tutor) and the student (tutee) should be characterized by authenticity, trust and a sense of being safe. In such optimal conditions, in line with the assumptions of educational constructivism, which may serve as a theoretical basis for tutoring, it is possible to stimulate reflection and social development of the student. The tutoring provided at the university may take a scientific form – then it manifests itself as increasing the level of knowledge and developing subject-specific skills, and/or it may take a developmental form – then support is provided for the tutee working on his or her personal development and acquiring social skills – organizational and communication skills, more broadly – civic skills (Brzezińska, Rycielska, 2009, p. 19-20). Therefore, the tutor should not only be an expert in his or her field of study and discipline, but also be fluent in the "language" of interpersonal competences. "The main goal of tutoring is to build a relationship in which both the intellectual and socio-emotional development of the student will be possible and safe. All tutorial work is aimed at integrating these two areas of learning into one experience" (Wojciechowska, 2020, p. 219). It not only shows the professionalism of the tutor, but is also associated with a practical consequence: the social and emotional support provided by the tutor has a clear positive effect on the student's cognitive abilities (De Smet et al., 2008, p. 219).

Academic tutoring is usually thought to be a didactic method, however – as in the case of most concepts in social sciences, theorists are not unanimous in its definition (Jendza, 2016, p. 43). Not only are there many different definitions of tutoring as a method[3], but neither is there unanimity as to whether tutoring is actually a didactic method at all. "It is difficult to call it a method [...] or solely a philosophy, a paradigm, because it is neither one nor the other on an exclusive basis. It is a holistic approach to education and to the student / person under your charge, requiring a specific attitude and competence on the part of the tutor in each individual case" (Karpińska-Musiał, 2016, p. 106). Supporters of this view believe that the aim of the tutoring education cannot be tantamount to expecting a specific result or final effect (e.g. performance of the assigned work), because it would impoverish or even block the phenomenon of tutoring. Rather, this goal could be described as a certain sense emerging from relations and interactions, devoid of directive demands or orders from the tutor (often commonly associated with the traditional concept of academic teaching). Instead, the tutoring relations should be characterized by negotiated decisions and contracts, based on conscious and verbalized needs, as well as by a system of meanings developed jointly by both parties (Brzezińska, Rycielska, 2009, p. 24; Fingas, 2015; Jendza, 2015, p. 40). A particularly important aspect of this subjectively understood relationship (or even a two- or multi-subject relationship) are

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2   The debate over the distinction between the two concepts is still ongoing. It is assumed that a personalized approach ("tailored", personalized for a given unique person) is more than individualization (it is based on the assumption that we work with students individually, but we do not necessarily differentiate the curriculum depending on the pupil/student). More: Czekierda, Fingas and Szala 2018, 24 and 126. There are also conceptual ambiguities concerning the word "tutor" itself, which in English means not only a tutor or a guardian, but also a private teacher (Štastný et al., 2021).

3   For example: "Tutoring is one of the methods of individualized education which is based on the direct meeting of the tutor with the pupil or student. A tutor is a person who has knowledge, experience and appropriate formation, and is able to work on a one-to-one basis. Tutoring is most often a long-term process of cooperation (covering at least one term), targeted at the integral development of the tutee–encompassing knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Budzyński et al. 2009, 5) or: "It can be assumed that [tutoring] is a specific method of pedagogical influence that involves cooperation of the tutor with the tutee or with a small group of tutees. This cooperation consists in planned, formal, informal and spontaneous activities which lead to the development of the persons participating in it" (Sarnat-Ciastko 2015, 10).

the values shared by all participants of the tutorial process as well as the knowledge, experience and the views that they have, because it is these views that will be confronted with the topics discussed during tutorials (Sipowicz, Pietras, 2020).

What results are achieved by caring for the knowledge, skills and social competences (attitudes) of tutors? According to the definition contained in the Recommendation of the European Parliament (*Appendix 1 to Recommendation … 2017, point i*)[4], competences mean "the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development". In the case of tutoring, this is applicable both to the student and the tutor. Conducting research as part of an international team, Brdulak et al. (2020) concluded that out of the three fundamental components of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) – social competences (abilities) are at a strong disadvantage. They are rarely perceived as an important goal of education, on a par with professional knowledge or skills. Rather, they are treated as a positive "side effect" of other carefully planned educational activities. It is not beneficial both from an individual and a social perspective. In addition, it does not have to be like that (after all, at least theoretically, social competences have a guaranteed place as one of the "learning outcomes" of particular subjects taught at universities). Thorough and systematic teaching of social skills can be a valuable educational activity (Brdulak et al., 2020, p. 117), at the same time providing a space for pursuing the missions of the university. Incidentally, for several decades, various digital tools have come to aid in this respect. We observe the development of these tools also in the area of tutoring – in connection with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (cf. Castro-Schez et al., 2021; Escobar Fandino, Silva Velandia, 2020).

Agnieszka Żur points out that social competences consist of knowledge, skills and experience. "A man has specific competences only when he uses them in practice, has experienced being able to do something and is aware of it" (Żur, 2016, p. 142). He wants to engage in reflection and to take action when he feels ready to do so – able to think independently and to evaluate the reality. Tutoring appears here as a kind of remedy – it is within the framework of tutoring activities that the above-mentioned competences undergo a specific and unconstrained process of change.

The importance of the shaping of tutoring competences[5] is beyond dispute. The involvement of students-tutees, which is such an essential component of effective learning, largely depends on the social attitudes of the tutor. "Young people appreciate the teacher-master's attitude of openness, honesty, integrity, authenticity, involvement in the performed work, as well as the ability to notice and take interest in every student and to treat him or her as a subject. (…) The characteristics of the teaching and learning process that become apparent in tutorials, such as: multi-directionality, criticality, holistic approach, theoreticality, dialogicality or historicity, largely depend on the teacher too" (Śleziński, 2014, p. 195-196).

The authors looking into the topic of benefits that result from the implementation of the tutoring model in higher education, emphasize in particular its developmental and educational character. Both practitioners and researchers indicate that in connection with the inclusion of tutoring in the curricula of educational institutions (including work on social competences), one can expect more frequent manifestations of self-regulated learning among pupils/students (including responsibility for their own learning process, internal, positive motivation and commitment), a growing sense of being safe and building deeper, less aggressive interpersonal relationships. Instead, these relationships will be more focused on dialogue and on transformation

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4   *Annex 1 to the COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning* (2017/C 189/03). https://europa.eu/europass/system/files/2020-05/Legal%20text-PL.pdf

5   For the purposes of our research project, we assume, in line with the European Competence Matrix "Tutor", that these competences relate to the following areas: building good relationships with the learner in the tutoring process; developing an on-the-job training programme; working together with a coach and supporting the mentor; designing, planning and negotiating an on-the-job training programme; supporting and motivating the learner in the workplace; monitoring progress and providing feedback; evaluation of the training programme. See Table 1 to find out more about the competences in particular areas.

of the culture of the (higher) education institution into a learning organization. In addition, the implemented tutoring programmes are reported to prevent professional burnout of teachers-tutors, because they often work in a tutoring team and this in turn has an effect on the support group and on the perceptions of one's own personal and professional development (Brzezińska, Rycielska, 2009, p. 20; Budzyński, 2009, p. 32). In this way, tutoring becomes the foundation for strengthening the culture of team-based mutual support of tutors. The workplace is thus transformed into a community – a learning organization.

1. Knowledge, skills and social competences of tutors

For the purposes of the "Masters of Didactics" project, it was assumed that the universities introducing tutoring should focus in particular on four areas. These are: tutoring models, modern methods and tools in educating students, institutional support for students, professional development of academic teachers. Modern methods and tools in educating students include technological issues, as well as broad achievements of pedagogical sciences. Institutional support for students consists in the individualization of teaching, taking into account both talented students and those who need support. An area that has been considered to be of special importance is the improvement of the teaching competences of academic teachers. At the same time, this area is thought to require a special strengthening at Polish universities (Brdulak et al., 2019). Therefore, the project "Masters of Didactics" brings academic teachers into the foreground.

A comprehensive description of the tutoring competences used in this research was prepared for the project *Certification of Mentors and Tutors* (Certi.MenTu). The aim of the project was to develop a support model for two professional groups – mentors and tutors. The project was in tune with wider activities in the European area of vocational education and training – *Work-Based-Learning*. The area is developed within the framework of support for continuous vocational

education and provides a foundation for social cohesion, stimulating the development of current and future employees (Religa, 2014).

The Certi.MenTu project focused on tutors referred to as representatives of educational institutions. On a daily basis, they were to play the role of trainers, teachers and student counsellors, supporting adults in their personal and professional development. The project did not define academic tutors directly. The general competences of the tutor specified in Certi.MenTu concerned a person who was to work with adults. Tutors were assumed to play a key role in the process of education and vocational training, contributing significantly to an increase in the quality of both.

The developed standardized competence profile of tutors corresponded to the structure of the European Qualifications Framework. It defined learning outcomes, each assigned with a set of the necessary knowledge, skills and social competences. A specific learning outcomes matrix was developed (European Competence Matrix "Tutor", 2012, Project LLP-LDV-TOI-12-AT-0015). The matrix contained seven areas. These were: building good relationships with the learner in the tutoring process; developing an on-the-job training programme; working together with a coach and supporting the mentor; designing, planning and negotiating an on-the-job training programme; supporting and motivating the learner in the workplace; monitoring progress and providing feedback; evaluation of the training programme.

Each of the areas contained an extensive description of knowledge, skill and competence-related effects. Some of them could, to a certain – greater and lesser – extent, be applicable to the practice of academic tutors. Other effects – being exclusively relevant in the work environment – could not be applied in the academic environment. In practice, the European Competence Matrix "Tutor" from the Certi.MenTu project became the starting point – an inspiration for the creation of a list of competences of academic tutors. The compiled list included seven areas. These were:

communication and relationships, organization, cooperation with the tutees and providing support for them, cooperation with others and providing support for them in the work environment, effective learning, monitoring the progress of the tutees and providing feedback, evaluation of the tutoring programme at the university.

The area of *communication and relations* integrated the competences and communication skills of tutors. Particular attention was paid to active listening and building professional relationships with the tutees. Basically, this area related to the tutor-tutee relationship, but it also included universal indicators of good communication, such as the understanding of the role of students, lecturers and governing bodies in the environment of a university. We also paid attention to the knowledge of theories, models and methods of communication, assuming that a "good" tutor should possess such knowledge.

Considering that the tutor always functions in an institution which has its specific culture and atmosphere, we decided that efficient functioning in the university environment is an important competence of the tutor. The area "Organization" includes such elements as knowledge about the university as a learning and tutoring environment. A highly competent tutor is characterized by an ability to act efficiently and effectively at his or her university. He or she has knowledge about the conditions of the functioning of the institution, about the people who make it up and about their responsibilities.

The main goal of tutoring is to work together with the tutees and to provide support for them. The first stage of working together within the framework of academic tutoring is the recruitment process. For this reason, we have given priority to the knowledge of the rules concerning the selection of future tutees as a competence which is important for their future cooperation. This cooperation begins with establishing a good contact. In the next stages, it is essential to build and to maintain authentic relationships. In order to care continuously for the quality of good relationships, it is essential to design cooperation and to provide assistance with solving problems.

The area *cooperation with others and support in the work environment* is the fourth prioritized area of the tutor's competences. Undoubtedly, building and maintaining a "network of the closest co-workers" is a basic skill of a tutor working with a project method, but not only. In the current socio-cultural conditions, teamwork in a higher education institution is a prerequisite for success. Academic tutoring likewise requires action taken by the community.

During tutoring, there is a learning process whose stakeholders are both academic teachers and students. Effective learning is another key area of academic tutoring where specific competences of the tutor have been highlighted. Some examples include: knowledge of learning styles and opportunities and the ability to plan a learning process using different methods. The special task of the tutor is not only to "take care" of his or her own learning, but also to support tutees in effective learning. An important element of this area is the readiness to take responsibility for the ongoing process of tutees' learning.

Academic tutoring is a process which involves many people (tutors, tutees, governing bodies of the university, administrative staff), but the most important pair is the tutor and the tutee. Another challenge in terms of the tutors' competences is the ability to monitor the progress of the tutees, including the ability to provide them with feedback. This area focuses on being capable to systematically review and constantly monitor the progress of tutees in terms of broadly understood development (learning, personal development). The ability to provide meaningful feedback is quite a challenge too, especially if the feedback is to be constructive.

The project "Masters of Didactics" is to be evaluated at each university taking part in it. Tutors are obliged to take part in this practice, and this requires knowledge of evaluation methods and tools, as well as the principles of documenting evaluation results. Another competence included in the area "Evaluation of the tutoring programme" at a university is the ability to analyse the results of evaluation and use them to identify areas that require support.

Each of the seven mentioned areas was described with several specific statements – expected to provide an indication of a tutor's competences.

Table 1: Exemplification of the statements assigned to areas of the tutor's competences

Name of the area	Examples of statements – descriptions of competences belonging to a given area
Communication and relationships	I know and understand theories, models and methods of communication. I have the ability to communicate effectively with tutees, using practical communication tools and techniques. I am ready to maintain a professional relationship with the tutee, helping her/him achieve his/her academic and professional goals.
Organization	I know and understand the characteristics that a university should have in order to provide a conducive learning environment. I know and understand the characteristics of my higher education institution as well as the tasks and competences of selected employees that can help me to provide the tutoring. I can optimally use the possibilities of my higher education institution (e.g. infrastructure, available human resources) in the provision of the tutoring.
Cooperation with and support for tutees	I can maintain the interest of the tutees cooperating with me and I can solve problems arising in our relationship in a creative way. I know and understand the principles of designing and implementing cooperation between me and my tutees. I can support tutees and help them with solving problems reported by them.
Cooperation with others and support in the work environment	I can build and maintain my "network of my closest co-workers". I know and understand the principles of designing and implementing cooperation between me and my colleagues. Working with others, I am not afraid to raise problematic issues and I can do so.
Effective learning	I can discuss and design the learning process together with the tutee. I can set commitments and reach agreement concerning goals, methods and procedures of supporting tutees in their professional development. I am ready to apply the principles of professional evaluation of my actions and take responsibility for performed work. My actions do not require direct supervision.
Monitoring progress of the tutees and providing feedback	I can review the progress made by the tutees at regular intervals. I can agree the next steps in the tutoring process with the tutees. I can help the tutees to reflect on their own activities and work, in order to identify development potential and take appropriate action.
Evaluation of the tutoring programme at the higher education institution	I know and understand the principles, methods and tools of evaluation. I can use evaluation methods (such as interviews and questionnaires). I can design and use tools and techniques to analyse the evaluation data.

2. Methodological aspects of research concerning the tutoring competences of the academic teachers participating in the *"Masters of Didactics"* programme – implementation of a tutoring model

The research, the results of which are presented below, has an exploratory, descriptive and explanatory character (cf. Pilch, Bauman, 2001). It was aimed to identify and then characterize the self-assessment of the level of tutoring competences of the academic teachers participating in the project "*Masters of Didactics" – implementation of the tutoring model*. In addition, the conducted explorations are intended to provide premises that will make it possible to formulate conclusions regarding the determinants of the academic tutors' competences in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes (social competences). In pursuit of the above goals, the following main problem was put forward: "What is the specificity of the tutoring competences of the academic teachers participating in the implementation stage of *The Masters of Didactics* programme?", as well as three specific questions:

1. What is, in the opinion of the tutors themselves, the level of their competence in each area of the tutoring competences?
    1.1. In which area, in the opinion of the tutors themselves, are their competences at the highest level?
    1.2. In which area, in the opinion of the tutors themselves, are their competences at the lowest level?

2. What is, in the opinion of the tutors themselves, the level of their competence in terms of each of the competency components (knowledge/skills/attitudes)?
   2.1. Which of the competency components (knowledge, skills, attitudes) are at the lowest level in the opinion of the tutors themselves?
   2.2. Which of the competency components (knowledge, skills, attitudes) are at the lowest level in the opinion of the tutors themselves?
3. Are there any factors, among those taken into account in the research, that differentiate the level of the tutoring competences of academic teachers?

Given the subject and the objectives of the performed explorations, as well as the properties of each of the research methods and techniques (cf. Pilch and Bauman, 2001; Rubacha, 2008), it was decided that research would be conducted on a quantitative basis, using the method of the diagnostic survey and the research technique of the questionnaire. The constructed questionnaire entitled *"Masters of Didactics" – knowledge, skills and social competences of tutors* consisted of three main parts. The first one contained information on the researchers, goals and principles for participation in the studies. The next one consisted of the following six components identical to the previously indicated areas of competence of the tutors (1) Communication and relations, (2) Organization, (3) Cooperation with tutees and provision of support for them, (4) Cooperation with others and provision of support in the work environment, (5) Effective learning and (6) Monitoring the progress of tutees and providing feedback. Within each of the areas, the respondents first gave their opinions using a 5-point scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-rather disagree, 3-hard to say, 4-rather agree, 5-strongly agree) to the statements describing their competences (examples of statements have been presented in the previous section), and then, by answering an open question, they could share additional reflections on

the development of their competences in each of these areas. The third part consisted of demographics questions that provided researchers with information on socio-demographic variables. Before designing the questionnaire, variables and indicators were adequately conceptualized to suit the formulated research questions. The indicators of the variables concerning the level of the tutors' competences with respect to each of the earlier-mentioned areas of the coaching competences, as well as to the knowledge, skills and attitudes, were the arithmetically averaged responses of the respondents to the statements corresponding to/representing them. The indicators of the variables related to the factors that could potentially differentiate the tutoring competence level were the frequency of selection of the answers included in the cafeterias assigned to the questionnaire questions concerning each of the variables.

The research procedure, designed to obtain data that would make it possible to formulate conclusions for the formulated research problems, consisted of several steps. The research procedure began with the identification of universities taking part in the implementation stage of the "Masters of Didactics" project, based on the materials available on the website of the Ministry of Science and Education (formerly the Ministry of Science and Higher Education). Then, the website of the higher education institution was searched for information on the persons responsible for coordinating the project. To initiate cooperation, we sent an e-mail to those persons, requesting them to forward a link to the Forms to the tutors who were conducting tutorials under the project. 78 academic teachers responded to the request positively and exactly this number was included in the research sample. Its characteristics are presented in the table below.

Regardless of the dominance of specific groups of individuals in the research sample (men, PhD holders, and representatives of science and social sciences), the sample can be considered relatively heterogeneous and one can conclude that each gender, field of science and each academic degree were represented in it.

Table 2: Characteristics of the research sample

discipline	gender	Title / gender					In total
		no data	master of arts/science	PhD	PhD with habilitation	professor	
humanities	female	-	5 (6.4%)	5 (6.4%)	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.3%)	12 (15.4%)
	male	-	0	0	2 (2.6%)	2 (2.6%)	4 (5.2%)
exact sciences	female	-	0	10 (12.8%)	7 (9.0%)	0	17 (21.8%)
	male	-	0	8 (10.2%)	5 (6.4%)	0	13 (16.6%)
	other	-	1 (1.3%)	0	0	0	1 (1.3%)
social sciences	female	-	0	13 (16.7%)	5 (6.4%)	0	18 (23.1%)
	male	-	0	8 (10.2%)	2 (2.6%)	0	10 (12.8%)
	other	3 (3.8%)	0	0	0	0	3 (3.8%)

3. Research results

78 respondents took part in the self-assessment of the level of tutoring competences. The mean of the obtained results encoded on a five-point scale was M = 4.08, SD = 0.27. The reliability of the measurement questionnaire estimated with the Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.93. For particular areas diagnosed with the questionnaire, the reliability was as follows, respectively: Communication and relationships $\alpha = 0.89$, Organization $\alpha = 0.84$, Cooperation with the tutees and providing support for them $\alpha = 0.87$, Cooperation with others and providing support for them in the work environment $\alpha = 0.91$, Effective learning = 0.89, Monitoring the progress of the tutees and providing feedback $\alpha = 0.92$, Evaluation of the tutoring programme at the university $\alpha = 0.92$. The reliability for particular components of the competences diagnosed with the questionnaire was as follows, respectively: Knowledge $\alpha = 0.93$, Skills $\alpha = 0.95$, Social competences $\alpha = 0.90$.

Descriptive statistics for the respondents' answers concerning particular areas of competences are presented in Table 3. Academic teachers assessed their competences relatively highly, the average self-assessment oscillates around the score 4 "I rather agree".

The area in which, according to the self-assessment of the tutors, their competences are at the highest level is "Cooperation with tutees and provision of support for them" (M = 4.27, Me = 4.43). In this area, a high score was also obtained in the minimum category ($M_{min} = 2.14$). The tutors' assessment of

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the respondents' answers concerning particular areas of competence, *N* = 78

Area	M	SD	Me	Min	Max
Communication and relationships	4.13	0.58	4.17	2.17	5.00
Organization	3.92	0.59	4.00	2.22	5.00
Cooperation with and support for tutees	4.27	0.57	4.43	2.14	5.00
Cooperation with others and support in the work environment	3.99	0.67	4.00	2.00	5.00
Effective learning	4.13	0.65	4.12	0.88	5.00
Monitoring progress of the tutees and providing feedback	4.29	0.59	4.37	1.75	5.00
Evaluation of the tutoring programme at the higher education institution	3.91	0.74	4.00	1.78	5.00

their competences was equally high in the area of "Monitoring the progress of tutees and providing feedback". The areas in which, as assessed by the tutors themselves, their competences are at the lowest level are "Evaluation of the tutoring programme at the university" (M = 3.91, Me = 4.00) and "Organization" (M = 3.92, Me = 4.00).

In order to confirm the above-mentioned relationships and to verify whether the factors selected in the study (gender, academic title / degree, represented scientific discipline) differentiate the self-assessment of particular competence areas, a variance analysis of variance in a mixed scheme (ANOVA) was carried out. Self-assessment in the area of competences (according to Table 3) was adopted as the dependent variable. Particular predictors (gender, academic title / degree, represented scientific field) were adopted as inter-object variables. The analysis confirmed a significant intra-object effect for the area of competences, $F_{(6.372)} = 3.16$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta 2 = 0.05$ ($\alpha = 0.05$, $1\text{-}\beta = 0.89$). As assessed by the tutors themselves, area 3 (Cooperation with tutees and provision of support for them; M = 4.38, SE = 0.09) was rated higher than area 2 (Organization; M = 4.05, SE = 0.09, estimation on the basis of the modified marginal mean for the population), $p < 0.005$, 95% CI [0.07;0.61], area 6 scored higher (Monitoring the progress of tutees and provision of support for them; M = 4.40, SE = 0.09) than area 2 (Organization; M = 4.05, SE = 0.09, estimation on the basis of the modified marginal mean for the population), $p < 0.005$, 95% CI [0.07;0.63]. Area 6 (Monitoring tutees' progress and feedback; M = 4.40, SE = 0.09) was also rated more highly than area 7 (Evaluation of the tutoring programme for the higher education institution; M = 4.05, SE = 0.11, estimation on the basis of modified population marginal mean), $p < 0.05$, 95% CI [0.01;0.68]. The other pairwise comparisons were found to be statistically insignificant, $p > 0.067$.

The analyses did not show a significant inter-object effect for the gender factor, $F_{(1.62)} = 3.12$, p = 0.082, nor for the title/academic degree factor, $F_{(3.62)} = 0.81$, p = 0.491. However, the scientific discipline factor was found to be significant, $F_{(2.62)} = 4.28$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta 2 = 0.12$ ($\alpha = 0.05$, $1\text{-}\beta = 0.71$). A post hoc analysis showed a significant difference in the self-assessment of tutors specializing in humanities (M = 4.38, SE = 0.15) and exact sciences (M = 4.01, SE = 0.12, with the estimation being based on the modified margin mean for the population), $p < 0.05$. The other differences were statistically insignificant, $p > 0.57$.

In the study, we also analysed particular components of the competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes). Descriptive statistics for the respondents' answers concerning particular components are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for the respondents' answers concerning particular components of competences, N = 78

Competences	M	Me	SD	Min	Max
Knowledge	3.98	3.98	0.57	2.00	5.00
Skills	4.07	4.07	0.54	1.93	4.86
Attitudes	4.28	4.42	0.56	1.75	5.00

Out of the three highlighted components, the tutors rated their social competences the most highly (attitudes described with statements such as "I am ready to manage crises that affect the tutoring process") and their knowledge–the least highly.

In order to confirm the above-mentioned relationships and to verify whether the factors selected in the study (gender, academic title / degree, represented scientific discipline) differentiate the self-assessment of particular competences, a variance analysis in a mixed scheme (ANOVA) was carried out. The type of competence (knowledge vs. skills vs. attitudes) was adopted as the dependent variable. Particular factors (gender, academic title / degree, represented scientific discipline) were adopted as inter-object variables. The analysis confirmed a significant main effect for the type of competency, $F_{(2.124)} = 12.75$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.17$ ($\alpha = 0.05$, $1\text{-}\beta = 0.97$). As assessed by the tutors themselves, attitudes were rated more highly (M = 4.43, SE = 0.08) than knowledge (M = 4.10, SE = 0.08, the estimation was based on the modified marginal mean for the population),

p <0.01, 95% CI [0.17;0.49], and attitudes were also rated more highly (M = 4.43, SE = 0.08) than skills (M = 4.19, SE = 0.08, the estimation was based on o modified margin mean for population), p <0.01, 95% CI [0.13;0.35]. The comparison of the pairs of knowledge and skills proved to be statistically insignificant, p = 0.138.

The analyses did not show a significant inter-object effect for the gender factor, F (1.62) = 3.24, p = 0.077, nor for the title/academic degree factor, F (3.62) = 0.79, p = 0.505. However, the scientific discipline factor proved to be significant, F (2.62) = 4.28, p <0.05, η^2 = 0.12 (α = 0.05, 1-β = 0.73). A post hoc analysis showed a significant difference in the self-assessment of tutors specializing in humanities (M = 4.41, SE = 0.15) and exact sciences (M = 4.03, SE = 0.12, with the estimation being based on the modified margin mean for the population), p <0.05. The other differences were statistically insignificant, p > 0.57.

Discussion

Both due to the educational value of tutoring, as well as the relatively high participation of Polish universities in the ministerial programme "Masters of Didactics" – *implementation of the tutoring method*, the topic of the tutoring competences of academic teachers seems to be worth exploring. It seems that the knowledge, skills and social competences possessed by academic tutors are a factor that determines the quality of support provided by them, while also contributing to the satisfaction of the two parties involved in this process. Making an empirical exploration of this topic, we decided to adapt the European Competence Matrix "Tutor" from the Certi.MenTu project, creating a list of tutoring competences of academic teachers, and to look into the respondents' self-assessment of the issues under analysis as a subject of interest.

The research results presented in the previous section, structured according to the specific questions, make it possible to answer the main question: "what are the specific characteristics of the tutoring competences of the academic teachers participating in the implementation stage of the *Masters of Didactics* programme?". The tutoring competences of the academic teachers, analysed both in terms of their areas and components, tend to be on a fairly good level. A slight difference between the average results in various areas of the tutoring competences (maximum 0.38) and their components (maximum 0.3) demonstrate relative high consistency. At the same time, it is worth noting that the areas of "cooperation with tutees and provision of support for them" and "monitoring the progress of tutees and providing feedback", as well as the component relating to social competences, received the highest scores. Given the above-mentioned properties of the tutoring competences, we believe that the academic teachers perceive themselves as adequately prepared to implement the tutoring process. At the same time, they are aware of the need to improve, especially in terms of knowledge, organization and evaluation of the tutoring programme at the university. This conclusion is also confirmed by the responses to open-ended questions:

> *"It seems to me that remote work provides a tutor with an area where he or she can practise soft, communicative and relational competences, because the circumstances and patterns of action known to all of us ceased to apply and we had to find our way in the new situation that tended to make communication more superficial".*

> *"Competences OK, but how to implement them effectively? The Ministry of Education and Science does not offer any mechanisms and neither do universities internally".*

According to some tutors, it is the universities themselves that should provide additional support for the process of developing tutoring competences:

> *"Practice, practice, practice ... I am familiar, I know, but why should I use them? The university still follows a classical approach and there is no promotion mechanism for this type of approach. Lack of understanding among decision-makers.*

"In my opinion, the university fails to provide support in the area of broadly defined didactics".

"I would like my university to (auto)diagnose my competences and to provide training in this area as part of the tutoring programme."

Another feature of the tutoring competences of academic teachers is the fact that they are independent from gender and academic degree, but differ depending on the academic discipline.

The above conclusions inspire one to identify problem areas for further research, as well as to formulate recommendations for the implementation of the "Masters of Didactics" programme. As regards the first of these aspects, it would be cognitively interesting and complementary to confront the self-assessment of tutors with the assessments of students regarding the tutoring competences of their academic teachers, and to examine the relationship between the self-assessment of competences and the preferred forms of tutoring. Moreover, it seems absolutely necessary to repeat this research in order to formulate conclusions on the developmental importance of tutorials for the areas and competence components under analysis.

Formulating recommendations, we would like to indicate in the first place that the Ministry of Education and Science must ensure more ways of providing academic teachers with an opportunity to

improve their competences, such as, for example, the conference held in June 2021, entitled "The International Conference Masters of Didactics. Enhancing the teaching competences of academic teachers within the non-competition implementation project entitled "Masters of Didactics" and the Seminar-workshop "Tutoring models and strategies for the development of academic teaching competences" (September 2021). During that seminar, it was announced that teaching excellence centres would be established in particular universities. Furthermore, we consider it worthwhile to conduct research (e.g. by teams implementing the tutoring/coordinators of the "Masters of Didactics" programme at universities) on tutors' needs concerning the development of their competences and the organization of appropriate forms of education, also in the form of peer tutoring.

Finally, we think that it is important to create a nationwide forum for tutors, which would enable them in future to exchange good practices in introducing tutoring at universities, both in terms of organization and content-related aspects, so that the quality of tutorials can improve. Such cooperation offers an opportunity for joint research activities and organization of scientific events in order to provide space for the development of both the tutors and the tutees. This kind of inter-university cooperation could aid the academic world in making tutoring an educational strategy that is permanently present in Polish institutions of higher education.

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