



**Peer Counselling Centre
Department of Early
Childhood Education**

<http://sykeom.ecd.uoa.gr/>

Director: Professor Maria Malikiosi – Loizos



**NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN
UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS**



**Laboratory of Psychological
Student Counselling
Department of Psychology**

<http://www.skf.psych.uoa.gr/>

Director: Professor Anastasia Kalantzi- Azizi

4TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL PEER SUPPORT SYMPOSIUM

Athens, 23-24 June 2011

**Cultural Center- Entefktirio
“Kostis Palamas” Building
Akadimias 48& Sina**

PROGRAMME

<http://www.mpes.uoa.gr/peer2011>

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Athens, 23-24 June 2011

Dear Colleagues,

We are very pleased to welcome you to the **4th Annual International Peer Support Symposium**.

The symposium is jointly organized by the *Peer Counselling Centre of the Department of Early Childhood Education* and the *Laboratory of Psychological Student Counselling of the department of Psychology*, both of which belong to the University of Athens.

The present symposium is an excellent opportunity for all of us to meet again and exchange ideas for the promotion of Peer Counselling/Support services in higher education. Moreover, we welcome new delegates that are interested in creating Peer Counseling Centers in their Universities.

The thematic sessions in which we will focus are the following:

1. Training in Peer Support /Peer Counselling
2. Research and Evaluation
3. Innovations and Sensitive Groups

We hope you enjoy your stay in Athens and your participation in the symposium!

Warmest Greetings,

The Organizing Committee of the University of Athens,

Maria Malikiosi- Loizos (*Professor,*
Director of the Peer Counselling Centre
of the Department of Early Childhood Education)

Anny Benetou

Dorothy Loizou

Angeliki Surlantzi

Anastasia Kalantzi- Azizi (*Professor,*
Director of the Laboratory of Psychological
Student Counselling Department of Psychology)

Georgios Efstathiou

Foteini Lekka

PROGRAMME

DAY 1- Thursday 23 of June 2011

Moderator: Maria Malikiosi- Loizos

- 09.00 - 09.30** **Registration**
- 09.30 - 10.00** **Introduction**
- 10.00 - 10.15** *The Peer Counselling Centre at the University of Athens*
Malikiosi – Loizos, M.
- 10.15 – 10.30** *The Counselling Centre of Students at the University of Athens*
Charila, D. & Kalantzi – Azizi, A.
- 10.30- 11.30** **Acquaintance of participants**
- 11.30-12.00** **Coffee Break**
- 12.00-14.00** Thematic Session: **Training in Peer Support /Peer Counselling**

“The development and training of the peer listeners at Jacobs University Bremen”, Sauing Yu, F. Jacobs University Bremen

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“Reflections on our experiences of the peer support training for trainers in Estonia”, Ford, A. (University of Oxford), Kasesalk, M & Niinep,I. (University of Tallinn)

“The training system of the peer counselling group of ELTE”, Takacs, R., Gerencser, D., Doka, A. Hungary

“Effective communication and counselling skills: Peer counsellors' training”, Loizou, D., Surlantzi, A., Malikiosi – Loizos, M. The Peer Counselling Centre, University of Athens

“A peer support training programme and its evaluation”, Lekka, F., Efstathiou, G., Kalantzi – Azizi, A. The Counselling Centre of Students at the University of Athens, University of Athens

14.00- 15.00 **Lunch**- served at symposium venue

15.00- 17.00 **Workshops** (parallel)

Workshop A: *“Ubuntu goes on-line: Web-based relationship building by trained peers”*, M. de Jager, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

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Workshop B: *“Building bridges between peer counselling programs: an interactive workshop to promote collaboration”*, Benetou, A., Surlantzi, A., Stivaktaki, M., Tsermidou, L., Malikiosi – Loizos, M.
The Peer Counselling Centre at the University of Athens

17.00-20.00 (free time)

20.00 **Dinner**

DAY 2- Friday 24 of June 2011

Moderator: Georgios Efstathiou

09.00 -11.00

Thematic Session: **Research and Evaluation**

"A peer support program at University of Athens: implementation and evaluation of a face-to-face and an on line peer support intervention", Lekka, F., Efstathiou, G., Kalantzi-Azizi, A. The Counselling Centre of Students at the University of Athens, University of Athens

"Peer tutoring as educational resource to approach excellence within the European higher education area", Arco, J. L., Fernández, F. D. and Miñaca, M., University of Granada

"Investigating the positioning of peer help programmes within the higher education landscape", Ntlokwana, N. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

"Examining the impact of peer helping on peer helpers: a comparative study of experiences in Sweden and Singapore", Gillo, C. (University of Gothenburg), Hsi, T. (Singapore Management University)

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11.00- 11.30

Coffee break

11.30- 13.30

Thematic Session: **Innovations and Sensitive Groups**

“How2@nmmu: An overview of the peer- led orientation programme of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University”, Knipp, S., Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

“Reflections on our 17 year experience as volunteers at the Peer Counselling Centre of the University of Athens: peer counseling for all”, Christaki, A., Malikiosi – Loizos, M., The Peer Counselling Centre, University of Athens

“Promoting student involvement with vulnerable groups: the use of the portofolio”, Watkiss, S., Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

“Peer support for Students with disabilities at the University of Athens: goals and function of the volunteer service of the Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities”, Sofianopoulou, A. & Velissaropoulou, A. Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities, University of Athens

13.30- 14.30

Lunch- served at symposium venue

14.30- 16.30 Workshops (parallel)

Workshop C: *“Strategic management of Peer Help Programmes by means of an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT): An interactive workshop”*, **A.C. de Jager**, Nelson Mandela University

Workshop D: *“Using counselling skills in written on line communication: Examples from an on line peer support discussion forum”*, **Lekka, F., Alexopoulou, A., Daliana, N., Kurkou, Th., Theologis, V., Efstathiou, G., Kalantzi-Azizi, A.** The Counselling Centre of Students at the University of Athens, University of Athens

16.30-17.00 Closure/Evaluation

ABSTRACTS

Thematic Session: **Training in Peer Support /Peer Counselling**

Presentation 1

*The development and training of the peer listeners at Jacobs University
Bremen*

Sauing Yu, F. Jacobs University Bremen

What is the Peer Listeners Project? The Peer Listeners Project at Jacobs University Bremen was proposed by the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) in Fall 2009. The Counseling Center has been collaborating with the USG on the project since January 2010.

There are three phases to the project. The first phase is selecting peer listeners which took place in January 2010. More than 30 students enrolled in the project. After the interview, twenty-two students are staying in the project for further training. The second phase is to go through a 10-hour training workshop which is offered by the Counseling Center from March to April 2010. Twenty-one participants completed the training successfully and proceed to the final phase of the project. The peer listeners meet their fellow students under regular supervision by the counselors of the Counseling Center which is the last phase of the project.

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Who are the Peer Listeners? The Peer Listeners are students who are willing to help each other by listening, sharing common experiences, exploring options and giving support and care on campus. Peer listening is based on communication, empathy and understanding to support fellow students. Peer Listeners can benefit from basic counseling skills and techniques training and the opportunity to help others, which contribute to their own personal growth and development.

Aims of the project:

1. To equip students with interpersonal and active listening skills
2. To enable students to be an accessible and supportive resource to their peers
3. To enable personal growth

Project Update:

This is a “student-to-student” project with the slogan “You Talk, We Listen”. Case sharing and case analyzing session will be held once per month by the counseling center. In addition, further training like “stress management” has been provided by the counselors. The topics of upcoming workshops will be “How to deal with family issues?” and “Life Balance” in Fall 2011.

Presentation 2

Reflections on our experiences of the peer support training for trainers in Estonia

Ford, A. (University of Oxford), **Kasesalk, M. & Niinep, I.** (University of Tallinn)

The presentation will focus on the experiences we had during the five-day Peer Support Training for Trainers in Estonia, January 2010, from both the trainers' and participants' view, and what we gained from the training. We will reflect on the experience of training/being trained across cultures and languages and the impact this had on the training experience. The Estonian trainers will discuss how they integrated the training programme into their university and, one year on, how it is currently running in Estonia.

Presentation 3

The training system of the peer counselling group of ELTE

Takacs, R., Gerencser, D., Doka, A., Hungary

Our Peer Counselling Group has been active since 1993 and since then we have tried and embraced many ways of training. The group's services include organizing social events, assisting the handicapped and providing consulting opportunity for the university students. Our Peer Counselling Group has special training methods which were developed by taking our special major in count. We are psychology students, we are from different ages and we are on different levels of knowledge and skills, so a mayor purpose is passing those down to junior members. The trainers on the one hand are senior members who are trusted by the group, on the other hand we regularly invite professionals to broaden our knowledge and skills.

Our system is built up of different elements. We have a special training plan for the newly enrolled members. It practices the first interview and the basic skills of the client-centered approach. We have trainings that focus on both the client's and the peer helper's feelings, this way we get to know ourselves better and become more efficient helpers. The aim of the presentation is to show how our training system works and share our experiences about different training plans including the one where we accentuated the feelings of the peer helper.

Presentation 4

Effective communication and counselling skills: Peer counsellors' training

Loizou, D., Surlantzi, A., Malikiosi- Loizos, M., The Peer Counselling Centre. University of Athens

The Peer counselling center of the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Athens runs annually a Peer Counsellors' Training Programme on effective communication and counseling skills in order to be staffed with trained volunteer peer counsellors. Participation in training is open to undergraduates as well as graduates of the department. The training programme, which covers a full academic year, is divided into two parts: a theoretical and a practical. The theoretical part of the seminar focuses on the presentation of the basic effective communication and counseling skills followed by practice through different exercises, role playing, videotaping etc. The practical part, which covers the second half of the academic year, is intended to implement the above in the Peer Counselling Center. Core components of the seminar are for the trainees to become aware of the Peer Counseling principles, to understand their role as volunteer peer counsellor and to implement the basic effective communication and counseling skills. In this brief presentation we will include an overview of the structure and content of the training programme, provide examples from the practice of the peers in the Peer Counselling Centre, as well as an evaluation of their training.

Presentation 5

A peer support training programme and its evaluation

Lekka, F., Efstathiou, G., Kalantzi – Azizi, A., The Counselling Centre of Students at the University of Athens, University of Athens

Peer support programs can be thought as the organized form of people's natural tendency to seek support, guidance, information and practical help from each other when experts intervention is not available or needed. Such programs at university settings have many advantages for students who receive support, such as: emotional support, encouragement, empowerment, socialization and problem solving. At the same time, there are advantages for the students how offer their support to others, such as: high self esteem, experiential knowledge of new skills, emotional maturity.

Since 2008 the counseling centre for students at the university of Athens offers a peer support service in two forms: face to face and on line. Trained students offer their support to their peers in order to overcome usual difficulties that are related with their age and with the demands of student life. The basic training consists of ten 3hours session and the volunteers learn basic communication and counseling skills. 57 students have completed and evaluated the basic training and the findings regarding the evaluation are discussed

Thematic Session: **Research and Evaluation**

Presentation 6

A peer support program at University of Athens: implementation and evaluation of a face-to-face and an on line peer support intervention

Lekka, F., Efstathiou, G., Kalantzi – Azizi, A., The Counselling Centre of Students at the University of Athens, University of Athens

Since 2008 the counseling centre for students at the University of Athens offers a peer support service in two forms: face to face and on line. Trained students offer their support to their peers in order to overcome usual difficulties that are related with the developmental stage and the academic demands of student life. Results are presented regarding the evaluation of the two forms of peer support intervention after one year of functioning.

Presentation 7

Peer tutoring as educational resource to approach excellence within the European higher education area

Arco, J. L., Fernández, F. D. and Miñaca, M., University of Granada, Spain

The purpose of this study was, on one hand, to determine the impact of a peer tutoring program, to prevent academic failure and dropouts among first year students (N = 102), from Business Administration and Enterprise , Economics, Pharmacy, and Psychology careers, and on the other hand, to identify the potential benefits on cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies and social skills on students from last course or postgraduate students (N = 50), all of them from the University of Granada (Spain). After building and selecting the measurement instruments necessities to gather demographic and academic relevant information on both samples, and assigning the first year students to either experimental or control group, the intervention consisted of 20 tutoring sessions (90´ minutes length each) along both semesters, given by Tutors after receiving 3 sessions of training (nine hours total) on tutoring contents like cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies, motivational strategies, social skills and also how to use the materials designed ad hoc for this program. The results show statistically significant differences in favour of the experimental group on grade point average, performance rate, success rate, learning strategies and social skill and also statistically significant pre-post differences for the tutors on learning strategies and social skills.

Presentation 8

Investigating the positioning of peer help programmes within the higher education landscape

Ntlokwana, N., Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Peer driven interventions, be it helping / counselling / support / education / mentoring, have, despite a relatively brief past, an active current existence at institutions for Higher Education worldwide. It has a potentially strong future if supported by adequate research and an on-going identification and implementation of best practices. Increasingly diverse student populations and their wide range of needs made it imperative to investigate the implementation and utilization of peer helping as an extension of Student Support Services at South African institutions for Higher Education.

This presentation is based on a recently documented report on the results of a survey, designed to gather information about the prevalence and characteristics of peer helping programmes in Higher Education in South Africa. The paper will contain a brief overview of these results. This will be followed by a guided reflection and discussion of the most prominent and relevant features of peer help in higher education, focusing on the South African and European scenarios. The discussion will, amongst others, cover the challenges related to the management and planning of peer programmes, the roles that peer helpers are fulfilling within Student Counselling and Support Services, the model(s) used to prepare peer helpers for their roles and the nature of peer helper supervision provided. The discussion will conclude with the issue of sustainability of peer helping, exploring its strategic positioning within the higher education landscape and exploring joint research initiatives by South African and European teams to support the research agendas of their respective institutions.

Presentation 9

Examining the impact of peer helping on peer helpers: a comparative study of experiences in Sweden and Singapore

Gillo, C. (University of Gothenburg), **Hsi, T.** (Singapore Management University)

Over the past two decades, peer helping programmes have increasingly been seen as a viable approach for counsellors and educators seeking to implement alternative methods for counselling interventions as well as the impartation of skills and knowledge. A scan across literature on peer helping seems to indicate that there is currently no clear-cut consensus on the scope of activities for peer helping programmes.

Some aspects of peer helping include peer counselling (Corn & More, 1992), peer education (Green, 2001), peer mentoring (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2000) and peer tutoring (Topping, 1996). In this paper, our intent is to examine the impact of peer helping on helpers by focusing on the experiences of two university peer counselling/helping programmes based in Sweden and Singapore. In addition, we would also examine the idea of ‘peer helping’ across these two very different cultures, highlighting interesting similarities and differences between the two.

Thematic Session: **Innovations and Sensitive Groups**

Presentation 10

How2@nmmu: An overview of the peer-led orientation programme of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Knipp, S., Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) has a peer-led faculty-based orientation programme called How2@nmmu. The NMMU is a multi-campus comprehensive institution spread across the city of Port Elizabeth with a satellite campus in George.

This conceptual paper will focus on the increasing involvement of approximately 200 senior peers in integrating new students successfully into the academic and social culture of the NMMU. The role of the peers has developed significantly since 2006 in response to annual qualitative evaluations undertaken by the orientation team. This has resulted in the development of a Buddy Programme in 2009 which extends into the first term. Furthermore, in 2011, an additional academic component has been introduced to anchor student integration at NMMU.

A description of this student-centred model will be shared with reference to the components and implementation of:

- the core how2 programme at NMMU

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- the extended Buddy programme
- the extended academic orientation programme

The description will include the preliminary results of a pilot survey conducted in March 2011 with reference to the successes and challenges of the above.

Presentation 11

*Reflections on our 17 year experience as volunteers at the Peer
Counselling Centre of the University of Athens: peer counseling for all*

Christaki, A., Malikiosi – Loizos, M., The Peer Counselling Centre,
University of Athens

The peer counseling centre in the Department of Early Childhood Education of the University of Athens, opened its doors to the students of the Department in 1995, under the supervision of Prof. Maria Malikiosi-Loizos. Since its beginnings, the peer counseling centre was open to all students that approached it. The peer- counselors were willing to support and assist them in their best possible way, always positive and open to search for any information asked for. Above all, the positive will of all peer counselors to help, led to the basis of a steady supporting group, open to innovations and characterized by inner sensitive bonds, which help outer counseling relationships to flourish, with good results for all participants (visiting students and the peer counselors themselves).

In my presentation, I will talk of my experience of the peer counseling centre in the Department of Early Childhood Education as main participant of peer web-based counseling at the present time.

Presentation 12

Promoting student involvement with vulnerable groups: the use of the Portfolio

Watkiss, S., Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Retention of vulnerable student groups has become increasingly prevalent on a global scale with a move from governments and institutions towards Internationalisation, where one sees increasing admittance of international student groups to Higher Education Institutions.

Portfolio development research was conducted in 2010 at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University where emerging themes included social interaction, diversity experiences and consideration for involvement in co-curricular activities as a means for personal development important for participants. In addition to aspects of personal development, social involvement is considered a good predictor of academic persistence leading to retention.

The author proposes that portfolio development has the potential to promote student involvement and persistence, particularly when dealing with vulnerable student groups. Themes from the research are reviewed with recommendations for use in a peer support context.

Presentation 13

Peer support for students with disabilities at the University of Athens: goals and function of the volunteer Service of the Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities

Sofianopoulou, A. & Velissaropoulou, A., **Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities, University of Athens**, access@uoa.gr

At the University of Athens are enrolled about 1000 students with disabilities. Those students are officially supported by the “Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities” of the University of Athens, since 2007, where the Accessibility Unit was established. The mission of the Accessibility Unit is to actively realize coequal access to academic studies for students with different abilities and needs, through environmental modifications, Assistive Technology and access services. The following services are provided in a regular basis: evaluation of students’ abilities, provision of personal Assistive Technologies, accessible workstations in University libraries, organization of volunteer work for helping the disabled students, Video Relay Service for deaf students, production and distribution of accessible educational material, everyday transportation to the University of students with severe mobility impairments, and personal and group psychological counseling.

In the first part of this presentation a pilot program for peer support for students with disabilities is discussed, where disabled students are getting voluntarily support from their peers/ colleagues, in order to get prepared for the semester exams. This program was offered by the Counseling Service for Students of the University of Athens and was used as a pilot program in

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order to organize and evaluate the new service of the Accessibility Unit, the Volunteers Service, which is at the moment in pilot phase and is presented during the second part of this presentation. Mission of the volunteers' service is to organize support to students with disabilities by their peers to the following academic activities: information about courses, deadlines, exams, keeping notes, support during the study for the exams, mobility in the university, etc. The rationale and the implementation of those two programs are presented and discussed.

WORKSHOPS

Workshop A

Ubuntu goes on-line: Web-based relationship building by trained peers

M. de Jager, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Format: Conceptual Paper followed by a guided reflection

Number of participants: Maximum 30

Social networking and communication technology – and students’ fascination and competence in terms of accessing and utilising it - have opened *new doors* to the counseling profession and to para-professional counselling practices. These *new doors* include exciting possibilities of expanding ethical peer support services and social networking via social media and mobile technology. Peer supporters can be enabled to responsibly reach out to those who cannot, or do not wish to, access face-to-face, peer-to-peer services, while applying the principles of *Ubuntu* (the African term for the philosophy of caring for one another that can be roughly translated as "I am, according to you" or "I am, because you are.")

This paper will address the value-driven application of a messaging management system, developed to more effectively manage multiple mobile chat and mobile social networks streams. It is engineered to allow peer supporters to have many conversations in one hour, increasing their ability to assist those who need help. The conditions, advantages and limitations of this mode of on-line counseling and support will be discussed within the

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parameters of Ubuntu. The implementation of an integrated peer web support system (including a mobile chat service) within student counselling services will furthermore be explored through guided reflection. Issues addressed will include adaptations to peer supporter training curricula; web based peer driven referral systems and peer learning support, peer wellness promotion and peer career guidance via the Web.

The ultimate aims of the paper are to reflect on ways in which peer supporters can improve their impact on their communities by drawing on the technology tools and skills they use daily, while, at the same time, adhering to the ethical principles of Ubuntu.

Workshop B

Building bridges between peer counselling programs: an interactive workshop to promote collaboration

Benetou, A., Surlantzi, A., Stivaktaki, M., Tsermidou, L., Malikiosi – Loizos, M. The Peer Counselling Centre at the University of Athens

The aim of the workshop is to give participants the opportunity to explore means and possibilities for collaboration among peer counselling programs internationally. With the help of a variety of psychoeducational methods (group discussions, brainstorming, written exercises e.t.c.) participants will be invited to cooperate in order to discover ways to "build bridges" and collaborate throughout the year. Moreover, the workshop aims to act as a forum for a structured exchange of ideas and experiences. The coordinators of the workshop will present some of their ideas (internet discussion forums, European exchange programs) in order to motivate participants and encourage the discussion.

Workshop C

Strategic management of Peer Help Programmes by means of an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT): An interactive workshop

A.C. de Jager, Nelson Mandela University

Number of participants: Maximum 20 to 30

Method of presentation: The Experiential Learning Cycle will be used throughout the presentation to process participants' learning

Outcomes of presentation:

1. Participants will have achieved insight in the place of strategic planning as a management method to promote Peer Help Programmes
2. Participants will have developed skills in conducting a SWOT analysis for their own Peer Help Programme as a fundamental step towards strategic planning as management tool
3. Participants will have developed skills in identifying strategic priorities in support of their Peer Help Programme
4. Participants will have developed skills in describing implementation plans aimed at achieving strategic priorities in support of peer help programmes

Workshop D

Using counselling skills in written on line communication: Examples from an on line peer support discussion forum

Lekka, F., Alexopoulou, A., Daliana, N., Kurkou, Th., Theologis, V., Efstathiou, G., Kalantzi-Azizi, A. The Counselling Centre of Students at the University of Athens, University of Athens

The way that basic counselling skills can be used in written communication is explained with examples from the on line peer support programme at the University of Athens. Participants will have the opportunity to practice by working on real students questions.

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Counselling Psychology Division

