Coaching Tutors: An Instrumental Case Study on Testing an Integrated Framework for Tutoring Sessions

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Coaching is a relatively new process in professional development; however, coaching has deep theoretical roots that have been around for over a century and are observed in the words of Alfred Adler and Carl Jung (McDowell, 2014). Coaching and mentoring are necessary to ensure that professionals learn and grow with support.
INTRODUCTION

The general problem is that there is not any research being conducted in the tutoring industry focusing on tutoring coaching and mentoring for tutors resulting in the gap in the literature. Instructional coaching is incongruent to what occurs in an effective tutoring session and there are not any existing studies to support tutoring coaching and helping tutors conduct effective tutoring sessions.
The purpose of the study was to examine participants’ perceptions on the tutor coaching framework and describe methods and strategies that tutors might use to effectively conduct tutoring sessions.
This research study was significant because there is not research conducted on coaching and evaluating tutors. Although research has been done for a reading checklist for volunteer tutors (Al-Hazza & Gupta, 2006), there is a gap in the literature on the qualitative experience and descriptions of participants themselves using the tutoring coaching framework and session review framework because it has only been field-tested.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the tutor coaches and tutors’ experiences, beliefs, and perceptions regarding the tutor coaching and session review frameworks in a tutoring context?

SUB-QUESTIONS

- Sub-Question #1: How do tutor coaches describe their experiences in using the session review framework to evaluate tutoring sessions?
- Sub-Question #2: From the tutor’s perspective, how do the tutor coaching and session review frameworks improve their tutoring skills to conduct effective tutoring sessions?
- Sub-Question #3: What methods and strategies might tutors use to effectively conduct tutoring sessions?
METHOD AND DESIGN

The method for this research study was qualitative and the specific research design was an instrumental case study (Yin, 2013). This particular qualitative research design was deemed appropriate because the focus on the study was known in advance and designed around established theory or methods. In this case, the tutoring coaching frameworks and session review frameworks were field-tested with tutors and tutor coaches (Holland-Johnson, 2013).
The case study lasted for 6 weeks involving one research study site in New York in which included one tutor coach and two tutors.

At the beginning of the study, participants were trained on how to implement the tutoring coaching framework with their tutors and tutors were trained on how to use the session review framework in separate online trainings.
DATA COLLECTION PLAN

TUTORS

• Online questionnaires
• Weekly Reflection Journal Entries
• Monitoring Notes from each tutoring session conducted each week.

TUTOR COACH

• 30-Minute Recorded Interview
• Weekly Reflection Journal Entries
• Session Reviews using the Session Review Framework.
• Coaching Tutors using the Tutoring Coaching Framework.
RESEARCH RESULTS

The analysis of interview transcriptions, online questionnaires, monitoring notes, and reflection journals were based on an inductive approach by finding themes, categories, subcategories, and codes.
Interview data

Three Emerging Themes from Tutor Coach’s Recorded Phone Interview
EMERGING THEMES IDENTIFIED FROM TUTOR COACH’S INTERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helps tutor coaches focus on what they are looking for.</th>
<th>Prompt to ask questions afterwards.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session Review Framework provides an avenue of viewing and keeping track on what to look for in tutoring sessions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused Observation of Tutor Sessions.</td>
<td>Reviewing a session before coaching.</td>
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EMERGING THEMES IDENTIFIED FROM TUTOR COACH’S INTERVIEW

Focus on Goal-Setting.

Focusing on assessment.

Focus on even introducing the lesson or instruction of the day.

Highlighted tutor strengths and weaknesses.

Theme 2
Tutoring Coaching Framework influenced coaching with tutors.
### Emerging Themes Identified from Tutor Coach’s Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutors have difficulties with questions and need to be able to support them.</th>
<th>Motivation Strategies for Clients and Communicating with Parents.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3 In-Between Support to tutors as part of the Tutoring Coaching Framework.</td>
<td>Providing support for tutoring methods, instructional strategies, and tutoring discourse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making sure that tutor coaches are available and flexible.</td>
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</table>
MONITORING NOTES

DATA

THREE EMERGING THEMES FROM TUTORS’ MONITORING NOTES
Helps students reinforce the information to go into long-term memory instead of short-term memory.

Interactive lesson plans help the students learn and focus more on what was being taught.

Mutual trust between tutor and student are developed or established.

Connecting what students’ have learned to real-life situations or examples are fundamental to student learning.

Theme 4
As tutoring sessions progressed, Week 1 vs. Week 6, students seemed to have a lot more energy and focus. They were more willing to fix their mistakes without being asked or not repetitive with their mistakes.

**Theme 5**

| Frequency and duration of tutoring sessions are important. | Student motivation is also positively impacted. |
| Working around the students’ schedule and times that are convenient for them allows greater sense of independence. | }
EMERGING THEMES IDENTIFIED FROM TUTORS’ MONITORING NOTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 6</th>
<th>Effective tutoring sessions require lesson preparation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More tutor prep allowed the tutor to put more time into a detailed lesson plans for their students.</td>
<td>More practice problems and assessments are planned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students were able to apply what they learned into actual practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students were able to apply what they learned into actual practice.
Tutor Questionnaire data

Two Emerging Themes from Online Questionnaires
Theme 7: Various Instructional Strategies are used in Face to Face (F2F) and Online Tutoring Sessions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helps monitor students progress.</th>
<th>Used to help students build on their levels of proficiency.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used during lesson planning for individualized instruction.</td>
<td>Monitoring notes are used to increase student achievement in face to face and online tutoring sessions.</td>
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</table>

**Theme 8**
Weekly Journal Reflections data

Two Emerging Themes from Tutor Coach’s Perspective
Emerging Themes Identified from Tutor Coach’s Weekly Reflections Journals

- Provided new experience.
- Week 4—No Sessions
- Theme 9: Evaluating tutor sessions with the session review framework.
- Provide opportunity for reflections.
- Evaluated on average 1-3 sessions per week.
Various Coaching Needs Identified from Tutor Coach’s Weekly Reflections Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need to model better questioning and session flow.</th>
<th>Provide strategies to motivate students.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss assessment strategies.</td>
<td>Develop pre- and post assessments and ongoing assessments.</td>
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**Theme 10**
Various coaching needs identified evaluating tutor sessions using the Session Review Framework.
Emerging Themes Identified from Tutor Coach’s Weekly Reflections Journals

Helps both tutor and tutor coach be on the same page (i.e. tutoring expectations).

Future use to develop tutor skills in instruction, assessment, and overall professional development.

Provide clarity.

Provide guidance and structure to tutor session observations and evaluations.

Theme 11
Both the Session Review Framework and Tutoring Coaching Framework are part of coaching tutors.
Weekly Journal Reflections data

Three Emerging Themes from Tutor’s Perspective
Theme 12: Various needs identified to help conduct effective tutoring sessions.

- More challenging additional resources for subjects tutored.
- Use current materials effectively until students’ grasp the concepts.
- Organized planning of learning activities.
- Provide effective worksheets to help students’ progression from previous tutoring session.
- Create a schedule for effective transitions to different topics.
- Build emotional support with learners.
- Additional time for lesson reflections.
### Emerging Themes Identified from Tutor’s Weekly Reflections Journals

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Prepare a variety of engaging lessons.</th>
<th>On average, planned detailed lessons for 1-4 sessions per week.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implemented provided resources and guidelines from tutor coach.</td>
<td>Used monitoring notes to determine next lesson for students.</td>
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</table>

**Theme 13**

Preparing for tutoring sessions is important.
EMERGING CATEGORIES FROM DATA
EMERGING CATEGORIES FROM ALL DATA

- Tutoring Coaching Framework
- Session Review Framework
- Tutor Coaches’ Beliefs and Perceptions
- Tutor Perceptions
- Tutor Coaches’ Perceptions
- Effective Tutoring Sessions
- Questioning and Discussion Techniques
- Professional Goal Setting
- Tutor Coaching
- Online Tutoring Sessions
- Professional Development
- Tutor Coach Perspectives
- Lesson Engagement
- Curriculum
- Tutoring
- Student Motivation
- Tutor Coach Evaluating Tutor Sessions
- Tutoring Frameworks
EMERGING SUB-CATEGORIES FROM DATA
Emerging Sub-Categories from All Data

- Professional Development
- Evaluating Tutoring Sessions
- Observations
- Coaching Tutors
- Tutoring
- In-Between Support

- Perspectives and Beliefs
- Virtual Learning Environment
- Student Motivation
- Tutor Lesson Plans
- Tutoring Program Sessions

- Incentives and Rewards
- Instructional Strategies
- Lesson Plan Framework
- Monitoring Notes
- Tutoring Methods

- Observing Tutors
- Effective Tutoring Sessions
- Tutoring Needs
- Lesson Planning for Sessions
DISCUSSION

Key Findings, Limitations, Future Research, Contribution to the Industry
Key Findings from the Study

- Both tutoring coaches and tutors had positive experiences with both the tutoring coaching framework and session review framework.
- From the tutor's perspective, both frameworks support tutors in preparing and conducting tutoring sessions.
- An interesting finding was how the tutor placed significant value on establishing mutual trust between the tutor and student during the engagement aspect that was evaluated using the session review framework.
Key Findings from the Study

- Provided tutor awareness of components of effective tutoring sessions.
- Provided confidence for tutors to continue lessons, if needed, after each tutoring session.
- Positive results in tutoring sessions.
- Highlighted specific needs and progress of tutors and students.
- Planning for a consistent scheduled set of tutoring sessions can help student progress.
- Strategies on how to focus on problem areas and tailor instruction.
LITERATURE REVIEWED HAS SUPPORTED FINDINGS OF OUR STUDY

• McFarlane (2016) suggests that tutors lack training in tutoring and may lack clarity as to the purpose and boundaries of the role. A key theme—strategies to move forward--include sub-themes related to training, dialogue with colleagues, and other suggestions in her study on personal tutoring in higher education from a tutor's perspective. Tutors reported training and suggested that the trainings might include guidelines, specific mentoring, and peer observations (McFarlene, 2016, p. 84).
LIMITATIONS OF OUR STUDY

1. Lack of prior research studies on coaching tutoring framework and session review frameworks. Therefore, that was the purpose of using an instrumental case study design.

2. Researcher had to establish a research team and project manager to conduct the research and engage with participants. As a result, each researcher kept a reflection journal and completed separate data analyses and was later shared with the rest of the research team.

3. Three tutors who initially consented, later withdrew from the study.

4. In Week Four of the Research Study, there were no tutoring sessions conducted due to a school break impacting the learners' tutoring schedule.
1. Conduct a further study with a larger sample size, comparing the experiences and perceptions of both tutor coaches and tutors in a learning organization. Specifically, in the K-12 and higher education setting using both frameworks in both virtual and face-to-face tutoring sessions.
1. Findings can be used to provide additional guidelines and recommendations for both tutor coaches and tutors. Specifically, from a tutor coach's perspective, the tutoring coaching framework was deemed appropriate for providing a structure and specific guidelines on how to coach tutors.

2. Tutor coaches are able to use the session review framework to evaluate tutoring sessions and cite specific examples that would be captured to use in coaching sessions with tutors.

3. This research focused on testing an integrated framework for effective tutoring sessions.

4. The findings support that these frameworks are effective in both coaching tutors and evaluating tutoring sessions.
REFERENCES


GOT QUESTIONS?

General Questions about the Coaching Tutors Study: tutoringstudy@iglobaleducation.com

Chris Grant, Research Project Manager: cgrant@iglobaleducation.com

Dr. Alicia Holland, Questions about Tutoring Frameworks: drhollandj@iglobaleducation.com