

Tutoring and Peer Learning

Before starting this section please make sure that you have read the theory section on page 16-17 and the volunteer recruitment and engagement sections in the previous chapter, which speak to the need for a 1:5 tutor ratio and ways to ensure that you achieve it.

Tutoring Methodology

There are various ways to encourage both the learners and the tutors to engage in tutoring rather than teaching. The tutoring pedagogy is fairly simple to understand, however implementing it takes a lot of effort. This section details some of the components that contribute to effective tutoring rather than teaching.

Make sure that you have read the core principles section to better understand the tutoring pedagogy.

It is important that the tutor understands the basics of the tutoring approach. This approach has to first determine what the learner does know and where the gaps in their understanding are. The tutors must be confident in the subject that they are tutoring. This will allow them to adopt different approaches so that they can explain a concept in multiple ways. Tutoring approaches will always differ according to the learners' needs and their level of understanding (and their way of learning).

For example, the tutor could start by identifying what a grade 9 learner should/must know about Science or Maths fundamentals and dedicate some time at the beginning of the tutoring session to get them to revise these fundamentals consistently and build from there. Tutors need to be encouraged to be creative about tutoring. They could use illustrations/videos to explain complex problems. This not only helps the tutor explain an idea it also begins to expose the learner to the various ways of learning and help them to identify how best learn best. There are many YouTube videos and online material available for free but a good tutor can also be creative with a piece of chalk and a blackboard.

Vygostky

Resource – Tutor Manual

Training

It is not merely the 1:5 ratio that facilitates group learning but the methodology that is employed by the tutors and managed by you as the coordinator. It is important to make sure that the tutors are of good quality as this increases the ability of the learner to participate and vocalise their needs and points of misunderstanding, which is the cornerstone of tutoring.

A quality tutor is someone who: has the academic knowledge to provide support in a subject, has been trained and understands the concept of tutoring over teaching, can implement tutoring and facilitate peer learning confidently, is able to commit to tutor for a minimum time (6 months), can be relied upon to attend tutoring sessions and to notify you if they are unable to make it, and is comfortable working with young people.

It starts with tutor training. It is important to equip volunteers with an understanding around how to group learners, ask the right questions and to get them familiar with how to question learners in order to test for understanding. It is important to continually train your tutors and remind them of the tutoring methodology. This will offer tutors a chance to connect with other tutors and share what works. This will then feed into a larger body of knowledge and understanding to really maximise the tutors work with the learner.

See Tutor Training How-to in Module 1 resources.

If you are interested in IkamvaYouth providing tutor training please email zoe@ikamvayouth.org for information.

Support

On-going support is as important as good quality training. There are various ways to support, and each tutor will be different. However, there are some basic ways to support your tutors, and they all begin with communication:

- **Share your vision** with them right from the start. Get their buy-in and ensure that they become members of the organisation
- **Communicate regularly** with volunteers; email, phone, FB, newsletter
- **Involve volunteers** in the whole programme. Inform them of important dates and events (AGMs, prize-giving, etc.)
- **Create an academic year calendar** for your programme that you can share with all your volunteers at the beginning of the year.
- Establish a system of **two-way communication** for volunteers to notify you if they are unable to come, they have noticed an issue with a learner, or they have feedback for programme implementation.

Foster Positive Relationships

Don't underestimate the role a good learner-tutor relationship can play in the success of your programme. By fostering quality interactions with a role model, the learner not only improves academically but their social skills, confidence, participation, self-perception and future expectations markedly improve.

The tutor-learner relationship relies upon well-trained confident tutors and committed learners, and luckily these two things reinforce each other!



Tip

Set aside 15 minutes after the Saturday sessions have ended for the volunteers to speak about their experience at universities, the challenges that have presented, what kept them going when the going got tough. Give the learners the opportunity to interact closely with volunteers and ask questions relating to studying and career prospects.

Some characteristics of a good learner-tutor relationship are:

- **Regularity:** Keep a tutor schedule and a list of the subjects they tutor, so learners start to learn who does what and when they will be there (this also forces the learner to take more control of their own learning)
- **Approachability:** Learners need to come to the tutors with their homework problems, and they need to feel that it is okay to guess and to fail. The first step is to have a “get to know you” session when a tutor joins. This can be a 5 minutes introduction section where you can go around the circle saying your name and your favourite food/soapie/place etc.
- **Trust:** Pair new tutors with more experienced ones so that the new tutor can build trust from an already established trusting relationship.
- **Fun:** whenever possible tutoring should be fun! We are not trying to replicate a school classroom. There is a certain amount of discipline that will take place but there needs to be a focus on removing the learner from a rigid learning environment.
- **Longevity:** when a tutor signs up, we ask for a minimum commitment. It can be very disruptive for learners if people come and go and it can threaten the trust and attachment that learners have with other tutors. If someone is tutoring for a specific period of time i.e. 1 month or just for winter school it is important to make it clear to the learners from the start. When they introduce themselves they can also say how long they are staying for so the learner’s expectations are managed.



Tip

Learners will want to work on the subject that they find the easiest. To prevent this it is important to share the learner’s reports with the tutors and encourage them to sit with the learners to discuss which subjects they need to work on. You can even make a note of this on the register so that coordinators and tutors can follow up and encourage the learner to work on what they are struggling most with.

Consider the motivation of the tutor. It is said that motivation boils down to three main elements:

Autonomy - the desire to direct our own actions and lives

Mastery - the desire to continually improve at something that matters to us

Purpose - the desire to do things in service of something larger than ourselves

Daniel Pink.

Be creative about how you can appeal to the different aspects of motivation. Giving tutors defined responsibility can have a positive effect on the way a tutor views their contribution, which increases their motivation.

Provide and receive feedback

Tutor feedback meetings can be held as often as necessary. Ideally once a week, but this is not always a reality so work with the capacity you have. They do not have to be long. Often a 10 minute chat after tutoring to ask questions and give space for conversation can be enough. This is a chance for you to ask questions such as:

- How did the tutoring session go?
- What challenges are you experiencing?
- Do you have any concerns about a particular learner/group?
- What have you found is working well?
- What are the ideas, actions, plans, responsibilities and timeframes for addressing problems and effecting improvements?

It is a way for tutors to share and learn from each other and build a collective understanding of how to make the most impact through tutoring. This offers you the best way to remind and promote tutoring rather than teaching. Acknowledge good practice that you have noticed, where you feel a tutor has exemplified quality tutoring.

Thank and Acknowledge

Don't underestimate this. Nothing works better than a genuine letter of thanks from the learners themselves or communicating the impact that the volunteer is having on the learner. Remember that the majority of people who sign up to volunteer have big hearts and care for the greater good. Build from this vantage point and give them a sense of purpose and belonging.

Tutor appreciation parties are a great way for you as programme coordinators to show your thanks as well. This could be as simple as bringing a couple of cakes into the office on a Saturday, organising a relaxed braai to get to know each other or going to Ratanga Junction! These 'parties' play a huge role in team-building and it increases the tutor's commitment.

Opportunities can also act as incentives. Keep your eye out for events, learner-ships, bursaries, employment opportunities etc. that you can connect your tutors with.

Peer Learning

Peer learning plays a huge role in the IkamvaYouth programme. The power of peer learning is discussed in the summary of core principles section pages 12-20. When operating effectively it has the ability to empower both the 'tutoring learner' and the 'learning learner.'

During the week you will often have a lower tutor ratio due to tutors not being so available. This is the optimal time to encourage peer learning. One way to do this is to look out for the learners who are excelling in each subject. Pair up those who are doing well in a subject with those who are not doing well.

Try to do this subtly by mixing up the groups. It can help to speak privately to learners who are doing well to ask them if they would be able to help others to understand a subject, but be careful not to do this publicly as it can cause negative perceptions within the group. Remember, learners will achieve up to the level of your expectations, and so it's very important that they do not feel identified as "struggling".

It can also be helpful to mix groups by grade. For instance if you have grade 11s and 12s you can ask the grade 12s to tutor the grade 11s. This will affirm the grade 12s understanding and will allow the grade 11 to build their own knowledge based on a 'language' they are familiar with.

A volunteer could give each learner the same task (in any subject) and then by asking questions and getting learners to respond in turn out loud in the group the tutor will be able to identify and pair up those who are struggling with the ones that understand the work better. Another method is when learners are all from different schools, identify which common topic (in a certain subject) has been covered and allow learners to share the different methods of approach when problem solving.

It must work both ways. As well as encouraging the older grades to tutor younger grades, the younger grades must be encouraged to ask the older grades for help. Building the relationships between grades through games and icebreakers as well as mixing the groups will aid these peer interactions.

It is a gradual process. Peer learning does not come naturally to everyone. There will be a tendency to copy rather than assist understanding. As a coordinator and tutor it is your job to monitor this.