

# **The Impact of The Tutorial System Method in Secondary Education: Enhancing Academic Performance and Personal Development**

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## **Abstract**

This study presents the tutorial system as a pedagogical method that involves personalized learning, formative guidance, and parent-tutor interaction. The author examines the impact of this method on the academic performance and personal development of secondary school students. Its influence on critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and overall academic engagement was also explored. The Situation, Task, Action, and Result method was employed to analyze specific case studies in a school with a population of eight hundred and forty-three students and one hundred and sixty-eight teachers. The results showed an increase in students' academic performance from 2022 to 2023 and a decline in disciplinary issues associated with disruptive behaviour. Notwithstanding the decrease in participation in the tutorials during the pandemic in the 2020/2021 session, the results presented show a significant increase in academic performance. This result raised some exceptions and observations. Firstly, the decline in participation created a gap that caused students to engage in unfavourable learning practices that affected performance outcomes. Secondly, deep learning did not occur during the pandemic as student performance dropped below expectations upon school return to physical learning. The study highlights the positive outcomes of embedding the tutorial system into the school schedule and having a clear set of guidelines, norms, and expectations set out for tutors based on the individual learning, developmental needs, and personal circumstances of each tutee.

The findings have significant implications for educators and administrators, offering insights to optimize educational practices and enhance student outcomes and personal growth.

**Keywords:** Character; Formative; Interaction; Pedagogy; Personalized

## **1. Introduction**

The effective well-rounded education for students is founded on the partnership between the home and the school. *The Implicit Pedagogy of Saint Josemaría Escrivá*, Professor Giuseppe Zaniello, Romana 64. Both the school and the family help the child in character building which is the foundation needed for academic success. In order to achieve this important collaboration, an ambience of friendship, trust, and confidence is necessary.

For the purpose of this study, we have chosen the primary channel of this collaboration between the home and the school as the tutorial system. In this paper, the presenter examines the impact of the Tutorial System Method on secondary school students' academic performance and personal development. The study evaluates the effectiveness of personalised attention and guidance provided through the tutorial system in improving students' understanding of their professional competency as lifelong learners whose significant role is to become catalysts for identifying and catering to the needs of their society. It also explores the influence of the tutorial system on students' critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and overall academic engagement. It delves into the benefits and challenges of implementing a tutorial system in schools and recommends tried and effective integration strategies within the existing educational framework.

Results will show areas of decline and incline and the factors attributed to these, particularly in the 2020/2021 session, where we recorded an unusually high value in academic performance and a decrease in disciplinary issues despite the low participation in the tutorial sessions. This outcome would provide context for further study on the importance of the physical learning environment on the child's overall development.

## **2. The Tutorial System In The Context Of Student Formation**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The Tutorial System is a pedagogical method that involves one-on-one interaction between students and assigned tutors. It is hinged on three principles; personalised learning, formative guidance, and parent-tutor collaboration.

Sanchez, Bauer, and Paronto in their study, *Peer-mentoring freshmen: Implications for satisfaction, commitment, and retention to graduation* provided detailed context and approach to the implementation of the system within the University framework. The team of authors noted that the tutorial not only provided additional academic support in smaller groups as an accompaniment to the lectures but also created an avenue where close relationships are

established between students and their tutors. The outcome of the tutorial relationship is the opportunity for the tutor to act as a guide and coach, supporting students in acquiring other skills that can improve their strategies for learning and personal leadership. (Sanchez, R. J., T. N. Bauer and M. E. Paronto, 2006)

The tutorial system is akin to the University establishment. While the literature provides details on how tutorials are conducted, it does not provide a clear definition of tutorials. Mills & Alexander 2013 in their study *Small group teaching: A toolkit for learning. The Higher Education Academy* opined that the concept of a tutorial system continues to evolve over time due to the dynamism of the practice. It is this dynamism and flexibility that allows for the benefits of tutorials to be carried into non-academic spheres of learning.

In the journal publication *Alternatives to the conventional 'Oxford' tutorial model: a scoping review. Int J Educ Technol High Educ 18, 29 (2021)*, Balwant and Doon in trying to adopt a definition for tutorial, conducted a web search across the top 10 universities ranked by the Times Higher Education in 2020. The web search revealed that the definitions provided by the various universities shared four main features. Firstly, tutorials are personalized and done in small groups and one-on-one. Second, the atmosphere created by the personalized attention provided an avenue for deeper engagement on the studied subject. Third is the development of future skills that drive academic success, including problem-solving, critical thinking, and confidence. Lastly, tutorials are student-centered as there is a high level of interaction between the two parties-tutor and student.

The definition that provides a better context to the tutorial system that this paper suggests is based on the Romana 72, 2015 publication on Nuova Secondaria as researched by Professor Giuseppe Zaniello on the tutorial system. His research builds on the implicit pedagogy of Josemaria Escriva which emphasizes the need for equity in education and the importance of giving personalized attention to each student based on a relationship of trust and done in an atmosphere of freedom and personal responsibility.

The tutorial system focuses on educating with respect for the dignity of the human person. The attention given to each student is based on a personalised plan, that makes the student feel valued and appreciated, thus positively impacting her development. The collaborative approach of this method of tutorial awakens the favourable disposition of parents towards school and home partnerships. The formation given aims to collaborate with and support the parents in their primary and inalienable responsibility of forming and educating their children.

Evans, Borriello, and Fields affirm that the transition from primary school to secondary education is one of the most difficult periods in a young person's life. It can have adverse consequences on the individual's psychological well-being and academic performance. They emphasize the possible reasons in the journal publication: *A Review of the Academic and*

*Psychological Impact of the Transition to Secondary Education.* They further emphasized that these negative impacts may as a result of the transition that coincides with early adolescence, a period during which certain psychological disorders become more salient and marked social, biological, and psychological development occurs. They also assert that the home and school community have an important role to play in making sure this transition is as successful as possible. The latter phase of secondary education can prove to be notably demanding for students due to typical challenges linked with this developmental period. Consequently, students often require substantial guidance and support at this stage. This is precisely the focus of the tutorial sessions; to address and cater to these needs.

While the tutorial system serves as a tool for fostering an inclusive learning and development experience for students, it also targets the formation of the personal value system of each student, in essence, habits, and behaviours. Each tutor within the tutorial framework demonstrates a personal commitment to growth and team cohesion among tutees that allows for accountability while still allowing each member of the tutored team to be personally responsible for their development; thus, respecting the freedom of each student. The opening up to interpersonal relationships is fostered in the tutorial community and the whole community by a desire to work for the common good.

## **2.2. Method (Case Study/Data Review)**

Through case studies, the author evaluates the effectiveness of the Tutorial System Method across various academic disciplines and learning environments. The data analysis technique that was employed considers the frequency of tutorial meetings in relation to academic performance and behavioural issues. The focus group were students from year 7 to 12. The study looked at the tutorial frequency of this group of children over a period of four academic sessions, from 2019 to 2023.

The quantitative research data collection method was employed whereby information was gathered from the tutor's record books and analysed. This was compared with data gathered on academic performance and behavioural issues. The parameters of attendance, student grade, and disciplinary cases were used as key performance indicators

The educational context under which this study was carried out, is that which enhances inclusive education where every actor within the student's educational framework is actively involved in the education of the child. To ensure the effectiveness of this pedagogical method, tutors within the school community are trained by professionals before tutees are assigned to them based on the student's personal circumstances and family background.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of this process and that the objectives set for this study were met, some external tutors were brought in to handle the tutorial sessions, as the number of existing tutors was not sufficient. There was also a need to reduce the tutor-to-tutee ratio to

1:15. This was in order to ensure the effectiveness of the whole process so a tutor does not have more tutees than what she can effectively cater to.

The first tutorial meeting is held at the beginning of the term. The meeting involves the parents, the tutor, and the tutee setting specific learning goals and objectives for the term based on previous performance and the present circumstances of the tutee. These are then recorded in the tutorial handbook of each tutee and signed by both parents and tutees. This ensures accountability and that each party is clear on her specific role.

Subsequent tutorial meetings between the tutor and the tutee are held every two weeks. The frequency of these meetings could be increased depending on the individual's needs. Once the termly goals have been set, they are then followed up in the bimonthly meetings between tutees and their tutors. And between parents and the tutee. In the middle of the term, there is an assessment of both academic and overall behaviour to ensure they are aligned with the goals set at the beginning of the term. This is usually the second meeting involving the students, the tutor, and the parents. The results are evaluated and possible realignments are made at this stage.

Regular feedback is also communicated to parents via different means to ensure they are aligned with the improvements or challenges encountered during the term. Tutors check students' updates to ensure that they are making progress and to make necessary interventions where there are gaps.

### 2.3. Result and discussion.

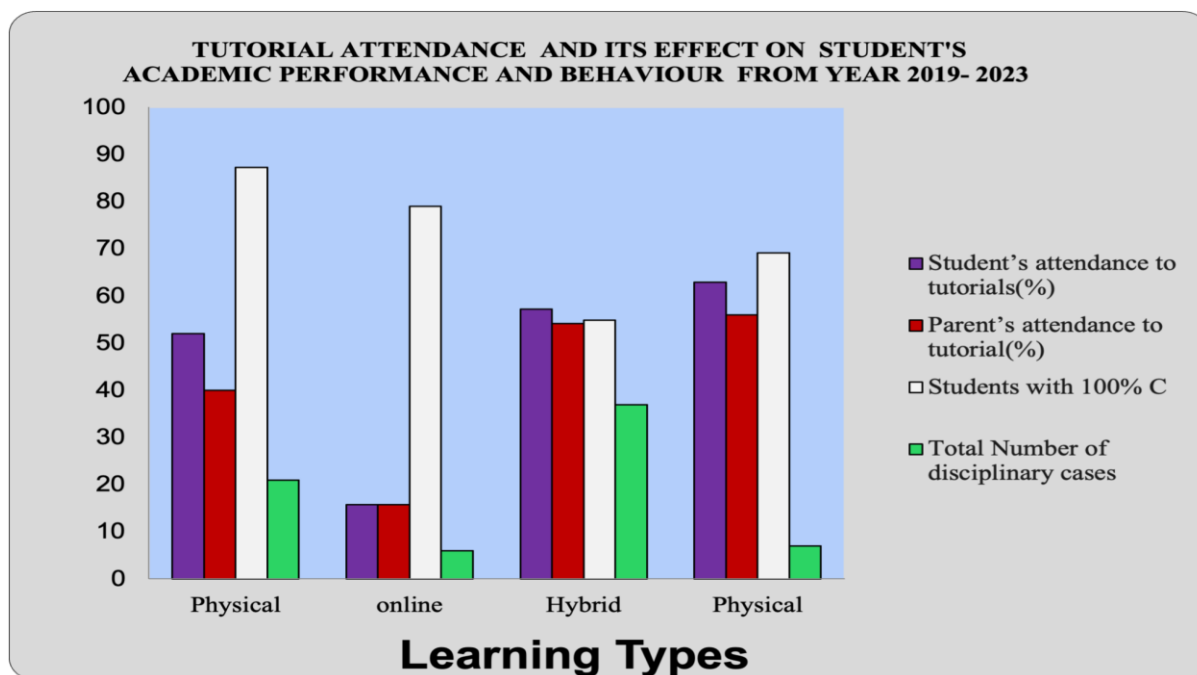
The bar chart and the table below, represent the frequency of parents' and students' attendance to tutorials and how it affected the personal and academic performance of each student in the years 2019 to 2023. The result shows an improvement in academic performance from the 2021/2022 academic session to the 2022/2023 session.

**Fig.1: Table**

<b>TUTORIAL ATTENDANCE AND ITS EFFECT ON ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIOUR FROM YEAR 2019- 2023( PRE, DURING &amp; POST COVID)</b>					
<b>Learning Type</b>	<b>Physical</b>	<b>online</b>	<b>Hybrid</b>	<b>Physical</b>	<b>School Year</b>
	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	
<b>Student's attendance to</b>	52	15.75	57.23	62.96	<b>2019/2020</b>

tutorials(%)					
Parent's attendance to tutorial(%)	40	15.75	54.18	56.04	2020/2021
Students with 100% C	87.29	79.06	54.92	69.09	2021/2022
Total Number of disciplinary cases	21	6	37	7	2022/2023

**Fig. 2: Bar chart.**



Although there were fewer tutorial sessions, in the 2020/2021 session, the results presented show a high percentage of the student's academic performance and a decrease in disciplinary issues. This result raised some exceptions and observations. Firstly, the decline in participation created a gap that caused students to engage in unfavourable learning practices, which affected performance outcomes. Secondly, deep learning did not occur during the pandemic years as student performance dropped sharply below expectations upon school return to physical learning. We also saw an unusually high number of disciplinary cases associated with disruptive behaviour in the school years under consideration.



This goes further to suggest that increased participation in tutorial sessions not only improves academic performance but also reduces the number of disciplinary cases associated with disruptive behaviour. This observation implies that when there is an increase in students' negative behaviour, naturally, there would be a decline in the academic performance of the students. However, in the following school year, the 2022/ 2023 session, where there was higher participation in the tutorial sessions by both students and parents, an increase in the percentage of students with 100% credit from 54.92 to 69.09 was observed, and a drastic decline in the number disciplinary cases from 37 to 7.

This was a result of a deliberate attempt at ensuring not only that the tutorials happened but that a standard and a clear set of guidelines, norms, and expectations were given to tutors. Integration of the tutorials into the whole school schedule and including this parameter as a key performance indicator for all tutors was also implemented. Several external professional tutors were brought in to ensure that the ratio of tutor to tutee remained at 1:15. Though this was very helpful, one must also state here that it is not necessarily the best. I have included my recommendations for this at the end of this paper.

The results presented above also show an interesting correlation between the increased frequency of students' and parents' participation in the tutorial sessions and academic achievement and overall personal development.

The number of disciplinary cases recorded was minimal as tutorial sessions were drastically reduced, so the tutors and the teachers could not track the emergence of unacceptable behaviour. Hence, they were not recorded. Very few of them appeared in the data provided for this study. This does not in any way suggest that the disciplinary cases were fewer; instead, they highlight the importance of tutorial sessions in tracking both favourable and unfavourable developments.

A noteworthy discovery from this study reveals that the most significant count of disciplinary incidents was recorded among students in years 10 and 11. These years encapsulate adolescence, a crucial phase that emphasises the importance of guidance and tutorial support. The findings from this research underscore the fact that their inability to engage in tutorial sessions substantially contributed to the figures documented in the 2020/2021 academic session.

#### **2.4. Challenges and Recommendations for Optimizing the Tutorial System Method**

There are several challenges affecting this system of education. One is the non-availability of trained tutors who can work with young adults.

Tutors should be full-time staff who work in the same environment as their tutees. As earlier mentioned in this paper, it was observed that the highest disciplinary issues stemmed not only from the year 10 and 11 students but also from those whose tutors were not working in the same school environment, even though these tutors are qualified and highly experienced. It is essential to accompany the students closely during this challenging period of growth. Hence, the regular absence of either parents or the tutor will adversely affect the intended outcome of the tutorial objectives and goals.

This study, therefore, recommends that having full-time staff as tutors whenever possible is optimal. Their in-depth knowledge and understanding of the school environment where their tutees are, and their ready availability to attend to the needs of their tutees can go a long way in enhancing the effectiveness of the tutorial system.

Secondly is the lack of integration of technology and the inability to put automated systems in place that can help with data collection. The Integration of technology allows information to be available to both tutors and parents in real time. This would help to ensure the tutorials are identifying gaps that should be addressed and targeting areas of need with effective intervention strategies. This integration streamlines data collection, recording, and analysis, maximising the system's benefits.

Proper timetabling and inclusion of the tutorials in the whole school plan would go a long way in ensuring that the tutorials hold as at when due. Timetabling would also help to ensure the external tutors can come in regularly when there is a dire need for them. Allowances should be made in the whole school schedule for building and leveraging team benefits within each tutorial unit. In other words, a day should be set aside for group tutorials.

A reward system for active participation in the tutorials would help foster stakeholder accountability. When stakeholders know their efforts and contributions are acknowledged, valued, and rewarded, they are more likely to engage actively and responsibly in the tutorial process.

Finally, group tutorials in which tutees of the same tutor can form a tutorial unit where common interests are shared and problems analysed by their peers should be encouraged. Finally, group tutorials in which tutees of the same tutor can form a tutorial unit where common interests are shared, and problems analysed by their peers should be encouraged. Peer-to-peer mentoring can be incorporated into this system, hence ensuring that one is getting maximum benefits from the tutorial process. These formative interactions could foster character-building, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills.



### **3. Conclusion.**

This system is human-focused and directed at the dignity of the person. It fosters whole-person education, which is the basis for academic success and the recipe for students' success in resilience emotional and social stability, as the moral compass needed to excel in an ever-changing world.

Evans and Borriello suggest in their journal: *a review of the academic and psychological impact of the transition to secondary education*, that parents and schools could aim to provide more social support during and following the transition from primary to secondary in order to increase the perceived support felt by adolescents. They also concluded by saying that schools are encouraged to provide strategies that focus on the worries of children such as being lost or being bullied, in order to ensure a successful transition from primary to secondary time,. The tutorial system is effective in providing the most desired support for adolescents during the period of transition.

The tutorial system is communitarian because it encourages service, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, which are crucial to building a sustainable community. Both learners and the whole teaching community stand to gain from this because communitarian ethics and respect for the dignity of the human person guide it.

The tutorial system provides leadership opportunities. Older students can help the younger ones within the same tutorial micro units. The older ones take leadership roles, creating a family unit within the tutorial system, harnessing the benefits of team building and collaboration within each tutorial unit, thus giving room to shared experiences. Friendships are forged, families are brought together, and characters are formed to ensure improved performance in academic and personal development.

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