

Hexis Plus Tutoring Conference - "Expanding your tuition network"

I've now been tutoring for seven years and I wish to share with you today some of my experiences in tutoring as well as the role of The Tutors' Association in supporting the profession and all those working in it. I understand there are three distinct audiences here of graduates, tutors and tuition companies so I hope you can all find something worthwhile to take from this.

My own tuition journey started in 2008 when a legal friend from a Classics summer school almost a decade before met me for pre-Christmas drinks. She knew I was in the process of applying for pupillage to practice at the Bar and that I was also applying for temporary roles in the meantime. We were reminiscing when I mentioned that I had been tutored in Classical Greek during my teenage years.

"Have you ever tried tutoring?" she asked. She told me that she had done some and it had made her good pocket-money during her studies at Oxford. From that point I looked into it and found a tutoring website where I could advertise my profile and I awaited my first enquiry, while I continued to look for legal work.

After Christmas I had been accepted for a six month placement in a Chambers researching insurance law. On my first week there, by sheer coincidence, my first tuition enquiry came through. I was asked to help a boy get from a D in his Latin mock-GCSE to a more respectable grade. Within three months he did it. By the August we found he had received an A*, all his hard work had paid off. The sense of reward and delight at his achievement was overpowering. It is such a great opportunity to share your passion and knowledge of a subject with others who are willing to learn.

I began to channel money earned from new clients into a Justice Mission in East Africa in summer 2010 and continued tutoring thereafter. It wasn't really until 2012 that things moved up a gear when another legal friend, who also tutored, told me about tuition agency work. I signed up and within three months I had gathered thirty students in London and had been sent to Shanghai to tutor a boy for his scholarship over the summer. It was very clear to me where my career was heading at this point, and by the end of that year I had been presented with a tutoring award. Since then I have tutored all over London, and on placements all over Europe and Asia both face-to-face and online. I hope this demonstrates to all the graduates and new tutors here today that tutoring in the UK is a flourishing industry, full of opportunity.

Founded in October 2013, The Tutors' Association is an industry-led initiative to provide much needed professional recognition for private tutors, reassurance for parents in selecting a tutor and to provide a responsible, representative voice for the profession in the UK. Finally, and importantly, it gives tutors a support network and community to share insights, challenges and exchange ideas.

It represents a broad spectrum of supplementary education – individual tutors, agencies, tuition centres, franchisees and online tuition. Tutoring is a multi-billion pound industry and it is the Association's aim to establish tutoring as a normal and desirable part of the educational landscape in the UK. Tutoring is widespread, yet it is still seen by many as something of an unfortunate necessity rather than a legitimate and complementary part of helping children to reach their full potential. As part of being the voice of the industry in representing and promoting best practice in tutoring, we are already establishing dialogues and relationships not only with tutors, but with parent groups, schools, universities, teachers, the media and with government. We seek to create a positive perception of

tutoring as a professional, quality, responsible, non-elitist, complementary and genuinely affordable option for parents as part of the broad spectrum of education.

This past year has also seen the Association begin to host events for its members, with five so far: relieving anxiety in children, fostering happiness and heroism in children and growing your tuition business and two on dyscalculia training. We believe that getting tutors together at events such as these is an integral part of helping tutors both to hone their skills and to build a wider network of contacts. We have even been developing a podcast with some of our members, where they discuss the benefits of tutoring. We are also looking at ways to formalise a CPD programme alongside the University of Buckingham, to help raise the profile of tutoring as a professional career path. I have represented the Association at company events in London, the Midlands, in Edinburgh, the Education Show in Birmingham, the BETT Conference in London, and the Education Festival at Wellington College to help spread the word about the role that tutoring has to play. We are in the final stages of organising our first National Tutoring Conference: "Creating a Legacy of Learning" which will be held at Stowe School on Monday October 24th, which will include a series of workshops provided by education experts, bookmarked by two keynote speakers: Ariana Azad from One Degree and the former All-Blacks International rugby captain Sean Fitzpatrick. It looks set to be an exciting event and a great way to meet others in the industry, and it is another opportunity for members to expand their tutoring network. We would be delighted to welcome you on the day.

We now have close to 400 members, 150 of whom are tuition companies representing many thousands of tutors across the UK. We are open, democratic and inclusive and there is a real opportunity for members to shape the Association to ensure that it meets their needs and wants both today and into the future.

As a member, you not only have the opportunity to participate, network and collaborate with others, but to take advantage of a growing list of membership benefits for tutors, encompassing a broad range of professional and financial support services, a free legal helpline, a DBS renewal service, discounts on academic resources and branding for stationery and for your business – as well, of course, as a certificate and designatory letters. Just like me, all members also have the opportunity to stand for the Board and participate on panels, shaping the direction of the Association and helping it become a thought-leader for the industry. You can share information, problems and advice with other tutors, get access to information you need, put the power of the brand at your disposal, align yourself with best practice, be part of the voice of the industry. In its development years, now is the perfect time to get involved. And as well as shaping the future of the Association, you have almost limitless opportunities to grow your own contacts, skills and networks.

For companies employing or getting work for tutors, being a member of the Association is public proof of your commitment to the sector. We can help you to get your voice heard, and moderate government interference, as well as creating a community of like-minded people and organisations whose combined strength is greater than that of any individual one.

In terms of creating more business for tutors, the TTA brand is increasingly recognised by the public, and they see it as standing for responsible, professional tuition. The buyers of tuition services know that when they choose a TTA member for their child's tuition, they are getting the certainty that that tutor has a DBS certificate and that they have signed up to a professional code of conduct. With the increasing calls in the press and in government for some kind of regulation over this issue, I believe that there will be increasing preference shown towards TTA members over non-members – and that this trend will grow over the coming years. So joining the TTA is not just an expression of commitment, but it confers commercial benefit as well. And as parents increasingly show preference for TTA members, as they will, that makes it a great way to expand your network of clients as well as networking with other tutors.

So in these formative years, can I urge you to join us. The more members, the greater the credibility. The greater the credibility, the more being a part of TTA will matter. And though young, we are already having influence. We are taken seriously. By establishing relationships with all our stakeholders, and by listening to members' needs and aspirations, we have the power to influence our industry for good. The late Steven Beeley, our former Treasurer and co-founder of the Association, recognised this and brought enormous energy and passion to making sure the Association would be a success. We mourn his untimely death, but the establishment of the TTA as a viable and thriving membership body is the greatest tribute to him. He helped to create a genuine tutoring community in the UK; tutoring no longer needs to be an isolated and solitary profession. When I started tutoring seven years ago I felt as if I was the only one in the world tutoring! But tutors today now have a go-to point of contact to get to know more about tutoring, expand their network, and enable them to flourish throughout their career.

There is an African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." With your support, great things can happen, raising the profile of tutoring and helping it continue to thrive. With further growth and participation, together we can all support each other and make the profession stronger within this growing network and the educational landscape in the UK. Thank you.

Adam Muckle

September 2016