



Reframing course tutoring through coaching and mentoring: implications for learner development in higher Education

Duminda Rajasinghe & Tolulope Fadipe

To cite this article: Duminda Rajasinghe & Tolulope Fadipe (26 Feb 2026): Reframing course tutoring through coaching and mentoring: implications for learner development in higher Education, Human Resource Development International, DOI: [10.1080/13678868.2026.2633994](https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2026.2633994)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2026.2633994>



© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 26 Feb 2026.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 16



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Reframing course tutoring through coaching and mentoring: implications for learner development in higher Education

Duminda Rajasinghe  and Tolulope Fadipe 

Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, UK

ABSTRACT

This perspective paper examines coaching and mentoring practices of course tutors within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK. Course tutors' roles vary across institutions under different titles, including personal tutors and academic mentors. HEIs recognise the value of these roles due to awareness of the multi-faceted pressures confronting learners. However, limited empirical research and professional practice highlight complexities in the design, development, and implementation of effective policies and strategies. Although coaching and mentoring are established as a learning and development initiative in commercial contexts, such practices in HEIs are limited. This imbalance is partly attributable to incentives associated with workplace coaching, compared to HEIs where such practices are embedded within academic workloads. Moreover, academics may see these practices as a burden, undertaken without formal training. Readiness to engage with coaching and mentoring is also uneven, among undergraduates compared to postgraduate learners. These challenges lead to a knowledge and practice gap that warrants critical reflection and collaborative inquiry involving multiple stakeholders. Drawing on theoretical links between coaching and learning, alongside our practices at Nottingham Business School, we offer insights into how coaching and mentoring-informed course tutoring enhance learner development, academic practice, and institutional approaches to personalised learning within HEIs. This perspective paper examines coaching and mentoring practices of course tutors within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK. Course tutors' roles vary across institutions under different titles, including personal tutors and academic mentors. HEIs recognise the value of these roles due to awareness of the multi-faceted pressures confronting learners. However, limited empirical research and professional practice highlight complexities in the design, development, and implementation of effective policies and strategies. Although coaching and mentoring are established as a learning and development initiative in commercial contexts, such practices in HEIs are limited. This imbalance is partly attributable to incentives associated with workplace coaching, compared to HEIs where such practices are

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 6 February 2026
Accepted 13 February 2026

KEYWORDS

Course tutoring in HE;
coaching and mentoring;
student experience; learning
and development

CONTACT Duminda Rajasinghe  duminda.rajasinghe@ntu.ac.uk

© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

embedded within academic workloads. Moreover, academics may see these practices as a burden, undertaken without formal training. Readiness to engage with coaching and mentoring is also uneven, among undergraduates compared to postgraduate learners. These challenges lead to a knowledge and practice gap that warrants critical reflection and collaborative inquiry involving multiple stakeholders. Drawing on theoretical links between coaching and learning, alongside our practices at Nottingham Business School, we offer insights into how coaching and mentoring-informed course tutoring enhance learner development, academic practice, and institutional approaches to personalised learning within HEIs.

1. Introduction

In the unprecedentedly changing context of UK HEIs, learners face academic, financial, and social pressures shaped by the career and life decisions they must navigate during university education. Meeting these demands requires personal development that extends beyond traditional classroom learning. Lectures and seminars facilitate subject knowledge, but offer limited opportunities to understand learners' motivations, challenges, learning styles, cultural contexts, and aspirations. Most HEIs offer additional support and pastoral care for learners to thrive, with personal tutoring (course tutoring, academic mentoring) being a well-established initiative practiced for decades. These interventions offer evident benefits, but emphasis often falls on learners already in difficulty, making them short-term, reactive measures that resemble crisis responses rather than informed, holistic approaches to developmental support. Therefore, these practices often prove ineffective in addressing complex and unique challenges learners face in today's Higher Education (HE) context. Furthermore, Jones and Smith (2022) attest that student support services are inconsistently delivered and primarily targeted at learners who actively seek support, rendering them insufficiently inclusive when considered from a broader learning and developmental perspective.

In response to the multifaceted challenges learners face, ranging from academic pressures to developmental gaps, coaching and mentoring have emerged as effective interventions. By offering personalised, relational, and non-directive support, these practices foster resilience and facilitate meaningful learner development. Scholars (Garvey & Stokes, 2022; Rajasinghe & Allen, 2020) assert that coaching and mentoring are fundamentally supportive in learning and development relationships and uniquely positioned to address the limitations of traditional educational approaches. However, research on this phenomenon within HEI context is limited, and current practices appear to be disconnected from institutional and learning and teaching strategies indicating a need for further research and practitioner insights to deepen our understanding of this phenomenon.

In this perspective paper, we outline current challenges associated with course tutoring and explore theoretical connections between coaching and mentoring and learning and development. We present coaching and mentoring informed course tutoring practices at Nottingham Business School (NBS), Nottingham Trent University (UK) as a case

study, and link them with theoretical constructs. Critically exploring unique insights from a recognised business school, and sharing our experiences, we aim to spark critical reflections among HEIs, academics, and learners. Such reflections may stimulate wider research, inform evidence-based policy, and encourage more intentional engagement with coaching and mentoring practices for academics and learners. This contribution is timely as learner success extends beyond personal accomplishments to influence the reputational and economical sustainability of HEIs (Campbell & Mogashana, 2025). Moreover, such practices support learners' career choices, skills development, and transition into work (see Nabi et al., 2025), while also aligning with workplace development practices and promoting the emotional and professional readiness of future workforce. Therefore, initiatives like this have the potential to address current HRD challenges in ensuring workforce readiness of our graduates (CSJ, 2026).

2. Challenges in course tutoring practices in UK higher education

Course tutoring in UK Higher Education has historically followed a reactive, interventive model, where tutors respond to learner-initiated concerns rather than proactively anticipating developmental needs (Wakelin, 2023). While this model offers operational convenience, it often neglects the subtle and evolving challenges learners face, thereby limiting opportunities for holistic engagement. At institutional level, this manifests in procedural meetings that lack depth, reinforcing perceptions of course tutoring as a compliance-driven exercise rather than a developmental intervention (Seraj & Leggett, 2023). Such transactional approaches risk undermining the transformative potential of tutoring for learners and its alignment with broader educational objectives.

We observed that practical implementation of tutoring is hindered by structural barriers like institutional inertia, insufficient staff training, and competing priorities (Guccione & Hutchinson, 2021). These challenges manifest through rigid workload planning, limited autonomy within tutoring initiatives, and inadequate professional development, resulting in inconsistent practices by colleagues within the sector. Increasing pressures to meet research and administrative targets further marginalises tutoring, positioning it as supplementary rather than integral to learners' experience. This is compounded by the absence of coherent, university-wide strategies, which create significant variability in tutoring quality across courses and individual tutors (Nabi et al., 2025). Consequently, learners' access to effective support depends on localised course cultures and individual commitment rather than a systematic approach. This causes fragmented learner experiences and inequitable outcomes, while opportunities to align tutoring with broader priorities like widening participation and wellbeing remain largely unrealised.

Resource constraints further compound these challenges due to lack of sustained relational engagement that is rarely achievable within standard contact hours, particularly in contexts characterised by high student-to-staff ratios (Kapoutzis et al., 2024; Pritchard et al., 2025). This translates into ongoing tension between the pedagogical idea of personalised support and the practical realities of limited time and competing responsibilities. Moreover, the ever-changing nature of HEIs' priorities, often dictated by external performance metrics and funding cycles, causes discontinuity, with initiatives gaining prominence only during specific reporting periods. Such seasonal attention

results in fragmented implementation, where initiatives were temporary and failed to be embedded within the fabric of academic practice (Jones & Munro, 2025). This lack of sustained commitment undermined trust and continuity, leaving tutors and learners navigating a HE environment where support structures feel transient and transactional (Hall & Liva, 2021, p. 7)

Our experience shows that one-off interventions rarely foster the depth of learning required for students to navigate future challenges. These interventions often feel transactional, constrained by time in design and institutions' pressure to deliver quick fixes. Such practices lack continuity and meaningful engagement with learners' evolving needs. The intermittent nature of existing practices undermines any relational foundation, leaving tutors unable to establish the depth of connection necessary for impactful learning relationships.

Emerging literature advocates for a developmental model of tutoring, integrating coaching and mentoring principles to foster autonomy, resilience, and reflective learning (Gamage et al., 2021). Techniques such as active listening, empathy, and collaborative goal setting, hallmarks of coaching, are widely recognised for their capacity to enhance learners' experience (Seraj & Leggett, 2023). However, their adoption remains inconsistent across UK universities, constrained by entrenched reliance on reactive practices and episodic interventions. This inconsistency reflects a systemic failure to embed coaching and mentoring within institutional frameworks, thereby limiting their scalability and sustainability. Therefore, such practices require scholarly attention, practitioner insights, policy, and leadership support to ensure their positive impact. This paper provides insights into the practice of incorporating coaching and mentoring in course tutoring and positions these practices within the extant literature.

3. Coaching and mentoring as a learning and development practice

Coaching and mentoring are associated with multiple meanings, driven by variations in application, the range of contexts in which they occur, stakeholder perceptions, and commercial, ethical, and practical considerations (Garvey & Stokes, 2022). These meanings and interpretations add complexity and confusion, making the terms difficult to comprehend in both theory and practice. Moreover, coaching and mentoring are often seen as differently focused interventions that require similar knowledge, understanding, and skillsets. Given the emphasis of this paper, we do not intend to explore diversity of meanings and interpretations of coaching and mentoring or engage in the ongoing debate on differences and definitions. Rather, we use the terms interchangeably and acknowledge the developmental discourse of coaching and mentoring since its inception.

Despite its popularity as a developmental intervention, scholars highlight the need to establish explicit links between coaching and learning theories (Hurlow, 2022). Within HE, coaching and mentoring as learning and development practices (Hillman et al., 2024; Jones & Smith, 2022) are sparsely used compared to their application in commercial context. Although early recognition of mentors in undergraduate education is evident (Jacobi, 1991), existing literature in HEIs does not explicitly focus on the learners' learning and development (Campbell & Mogashana, 2025; Le et al., 2024). Current research largely examines outcomes such as employability (Jones & Smith, 2022; Nuis et al., 2024), student

engagement (Gamage et al. 2021), personal and professional development (Hakro & Mathew, 2020), career development (Nabi et al., 2025), wellbeing of educators and learners (Kutsyuruba & Godden, 2019), benefits of peer mentoring (Dixon et al., 2023), and learners' reflective capacity (Nuis et al., 2024, 2025). For instance, Hillman et al. (2024) explored the holistic experience of Black learners undertaking coaching and mentoring in UK HEIs. Therefore, a critical reflection on current practices of coaching and mentoring within HEIs is needed, particularly from a learning and development perspective.

3.1. Integrating coaching and mentoring within learning and development practice

Whilst appreciating the diversity of meanings and practices of coaching and mentoring, we position coaching as a social activity informed by humanist philosophy, which is about 'individuals having the right to give meaning and shape to their own lives' (Garvey, 2017, p. 684). We consider coaching as a 'process of joint meaning making' (Bachkirova, 2017, p. 31) between academics and learners within the HEI context. Therefore, through our practice, we acknowledge learners' role in learning and development and the authority they hold in shaping their lives, learning, and their career choices. Coaching is known for providing a safe, supportive space for learners to reflect on experiences and predispositions, with the coach acting as a non-judgemental sounding board for critical conversations. This process enables learners to make sense of their praxis (Kolb, 1984), challenge predispositions (Mezirow, 1991), and develop authority and internal resourcefulness (Knowles, 1975). Consequently, coaching and mentoring encourage learners to become critical reflective practitioners, a timely and relevant mode of learning (Cunliffe, 2002; Parker et al., 2020). Both self-reflexivity; the learner's ability to recognise how their assumptions hinder actions and progressive thinking, and critical reflexivity; the ability to challenge organisational and social practices, are vital for deepening understanding of how learning and development occurs and the actions deliver results (see Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015).

Reflexive and reflective practices is foundational in coaching and mentoring, intended to grant the coachee authority, appreciate humanism and recognise the resourcefulness individuals bring to shaping their learning and development. This enables learners to become more responsible and self-directed (Knowles et al., 2025). Therefore, coaching and mentoring are influential in generating intrinsic motivation among learners and enabling them to act willingly on their development (Rajasinghe & Garvey, 2023). Informed by this theoretical construct and our experience, we suggest that coaching and mentoring practices have the potential to offer holistic developmental support for learners within HEIs. However, we do not discard the importance of learning and teaching or other support initiatives offered by institutions, rather, we believe coaching and mentoring can help learners interpret these opportunities differently and utilise them effectively. It will also underscore the social nature of learning and support further critical reflection and deeper understanding of our current practices.

3.2. Learning and development shaped by social factors

Learning has been critiqued and explored from different perspectives. For example, Cunliffe (2002) challenges approaches that assume knowledge is objective, arguing that knowledge is contextual and involves questioning established discourses and predispositions. This position acknowledges multiple, co-existing, contrasting perspectives, and recognises the social nature of learning. Accordingly, we adopt this position, seeing learning as ‘less about objective observation and more about subjective conversations, less about facts and more about narratives’ (Drake, 2011, p. 145). In this context, diverse learner experiences ‘is important because it allows new relationships to form between learners, the objects of study and the context in which the experience emerges’ (Parker et al., 2020, p. 294).

Moreover, Mezirow (1991) signifies that learners should examine predispositions shaped by culture, experience, and education, as these confine learning. Also, Knowles (1975) emphasises adult learners’ ability as self-directed learners and the importance of treating them as resourceful individuals. The concept of ‘community of practice’ provides learners with opportunities for different experiences, reflective spaces, and challenges their predispositions, drawing on experiential, reflective, transformative and andragogical learning theories. This allows the community to take up low-risk activities and gradually transition towards full participation, a ‘move from legitimate peripheral participation into full participation’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 37). This raises the question of whether learning-outcomes-driven, and staged models of learning and teaching practices fully accommodate these theoretical perspectives within HEIs. We attest that classroom-based education is often teacher-led and narrowly focused on learning outcomes, which can hinder creativity, innovation, and learner diversity (see Rajasinghe & Allen, 2020). Such linear approaches have become embedded in practice that they are rarely questioned (Garvey, 2017), overshadowing the notion of learning as a process of gaining knowledge and expertise rather than a fixed outcome (Knowles et al., 2025).

Recognising these gaps, at Nottingham Business School (NBS), we developed our personalisation and experiential learning strategy, within which coaching and mentoring-informed course tutoring practice exists. This initiative aligns with the theoretical frameworks discussed above and the learning-oriented attributes of coaching and mentoring discussed in Integrating coaching and mentoring within learning and development practice. Therefore, despite acknowledging philosophical, theoretical and practical gaps in how coaching facilitates learning (see Hurlow, 2022), we argue that coaching and mentoring-informed course tutoring can positively influence learner development.

Having established these theoretical associations between coaching, mentoring and learning and development, the following section discusses implications for practice and elaborates on the transferability of our work practice at NBS, and its theoretical underpinnings.

4. Practical implications, a tailored way of student support

Based on above discussion, we argue that student outcomes, such as learning and development, learning experience, satisfaction, and employability, are shaped by intersecting factors including financial challenges, caring responsibilities, and diverse social

and ethnic backgrounds (Alzen et al., 2021; Nwosu, 2024). While traditional support interventions are valuable, they often lack the flexibility and responsiveness needed to fully accommodate these complexities. Campbell and Mogashana (2025) argue that although coaching enhances student success, its effectiveness is contingent on contextual adaptation and sustained institutional commitment. Without deeper integration into tutoring frameworks and more inclusive design, coaching and mentoring risk reinforcing existing disparities rather than mitigating them (see Shoukry, 2016). However, given appropriate institutional support, strategic focus and systemic readiness, coaching and mentoring-informed course tutoring can enhance student learning and development and ensure career readiness.

These implications extend beyond individual student outcomes. As learner success increasingly underpins the reputational and economic sustainability of HEIs (Campbell & Mogashana, 2025), we argue that coaching and mentoring-informed tutoring provides a strategic response to sector-wide challenges relating to learners' retention, wellbeing, and holistic learner experience. These practices support learners' career choices, skills development, and transition into work (Nabi et al., 2025), aligning higher education with workplace development practices and strengthening professional and emotional readiness for employment. From a human resource development perspective, these practices reflect core values of inclusion, sustainability, and human-centred development by addressing structural inequalities, foregrounding learner voice, and supporting long-term employability. As such, this approach has the potential to contribute to meaningful transformation across the HEIs in the UK and, with contextual adaptation, globally, to ensure positive individual, institutional and societal outcomes.

Having discussed practical implications, coaching, and mentoring informed course tutoring practice more broadly, the below section provides further insights by exploring our course tutoring practice at Nottingham Business School as a case study.

4.1. Nottingham Business School, a case study of coaching and mentoring informed tutoring

At Nottingham Business School, our coaching and mentoring practice within the BA Management and Human Resources programme is shaped by an experiential and personalised learning agenda. Drawing on humanistic principles (Garvey, 2011), we adopt a tailored approach that recognises learners as socially and culturally immersed beings with unique challenges and learning and developmental preferences. We view learning as a social process, and our role as course tutors extends beyond academic instruction. Support is offered holistically ranging from subject-specific guidance to active listening, mentoring conversations, and referrals to specialist services such as mental health or financial support. This flexible, student-centred model ensures that learners feel valued, heard, and supported in a non-judgemental and inclusive environment. By embedding coaching and mentoring into everyday academic interactions, we aim to foster resilience, promote personal growth, and enhance learners' overall experience.

Numerous individual stories illustrate the success of our practices, how learners move from near withdrawal to first-class degree completion, or from unclear career and developmental goals to gaining clarity, resilience, self-understanding, and intrinsic

motivation to learn, develop, and pursue fulfilling careers. These success stories are reinforced by course-level metrics such as the National Student Survey (NSS) at an average of 94% in the last three years across six course-related criteria and over 70% of students achieving a 2.1 or above in the same period. These outcomes evidence the impact of tailored support through our coaching and mentoring practices. Although we do not attribute these successes solely to coaching and mentoring, we are confident that our approach has been influential in achieving holistic results over the last three years.

Informed by our experience and wider research, we consider coaching and mentoring, where learners receive authentic, tailored support aligned with their current circumstances as a significant element in their learning, development, and overall experience. It fosters self-directed learners with the capacity to thrive beyond academia (Mezirow, 1991; Nabi et al., 2021). This may be achieved by critically exploring the practices below, adopted in our roles as course tutors.

- **Personalisation:** Understanding the distinctive nature of individuals, their needs, expectations, and how they make sense of learning and development is fundamental (Garvey & Stokes, 2022). Achieving this requires a trusting relationship between academic (coach/mentor) and the learner (coachee) (Baron & Morin, 2009; De Haan et al., 2020). Informed by this theoretical construct, we continue developing our relationship as equitable partners in a trusting space, as trust is known for improving student engagement (Holzer & Daumiller, 2025). The personalised and targeted support we offer aligns with andragogy (Knowles et al., 2025), which asserts that ‘adults learn best through learner-centered methodologies that enhance motivation, openness, and readiness to learn’ (J. Jones & Smith, 2025, p. 1). Our approach respects learner autonomy, views learners as resourceful individuals, and sparks intrinsic motivation. While this requires considerable time and effort, which is challenging in the current academic context, our experiences suggest that positive relationships with the learners are critical to successful coaching and mentoring interventions. At NBS, we benefit from personalisation as a lived praxis embedded in our teaching and learning strategy. Moreover, institutional policy and support remain salient in making these initiatives strategic, enabling resource allocation and fostering an environment where coaching and mentoring culture is embraced.
- **Consistency:** Continuous and consistent support benefits learners compared to random, inconsistent activities. Gamage et al. (2021) attest that consistent engagement builds trust (see above) and enables deeper issues to surface and be addressed. Sometimes, consistency simply means learners’ feeling support is available and that someone is there to turn to. At NBS, personalisation is embedded from day one through a dedicated course tutor, offering assurance of a ‘go-to-person who continuously endeavour to understand individual learners’ circumstances and coordinates wider support. This sustained relationship enhances learning, development, and attainment outcomes, strengthening the coach-learner dynamic and enabling effective engagement. Importantly, coaches/mentors must balance autonomy, with structure, maintain professional distance, and nurture the professional relationship (Nuis et al., 2025). We observed that consistency in coaching and mentoring cannot be sustained unless both the coach/mentor and the coachee/mentee are actively and

willingly engaged in the process; neither should it be ‘enforced’ on participating individuals. Where either party lacks commitment or fails to perceive its value, the practice risks becoming transactional and ineffective. It is imperative that both parties understand the purpose of their engagement and share a clear sense of their goals; this mutual clarity and investment are fundamental to building trust, sustaining momentum, and achieving meaningful developmental outcomes.

- **Holistic Support:** Learning and development, like coaching, are inherently social (Garvey, 2011). Reducing them to a few variables is impractical, as learning ‘theories are more complex than selection of statements concerning generic principles that have a universal application’ (Hurlow, 2022, p. 122). Stokes et al. (2021) reinforce this, arguing that learning is underpinned by ontological, epistemological, and axiological lenses. A holistic understanding of how coaching and mentoring facilitate learning, alongside the diverse realities and challenges learners’ face, is essential for effective support. Such approaches enable coaches to embrace various approaches for facilitating learning and development, since “different frameworks of ideas are ‘better’ at doing different things’ (Hurlow, 2022, p. 122) and have the potential to accommodate diverse learning and development needs. Equally, coaches and mentors should understand their own world views and how this shapes their practice. We argue that a critical exploration into the world views of both coaches and coachees places coaches in a position to offer holistic support by addressing emotional, psychological, and philosophical dimensions of challenges, helping learners remain engaged in their learning and development despite the difficulties they face (Alzen et al., 2021). These approaches have the potential to ‘liberate individuals and collective human potential’ (Caproni & Arias, 1997, p. 294) and advance the purpose of critical management education.
- **Encourage critical reflective and reflexive practice:** Reflexivity and reflection are central to coaching and mentoring practice. It involves self-inquiry into one’s own world views and those of others, enabling collective understanding of why and how people think and behave in different contexts (Mezirow, 1991). These approaches also reveal systemic barriers to learning and development, informed by the concept of double loop learning, where new experiences help learners reorganise cognitive structures and challenge existing world views (Du Toit, 2014). Such reorganisation allows learners to absorb new knowledge or deepen their understanding, but only when they have opportunities to reflect on their experiences. Reflective practice promotes self-discovery, which drives self-motivation and resulting actions (Rajasinghe & Garvey, 2023). Scholars such as Schön (1983), Mezirow (1991) established that intentionally revisiting life events enhances learners’ ability to handle challenges effectively. Furthermore, reflection helps learners recognise skills and knowledge gaps and learn through varied experiences which are fundamental in learning (Du Toit, 2014; Mezirow, 1991; Schön, 1983). Learning through reflexive and reflective practices is validated by experiential, transformative, and reflective learning theories, yet Boud et al. (1985, p. 8) noted that ‘the skill of experiential learning in which people tend to be the most deficient is reflection’ a point reinforced by more recent literature (Pretorius & Ford, 2016). Therefore, the support we extend through our coaching and mentoring practices for learners to reflect on their experiences and life events significantly influences how they perceive challenges and

Table 1. Course tutoring informed by coaching and mentoring for HRD implications.

Key theoretical perspectives	Core focus	Potential Implications
Philosophical and Relational elements	Humanist philosophy, Personalisation, Trust-based relationship	These create psychologically safe, equitable partnerships between tutors and learners, that enable learners to engage openly, critically and reflectively in their developmental journey
Learning Processes/ Mechanisms	Andragogy-informed, socially influenced, reflective and transformative learning practices through our tutoring practice	Coaching and mentoring-informed course tutoring activates learning processes/ practices through reflective dialogues, enhanced relationship and meaning-making conversations
Psychological Dimensions	Facilitates autonomy, trust, self-esteem, security, holistic support – consider learners as socially and culturally embodied.	These influences learners’ capacity and willingness for engagement and to change their current ways of being as a result of sparked intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, emotional and psychological insights and readiness to learn.
Behavioural changes	Feedback seeking, participation in communities of practice, support seeking and offering community support, result-orientation, critically reflexive and reflective individuals (reflective practitioners)	Such behavioural changes have the potential for employability, lifelong learning orientation, self-directed learning, and resilience which represent sustained human capital and social capital outcomes enabled by coaching and mentoring informed tutoring. Thus presents HRD implications.

understand their predispositions and make sense of learning and development in a different way, ultimately improving engagement and learning outcomes.

Informed by the theoretical positions outlined above and our practice. A summary of the discussion is presented below [Table 1](#).

5. Future research and practice opportunities

Our emphasis has largely been on the positive outcomes of our coaching and mentoring practices. Here, we outline some challenges and opportunities for research and practice. Bachkirova (2024, p. 215) argues that with practice dominating the focus over research, ‘the debates that are required for addressing difficult questions remain patchy and non-influential’. Similarly, Hurlow (2022, p. 121) highlights that despite claims that learning is central to coaching, there is a ‘temptation to fall back on habitual practice or to cherry-pick coaching tools and techniques’, often overlooking the worldviews underpinning learning theories. Therefore, philosophies behind coaching policies and practices should be critically examined (Bachkirova, 2024), and ‘for the theories of learning implicit in any discussion of coaching to be made explicit’ Hurlow (2022, p. 121). Establishing stronger links between coaching and learning theories would help practitioners and policy makers to understand their relevance within the context of HEIs where coaching and mentoring practices are relatively ineffective/under-used. We endorse Hurlow’s (2022) view, advocating for critical reviews of theoretical underpinnings that informs coaching practice (Du Toit & Sim, 2010; Shoukry, 2016) alongside reflective practice. Wider research and

practice projects into this phenomenon ensuring methodological heterogeneity and innovations (see Rajasinghe et al., 2024) are timely, given that ‘there are still a lot more work to discover what exactly makes coaching effective’ (De Haan et al., 2020, p. 165) and that ‘context specific best practice is limited’ (Jones & Smith, 2022, p. 214). More importantly, as outlined previously, current research in this domain is limited, particularly studies that focus on learning and development of individuals more holistically rather than focusing on elements such as wellbeing (see section 3). This demands more credible research that improves our current knowledge, practices, and policy.

Such research can strengthen the evidence base (Bachkirova, 2017; Garvey, 2011; Rajasinghe & Allen, 2020) that coaching deepens learning and development of coachees leading HEIs to reconsider the use of coaching and mentoring to support learner development. As HEIs continue to face challenges of personalisation of learning, the presented insights may provide institutions and policy makers with a way in and space for exploring possibilities of coaching and mentoring within the sector. Moreover, NBS case study strongly advocates for a strategic fit of these initiatives to ensure success. Unique insights presented within this perspective informed by both literature and case study organisational practice, may present opportunities for HEIs to reconsider their academic tutoring approaches. From a practice perspective within HEIs, particularly where academics act as coaches and mentors, relevant learning and development to improve the required skills is vital (see Burt et al., 2024). This does not imply certification but rather equipping academics with the knowledge to perform effectively. Resource allocation and funding remain challenging within UK HEIs, yet credible research and practitioner reflections and insights strengthen the evidence base to justify resource allocation.

Finally, social, cultural, diversity, and inclusion challenges can influence the uptake of coaching and mentoring. Rather than relying on anecdotal judgements about lack of student engagement, we as researchers and practitioners of coaching and mentoring should first understand these challenges and explore ways to mitigate them.

6. Conclusion

In this perspective paper, we explored the potential of coaching and mentoring as learning and development intervention. Presenting our coaching and mentoring informed course tutoring practice at Nottingham Business School as a case study, we aim to spark critical debates among HEI stakeholders. We offer practical guidance to enhance coaching and mentoring practices and help learners understand how these approaches foster development. We highlight the need for personalisation, holistic support and consistency, and reflective and reflexive spaces for both academics and learners, while inviting collaboration between coaching and mentoring enthusiasts on research and practice. We advocate that HEIs should embed coaching and mentoring into learning, teaching and student experience strategies, allocate sufficient resources, and extend leadership support. Training and development for academics acting as coaches and the readiness of learners to be coached can play a vital role in success. We reiterate gaps remain in theory and practice of coaching and mentoring; hence, research should continue to play its role in knowledge development. As coaching and mentoring enthusiasts, we acknowledge that our perspectives, while literature-informed and

critically grounded, may be perceived as biased. The scope of this paper limits our ability to explore potential negative consequences of coaching and mentoring practices, particularly where strategic coherence is lacking. Therefore, in conclusion, we invite all interested parties to approach both research and practice with greater criticality and reflexivity.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Duminda Rajasinghe  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7677-0691>
Tolulope Fadipe  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8228-9199>

References

- Alzen, J., Douglass, K., & Robison, R. (2021). Holistic academic mentoring: A model for supporting student success. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 43(4), 465–480. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2021.1930507>
- Bachkirova, T. (2017). Developing a knowledge base of coaching: Questions to explore. In T. Bachkirova & G. Spence, and D. Drake (Eds.), *Sage handbook of coaching* (Vol. 23–41, pp. 23–42). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Bachkirova, T. (2024). The purpose of organisational coaching: Time to explore and commit. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, 22(1), 214–233.
- Baron, L., & Morin, L. (2009). The coach-coachee relationship in executive coaching: A field study. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 20(1), 85–106. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.20009>
- Boud, D., Keogh, R., & Walker, D. (1985). *Reflection: Turning experience into learning*. Kogan Page.
- Burt, S., Rajasinghe, D., Garvey, B., Barosa-Pereira, A., & Clutterbuck, D. (2024). What do coaches actually do to learn and develop? A qualitative exploration of the development narratives of experienced coaches. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, 22(2), 80–97. <https://doi.org/10.24384/a16t-f341>
- Campbell, A. L., & Mogashana, D. (2025). Assessing the effectiveness of academic coaching interventions for student success in higher education: A systematic review. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 62(4), 1325–1347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2024.2417173>
- Caproni, P. J., & Arias, M. E. (1997). Managerial skills training from a critical perspective. *Journal of Management Education*, 21(3), 292–308. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105256299702100303>
- CSJ. (2026). Jobless graduates now claiming benefits, new analysis reveals. *Center for Social Justice*, 700, 000. Retrieved January 27, 2026, from <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/newsroom/700000-jobless-graduates-now-claiming-benefits>
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2002). Reflexive dialogical practice in management learning. *Management Learning*, 33(1), 35–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507602331002>
- De Haan, E., Molyn, J., & Nilsson, V. O. (2020). New findings on the effectiveness of the coaching relationship: Time to think differently about active ingredients? *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 72(3), 155–167. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000175>
- Dixon, B. T., Agboola, O., Hauck, A., Argento, M., Miller, C., & Vaughan, A. L. (2023). Peer mentoring: Benefits to first-time college students and their peer mentors. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 23(2), 202–217.

- Drake, D. (2011). What do coaches need to know? Using the mastery window to assess and develop expertise. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research & Practice*, 4(2), 138–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2011.596486>
- Du Toit, A. (2014). *Making sense of coaching*. Sage Publications Ltd.
- Du Toit, A., & Sim, S. (2010). *Rethinking coaching: Critical theory and the economic crisis*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gamage, K. A., Perera, D. S., & Wijewardena, M. D. N. (2021). Mentoring and coaching as a learning technique in higher education: The impact of learning context on student engagement in online learning. *Education Sciences*, 11(10), 574.
- Garvey, B., & Stokes, P. (2022). *Coaching and mentoring: Theory and practice* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Garvey, R. (2011). *A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about coaching and mentoring*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Garvey, R. (2017). Issues of assessment and accreditation of coaches. In T. Bachkirova, G. Spence, & D. Drake (Eds.), *Sage handbook of coaching* (pp. 680–695). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Guccione, K., & Hutchinson, S. (2021). *Coaching and mentoring for academic development*. Emerald Publishing.
- Hakro, A. N., & Mathew, P. (2020). Coaching and mentoring in higher education institutions: A case study in Oman. *International Journal of Mentoring & Coaching in Education*, 9(3), 307–322. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-05-2019-0060>
- Hall, W. A., & Liva, S. (2021). Mentoring as a transformative experience. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 29(1), 6–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2021.1899583>
- Hibbert, P., & Cunliffe, A. (2015). Responsible management: Engaging moral reflexive practice through threshold concepts. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 127(1), 177–188. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1993-7>
- Hillman, J., Lochtie, D., & Purcell, O. (2024). Black students' experiences of coaching and mentoring in higher education: A case study. *International Journal of Mentoring & Coaching in Education*, 13(2), 246–257. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-01-2023-0011>
- Holzer, A., & Daumiller, M. (2025). Building trust in the classroom: Perspectives from students and teachers. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 40(2), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-025-00961-7>
- Hurlow, S. (2022). Revisiting the relationship between executive coaching and learning: The problems and possibilities. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 21(1), 121–138. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2019.0345>
- Jacobi, M. (1991). Mentoring and undergraduate academic success: A literature review. *Review of Educational Research*, 61(4), 505–532. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543061004505>
- Jones, G., & Munro, E. (2025). A taught approach to personal tutoring. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 30(2), 278–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2024.2441216>
- Jones, J., & Smith, H. (2025). Editorial: Special issue editorial: Coaching and mentoring in the workplace, and its impact on learning at multiple levels. *International Journal of Human Resource Development: Practice, Policy & Research*, 9(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ijhrd-2025-0001>
- Jones, J., & Smith, H. A. (2022). A comparative study of formal coaching and mentoring programmes in higher education. *International Journal of Mentoring & Coaching in Education*, 11(2), 213–231. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-03-2021-0054>
- Kapoutzis, N., Whitley, L. A., Lewis, R., & Yarker, J. (2024). Developing coaching cultures: An exploration of the enacting practitioner perspective. *Journal of Work & Applied Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JWAM-06-2024-0079>
- Knowles, M. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*. Associated Press.
- Knowles, M., Holton, E. F., III, Robinson, P. A., & Caraccioli, C. (2025). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (10th Eds ed.). Taylor & Francis.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning*. Prentice Hall.

- Kutsyuruba, B., & Godden, L. (2019). The role of mentoring and coaching as a means of supporting the well-being of educators and students. *International Journal of Mentoring & Coaching in Education*, 8(4), 229–234. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-12-2019-081>
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Le, H. G., Sok, S., & Heng, K. (2024). The benefits of peer mentoring in higher education: Findings from a systematic review. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, 31(31). <https://doi.org/10.47408/jldhe.vi31.1159>
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.
- Nabi, G., Walmsley, A., Mir, M., & Osman, S. (2021). The impact of mentoring in higher education on student career development: A systematic review and research agenda. *Studies in Higher Education*, 50(4), 739–755. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2024.2354894/>
- Nabi, G., Walmsley, A., Mir, M., & Osman, S. (2025). The impact of mentoring in higher education on student career development: A systematic review and research agenda. *Studies in Higher Education*, 50(4), 739–755. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2024.2354894>
- Nuis, W., Lundquist, R., & Beausaert, S. (2025). Exploring master's learners' perceptions of mentoring support for reflection in a one-year employability-oriented mentoring program. *Higher Education*, 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-025-01449-5>
- Nuis, W., van der Baan, N. A., & Beausaert, S. (2024). Mentoring learners in higher education for reflection and development of employability competences: A pre-test post-test design. *Education+ Training*, 66(4), 408–430.
- Nwosu, C. (2024). Outcomes of a mentoring scheme to improve career engagement in academia among learners from minority ethnic groups. *Frontiers in Education*, 9, 1472953. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2024.1472953>
- Parker, S., Racz, M., & Palmer, P. (2020). Reflexive learning and performance failure. *Management Learning*, 51(3), 293–313. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507620903170>
- Pretorius, L., & Ford, A. (2016). Reflection for learning: Teaching reflective practice at the beginning of university study. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 28(2), 241–253.
- Pritchard, D. J., Kaya, S., Nethercott, K., & Briggs, S. (2025). Personal academic tutors and student continuation: The importance of establishing relationships. *Studies in Higher Education*, 51(2), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2025.2465698>
- Rajasinghe, D., & Allen, C. (2020). Coaching for workplace learning and development. In M. Loon, J. Stewart, & S. Nachmias (Eds.), *The future of hrd: Volume ii - change, disruption and action* (pp. 147–175). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rajasinghe, D., & Garvey, B. (2023). How experiencing executive coaching helps coachees feel they are independent learners and self-coaches: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, 21(2), 162–178.
- Rajasinghe, D., Garvey, B., Burt, S., Barosa-Pereira, A., & Clutterbuck, D. (2024). Innovative interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach in a coaching research project: Implications for future qualitative coaching research and beyond. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research & Practice*, 17(2), 301–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2024.2358771>
- Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. Jossey-Bass.
- Seraj, S., & Leggett, R. (2023). The challenges of personal tutoring in higher education: Applying a coaching approach at a UK higher education institution. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, 21(1), 85–98.
- Shoukry, H. (2016). Coaching for emancipation: A framework for coaching in oppressive environments. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, 14(2), 15–30.
- Stokes, P., P. F. D., & Otter, K. (2021). “Two sides of the same coin?” coaching and mentoring and the agentic role of context. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1483(1), 142–152.
- Wakelin, E. (2023). Personal tutoring in higher education: An action research project on how to improve personal tutoring for both staff and students. *Educational Action Research*, 31(5), 998–1013. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2021.2013912>