

PRIVATE TUTORING DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND PARENTS IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF KAZAKHSTAN

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Abstract. After the collapse of the Soviet Union there have been noticeable transformations from the socialist regime towards market-based system since the early 1990s, which encompassed a variety of economic and social issues including the education system. In most of the post-soviet countries including Kazakhstan several reforms have been implemented to provide effective learning opportunities for children. However, this process has led to serious consequences in terms of the equal access to quality education and quality of life. A free market system has contributed to the expansion of private tutoring involving the access to university education.

Key words: shadow education, private tutoring, social status, socio-political transformations.

The term ‘shadow education’ was coined by David Stevenson and David P. Baker (1992), which they defined it as an education establishment “having tight linkages between the outcomes of educational allocation in elementary and secondary schooling and future educational opportunities, occupations, or general social status” (p.1640). The practice of this trend in Japan can be a good example of its functioning as an open enterprise, while, in some other countries there exist some challenges in terms of its acknowledgement by public. For example, Russell (2002) defined private tutoring as “the secret lessons” in his research studies about the United Kingdom. Moreover, he added that tutoring seems to be one of “the most important yet least acknowledged factors” in a learner’s academic achievement (as cited in Bray & Silova, 2006, p.30). However, recently several scholars have started to consider it as “a part of an extensive culture of formal education” (Byun & Baker, 2015, p.4)

Private tutoring has been referred as “shadow education” by several researchers like Stevenson and Baker (1992) and Bray (1999) emphasizing the

glass wall between two educational systems. Although the term “shadow education” is often connotated negatively, but shadows do not always symbolize problems. Hence, they epitomize social changes just like the sun-shadows showing the stream of time (Bray, 2003, p.21).

There exist viable arguments for and against private tutoring in terms of the issues related to social inequalities and learners’ academic performance. The main concern lies in whether private tutoring increases parental choice and improve student achievement, or it may widen social inequalities and impose heavy costs on households. Nevertheless, according to Bray and Silova (2006), private tutoring can be considered effective both for the teachers and senior course students to earn income (Bray & Silova, 2006).

Next, it can be the right thing for the students with low academic performance to improve their knowledge. However, parents of the students with high performance apply a tutor as well. In the words of Hajar (2019), parents consider that the successful academic performance will ensure opportunities for more prosperous life (Hajar, 2019). Thus, they often seek the assistance of private tutors in some academic core subjects, which are included in the entrance examinations for highly selective schools and universities such as Nazarbayev Intellectual schools and Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan.

Private tutoring market used to be associated with a mirror distorting the educational system in the post-soviet countries including Kazakhstan. It was considered that this sector could misrepresent the state education system, which was founded on the principle of giving every learner free and equal chance to study (Silova, 2009). However, over the past years, private tutoring has mushroomed as it promises high academic achievements (Silova, 2009). At present, there are few studies on shadow education in Kazakhstan (Akimenko, 2017; Kalikova & Rakhimzhanova, 2009; Hajar & Abenova, 2021; Hajar, Sagintayeva & Izenkova, 2022).

In the research study of Hajar and Abenova (2021), there have firstly been mentioned about the participants' perceptions in the Kazakhstani context providing an accurate data according to the subjects, the participants' geographical and educational background, their gender and so on. In my study I will reflect the concerns of teachers, students and parents, who allow the learners to take extra lessons outside classroom.

Several researchers have studied the private tutoring in Nur-Sultan and Almaty, however, these studies do not cover the other demographic areas. The economy of the country is growing with the development of transportation, trade, commerce and other facilities including the international orientations, which implies the increase of job market demand. Hence, the private tutoring requires empirical studies providing insight into the actual situation of the educational system, which in turn shows the applicability and effectiveness of the legal norms regarding the private tutoring in the Kazakhstani context on a practical basis.

Previous research done by Kalikova and Rakhimzhanova (2009) on private tutoring has focused on six state universities in Almaty and secondary school in Shymkent. According to their research findings, students have private tutors either when they want to improve their academic performance in certain subjects or to overcome the lack of knowledge (Kalikova & Rakhimzhanova, 2009, as cited in Hajar, 2020). Another study investigating the expansion of this sector has added other reasons like "to gain places at highly competitive university" and to cope with complex situation during the COVID-19 outbreak (Hajar & Abenova, 2020, p.8). Besides, private tutoring can be considered "as a remedial strategy" as a response to "the poor quality of education in mainstream schools" (Silova, 2009, p.37). In this regard, Silova (2009) stated that with the Soviet dissolution, many countries in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan the quality of education has decreased. Thus, taking into consideration that Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan is implementing new reforms to adjust to

the transformational changes and major developments in society, there still exist some factors stressing the necessity of private tutoring.

It should be admitted that Kazakhstan is falling behind the times in terms of well-designed school textbooks production. The materials included in school textbooks and the questions included in the university entrance exams vary significantly, which necessitates intensive preparation.

Besides school teachers need special training to teach and prepare their students for the university admission exams. For example, English textbooks are different in different schools within one city. The materials on country study or literature of the English language are not included in most of these textbooks, as a result, it is hard to find high quality textbooks to prepare for the national entrance examination to a last year school student. The capacity of state schools is not so large to provide such materials both for the teachers and learners, while private tutoring involves a large variety of educational activities including workbooks with questions from previous examinations and conduct practice tests. The problem related to the content and form of teaching materials, in addition to that, orientation programs for teachers to prepare the last year students for the entrance exams fosters further development of private tutoring in Kazakhstan. The enrollment rating of the graduates indicate teachers' professionalism and the quality of school as a whole. Thus, this fact is subject to extremely careful development and refinement from the part of education policy makers. Since shadow education is held on a paid basis, it is not affordable to some families with limited income to rely on private tutoring. As such, private tutoring practice can pose certain issues related to social inequalities. This kind of economic, social and educational implications has drawn the attention of policy makers (Bray, 2009). As they are in charge of mainstream school systems, they can draw lessons from analyzing the scale and nature of shadow education. This analysis will contribute to revealing the reasons why and who applies a tutor. Moreover, the expansion of this sector raises some issues on private tutoring support. They

can either encourage or discourage certain sorts of such establishments as they function parallel to mainstream schools and to some degree follow the attainment targets set in the curriculum (Bray, 2009).

James (1987, 1993) has distinguished a model of distinguishing the nature of demand for the private tutoring. The conditions in certain countries, where state schools provide proper education with limited capacity generate excess demand for private tutoring. Private establishments help learners compensate for the insufficient knowledge obtained at public school. Differentiated demands are posed by the schools, which are of high quality and have different orientations in their curricula. The learners attend private schools, as the mainstream system does not meet all their necessities (Bray & Kwok, 2003).

Moreover, Baker and LeTendre (2005) have considered the private tutoring as a “world megatrend” (as cited in Bray & Silova, 2006, p.20). The scholars studied this phenomenon in terms of its scope, intensity and organization. The scope of private schooling depends on cultural, economic, and educational factors (Bray, 2003, as cited in Bray & Silova, 2006). Silova (2010) stated that the educational system of Eastern Europe and Central Asia have undergone radical changes during the 1990s. The socio-political transformations have facilitated the expansion of private tutoring along with complexities.

Regarding this issue, Silova (2010) has revealed two types of private tutoring, those are compulsory and discreet. Both of them are considered unethical, as the teachers explicitly provide them to their own students. The students are forced to apply private tutoring because of being threatened to get low marks. This kind of practice is typical to some post-soviet countries like Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

As it was mentioned above, the scope of private tutoring may be affected by several factors. According to Bray (2003), private schooling is widely spread in certain cultures promoting the effort. For example, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan are the countries where competition is the main ingredient in

getting education. Hence, cultural factors have profound effect on private tutoring.

Another factor influencing private schooling is related to economy. According to Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2004) stated that the investment on education is profitable and will be paid off in the future. The scholars have revealed the cases of the economic returns that families can get by applying private tutoring in Singapore. It leads to the fact that private tutoring may be affected by economic factors, which in its turn implies the difference in the amount of salary of the educated and non-educated people (as cited in Bray & Silova, 2006). The third factor is connected with the education systems. In this regard, Baker and LeTendre (2005) claimed that private tutoring is extensively boosted in such countries where there is "tight linkage" between academic achievement and further career planning (as cited in Bray & Silova, 2006, p.32). In other words, high-stakes examinations are considered to be "a gate-keeper to education and labor market opportunities" (Baker and LeTendre, 2005, as cited in Bray & Silova, 2006, p.32). In the light of the factors considered above, private tutoring has pervasive implications in different educational settings. Several research studies have documented positive impact of private tutoring on learners' academic performance. It also positively affects the dynamics of teaching and learning processes in public schools. For example, De Silva (1994) has stated that private schooling contributes to the fulfilment of the leaners' needs (Bray & Silova, 2006). However, Silova(2010) claims that private tutoring carries certain negative implications in terms of getting equal access to education among the students of low socioeconomic conditions and countryside areas. Nevertheless, it is significant that the issues related to private tutoring should be addressed properly by policy makers in order to reduce the negative influence of private tutoring on mainstream schools and the society as a whole.

To conclude, it should be stated that private tutoring has both positive and negative impacts on the educational system. It may be triggered by different

factors such as educational, social and economic. Taking into consideration that the society is not static, it keeps on developing which might cause considerable changes in different settings. So, private tutoring is worth investigating as it is explicitly related to the educational system, which is at the core of social and economic development.

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