

## The Private Tuition Industry in Pakistan: An Alarming Trend

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Rapidly increasing enrolments and financial constraints worldwide have put intense pressure on state sector provision of quality schooling leading to the emergence of a private sector, which has been absorbing an ever-increasing proportion of children in South Asia (Aslam 2009, Andrabi, Das and Khwaja, 2008 and Kingdon 2007<sup>1</sup>). This in turn has raised pertinent questions regarding equity, efficiency and social justice. The emergence of the private sector has been accompanied in many countries by the stealthy evolution of a parallel or 'shadow' education system that provides *paid* supplementary tutoring outside normal school hours. Large private tutoring industries are now known to exist in economically and geographically diverse countries. There is substantial *anecdotal* evidence of the existence of large-scale private tutoring industries in India and Pakistan as anyone travelling even a few kilometres in a densely packed urban region will vouch for. However, it has not been possible to measure the extent of the shadow education sector in Pakistan largely due to unavailability of data. The ASER data allows for the first time for researchers to document the extent of private tuition prevalence in Pakistan. This brief note is based both on the trends emerging from ASER 2010 and 2011 data and from research conducted by Aslam and Atherton (2011)<sup>2</sup> that used the ASER 2010 data from Pakistan to document the incidence of private tuition in rural Pakistan (and India; the findings from India are suppressed due to space constraints, for more details refer to working paper cited in references).

It is surprising how little policy attention has been paid to what some academics now recognise as the 'third important education sector' (Dang and Rogers, 2010)<sup>3</sup>. The lack of existing evidence is worrying. The option of giving (for the teachers) and receiving (for the pupils) tuition outside of normal school hours changes the incentive structure of the provision of high quality instruction within the standard school system which in turn has implications for equity and social justice. The relationship between private tutoring and student achievement is also increasingly gaining policy attention as it calls into question the quality of schooling *during* school-hours. It also raises questions about ability to

pay and ability to thus access this extra help. These questions become even more crucially important for Pakistan given the fundamental Right to Education as provided for in Article 25 A.

Interestingly, in some countries where the shadow education system has been studied it is believed that private tutoring caters to the needs of students trapped in poor-quality state schooling systems. This premise, however, has no basis in good-quality research in Pakistan. Pakistan has seen a mushrooming of very low-fee charging private schools (Aslam 2009). The quality of schooling these schools provide is often no different to the poor quality schooling provided by the state sector (Andrabi et al. 2008). There is, therefore, no reason to presume that only government school students will necessarily engage in private coaching activities.

While anecdotal evidence suggests that private tuition is widespread, it is important to expand such evidence using survey data to substantiate the claims. Data from ASER 2010 suggested that a significantly large proportion of children in Pakistan aged 3-16 years seem to be taking paid private tuitions. Across Pakistan, almost 16 percent enrolled rural children reported taking paid tuitions in 2010. This figure is about 11 percent according to the most recent estimates drawing from ASER 2011. As our data are drawn from rural samples only, these are likely to be *under-estimates* of the true levels, as tuition-taking is often more prevalent in urban areas (Bray 2009)<sup>4</sup>. ASER 2011 was unique because it allowed for the sampling of 3 urban locations as well; these included Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar. The incidence of private tuition-taking in these urban localities is about 62 percent in Lahore, 54 percent in Karachi and 34 percent in Peshawar, which gives credence to our belief that private tuition-taking is substantially more in urban areas. There are also some other interesting patterns emerging from the data. For example, the data suggest that the incidence of tuition-taking while mildly increasing with age (with the highest incidence of tuition-taking found in the 14-16 age-group which corresponds to the years when children are

<sup>1</sup> Andrabi, T. Das, J. and A. Khwaja(2002), 'The Rise of Private Schooling in Pakistan: Catering to the Urban Elite or Educating the Rural Poor?', World Bank and Harvard University.

Aslam, M. (2009), 'The Relative Effectiveness of Government and Private Schools in Pakistan: Are Girls Worse Off?', *Education Economics*, 17 (3), 329-353. Kingdon, G. (2007), 'The Progress of School Education in India', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 23 (2), 188-195.

<sup>2</sup> Aslam, M. and Atherton, P. (2011), 'The Shadow Education Sector in India and Pakistan: the determinants, benefits and equity effects of private tutoring', Mimeo, Institute of Education, University of London, UK.

<sup>3</sup> Dang, H. and Rogers, F.H. (2008), 'The Growing Phenomenon of Private Tutoring: Does it Deepen Human Capital, Widen Inequalities or Waste Resources?', *The World Bank Research Observer*, advanced access published 18 April 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Bray, M. (2007), 'The Shadow Education System: Private Tutoring and its Implications for Planners', International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, Paris 2007.

faced with the high school exam, Matric) is actually not very different across children aged 3-16. Tuition-taking appears to be prevalent across age groups in rural Pakistan. The amount spent on children's tuitions is also not insubstantial; on average parents spend Rs.293/month on private tuitions in rural Pakistan (ASER 2010). This equates to about \$3.4/month<sup>5</sup>. This is not an insubstantial amount given that 60 percent of Pakistan's population reportedly lives on under \$2/day<sup>6</sup>.

A very interesting angle within this private tuition debate is whether children in private schools are less likely to engage in private tuition compared to their counterparts in government schools. This debate stems from the notion that private school students possibly face a better quality schooling which should reduce the likelihood of their taking private tuitions to supplement poor schooling. Government school students, on the other hand, are believed to face poorer quality schooling which would possibly increase the likelihood of them 'substituting' paid tuition for poor quality schooling. However, as mentioned before, this presumption has no premise on quality research. Aslam and Atherton (2011) found that private school pupils in rural Pakistan are significantly more likely to engage in paid tuition compared to government school students (based on ASER 2010 data). A similar trend is observed using ASER 2011 data. For example, almost 30 percent of all children aged 3-16 who are enrolled in private schools report taking private tuition in Punjab compared to about 16 percent children of the same age group who are enrolled in government schools. We observe the same patterns in Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan. Indeed, the gaps between incidence of tuition-taking between government and private school students are strikingly large in other provinces compared to Punjab. The largest gap between incidence of tuition-taking between private and government school students is observed in Balochistan in 2011 where only 2 percent government school students report taking tuitions compared to almost 30 percent private school students yielding a gap of almost 28 percent. The government-private gap is about 15 percentage points in Sindh (where 18 percent private school students report taking tuitions compared to only about 3 percent government school counterparts). Overall, there is also some evidence that the incidence of tuition taking among private school students in rural areas has somewhat declined even over the short 1 year period (2010-2011). This could be attributed to the fact that the survey in 2011 covers a much broader regional diaspora (far more districts are covered across each province). If anything, the finding that the incidence of tuition-taking is so high even when very low-literacy ranking

districts are covered highlights the magnitude of tuition-taking across the country.

The existence of a fee-charging shadow sector has crucial equity implications for users and non-users for instance if it consumes substantial proportions of family income and imposes a heavy burden on low-income families. It is also argued that tutoring exacerbates social inequalities if it becomes accessible only to the rich or to the children of more educated parents or if the quality of tutoring accessed differs by social class. There are also important implications from the point of view of providers and the role school teachers play in providing the extra tuition at a cost and the impact it has for class-room teaching in general. The option of giving (for the teachers) and receiving (for the pupils) tuition outside of normal school hours changes the incentive structure of the provision of high quality instruction within the standard school system which in turn has implications for equity and social justice. It seems that parents in rural Pakistan are turning to private coaching more frequently than thought. Aslam and Atherton (2011) using ASER 2010 data further find that while private tutoring is not necessarily just the preserve of the rich in rural Pakistan, being richer does help increase the likelihood that a child will take private tuitions. Moreover, they conclude that private coaching imposes a significant burden on relatively low-income families in rural Pakistan. The authors also suggest that there are elements of gender differentiated treatment apparent in the uptake of private tuition emerging from the empirical analysis where a pro-male bias prevails in the decision of how much to spend conditional on enrolment i.e. parents are found, on average, to be spending significantly more on boys' tuition than in girls'. This suggests that private tutoring in Pakistan is capable of further exacerbating already-existing and deeply entrenched social inequalities.

Part of the explanation for the rise in private tutoring in Pakistan may rest on the poor quality of schooling that is provided to students in school. This may be because of several factors including poor facilities, outdated curriculums or untrained and even un-interested and incompetent teachers. It is harder, however, to reconcile many of the differential findings (such as differences in uptake of tuition by gender or by school type) on the basis of variations in schooling quality alone. An alternative explanation for the rise in private tuitions is based on the argument that teacher salaries in Pakistan are lower compared to salaries of persons in other professions and with similar educational qualifications which is cited as a

<sup>5</sup> As on 17 June 2011 ([www.se.com](http://www.se.com))

<sup>6</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty\\_in\\_Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_in_Pakistan)

reason why teachers turn to giving private tuitions to supplement their incomes. Kingdon (2010) and Aslam, Kingdon and Rawal (2011)<sup>8</sup> argue that this is not based on solid evidence. Their analyses suggest that not only are teacher salaries in India and Pakistan equivalent to those in other professions but teacher salaries have risen *more* in real terms than salaries of persons in other professions. Teacher's often get 3-5 times as much (and even more in certain regions/states) as multiples of per capita GDP in Pakistan.

Salary increases are intended to improve the quality of public services delivered to citizens. The pay-rises are premised on higher salaries attracting better individuals into teaching and also on the idea that higher salaries motivate greater effort while in service, as per efficiency wage theory. However, Kingdon (2010)<sup>9</sup> argues that salary increases unrelated to performance are not necessarily efficiency enhancing. In order for higher pay to lead to higher effort, it must be the case that the threat of dismissal is credible if a worker is found to be shirking (e.g. if a teacher is found to be chronically absent). However, it is well known that in general in most South Asian countries, government school teachers are virtually un-sackable irrespective of effort. The fact that most government school teachers in Pakistan are hired 'permanently' and are virtually un-sackable means that they can get away not only with not turning up to teach (evidence suggests high absenteeism among teachers in Pakistan though there is a suggestion that things are improving) and also the possibility that teachers are able to create a *need* for private tutoring either by encouraging their students to take it (from them or others) or by not putting in enough effort while teaching in class which may indirectly lead to the need for extra help outside the classroom. Thus, lax governance and accountability structures surrounding the teaching profession especially in government schools is a more convincing argument for the rise of private tutoring industries in the two countries. However, it is again difficult to explain the heterogeneity in usage (by gender and school type for instance) on the basis of any of these arguments alone suggesting a very complex interplay of factors that give rise to the demand and the supply of paid private tutoring in Pakistan.

Aslam and Atherton's (2011) empirical work also finds that while private tuition has favourable effects on learning and achievement for all pupils, the main beneficiaries are government school pupils. Within government schools, it is the poorest students who gain the most, being far more likely

to be at a higher reading or mathematics level. While it is the poor who are also least likely to be able to afford private tuition and hence to be priced out of the private tuition market when faced with poor quality general schooling in state schools, they are, also the most likely to *benefit* from any extra paid coaching in terms of achievement gains. This finding raises important policy questions about not just the existing quality of schooling but also about the consequent implications of the shadow education sector for social inequalities in access and quality in schooling.

Regardless of the reason for the rise of the shadow education sector in Pakistan, it is prominent and apparently here to stay. The consequent implications for equality and social justice are numerous, ranging from issues of why a person chooses to pay extra for tuition when 'free' government education apparently exists, who are the persons who can access paid coaching and how it impacts their learning and other educational outcomes. Even more broadly speaking, there is now almost universal agreement that what is learnt (in school and out of it) matters as much as, if not more than, the years of schooling acquired. There is evidence that cognitive skills have economically large effects on individual earnings and on national growth. This literature is summarised in Hanushek and Woessmann (2008), and appears quite conclusive. This suggests that the socio-economic implications of this neglected educational phenomenon – private tutoring – could be potentially dramatic.

<sup>8</sup> Adam, M., Kingdon, G. and S. Rawal (2011), 'Teacher Quality in South Asia', Mimeo (University of Oxford and Institute of Education, University of London).

<sup>9</sup> Kingdon, G. (2010), 'The Impact of the Sixth Pay Commission on Teacher Salaries: Assessing Equity and Efficiency Effects', RECOUP Working Paper No. 29, May.

<sup>10</sup> Hanushek, E. and Woessmann, L. (2008), 'The Role of Cognitive Skills in Economic Development', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 46 (3), 607-668.

Aslam, M. and Kingdon, G. (2008), 'Gender and Household Education Expenditure in Pakistan: Engel Curve Evidence', *Applied Economics* 40, No. 20, 2573 - 2591.