



The Private Tuition Industry in Pakistan: An Alarming Trend

Dr. Monazza Aslam and Suwaibah Mansoor

Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi

The emergence of the private education 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.

Little policy attention has been paid to what some academics now recognise as the 'third important education sector' (Dang and Rogers, 2010)¹. 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.

Incidence of the 'shadow sector' in Pakistan

According to ASER 2011, 11 percent enrolled rural children (3-16 years) reported taking paid tuitions. As the data was 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 2007)². 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 incredibly high; about 62 percent in Lahore, 54 percent in Karachi and 34 percent in Peshawar. This gives credence to our belief that private tuition-taking is now a huge phenomenon and 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 faced with the high school exam, Matric) is actually not very different across children aged 3-16. Tuition-taking appears to be prevalent across all 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/month³. This is not an insubstantial amount given that 60 percent of Pakistan's population reportedly lives on under \$2/day⁴.

Table 1: Classwise % children attending paid tuition ASER (2011) – The National Picture

Class wise % children attending paid tuition										
Class	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Govt.	3.9	5.1	5.2	6.7	8.0	9.9	10.1	11.4	15.8	14.9
Pvt.	19.9	24.7	25.1	25.3	28.3	24.6	25.9	29.4	29.7	30.2

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 compared to government schools which should reduce the likelihood of their taking private tuitions. However, this presumption has no premise on quality research. Aslam and Atherton (2011)⁵ 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, KP and Balochistan.

A critical factor generating educational inequality?

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

¹ 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.

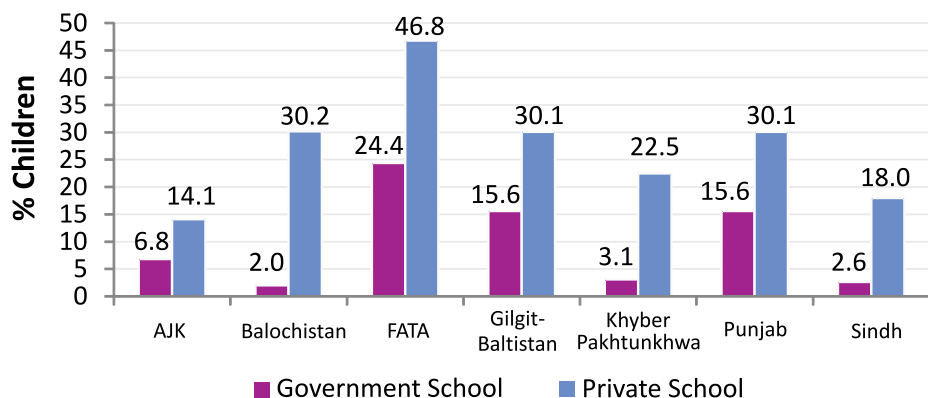
² Bray, M. (2007), 'The Shadow Education System: Private Tutoring and its Implications for Planners', International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, Paris 2007.

³ As on 17 June 2011 (www.xe.com)

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_in_Pakistan

⁵ 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.

Children Attending Paid Tuition ASER (2011)



schools is a more convincing argument for the rise of private tutoring industries in the two countries.

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.

Policy Recommendations

The 'shadow' education sector is associated with its own costs and benefits. Planners and policy makers need to be fully informed about this phenomenon and must be clear on whether it is something to be encouraged or discouraged. As discussed above in its current mode and form it has some worrisome implications for social equity and quality schooling. However, on the other hand it provides an opportunity to university students, teachers and retired individuals of supplementing their income. It also provides additional help to students to better their academic outcomes. While on the one hand trying to achieve a 'ban' on the 'shadow' education sector is an impossibility in as much as it is like the 'private' schooling sector and has emerged due to a demand for services, but also because it is likely to be associated with benefits to society that

incentive structure of the provision of high quality instruction within the standard school system which in turn has implications for equity and social justice. Aslam and Atherton (2011) 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 reason why teachers turn to giving private tuitions to supplement their incomes. Kingdon (2010) and Aslam, Kingdon and Rawal (2011)⁶ 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.

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

⁶ Aslam, M., Kingdon, G. and S. Rawal (2011), 'Teacher Quality in South Asia', Mimeo (University of Oxford and Institute of Education, University of London).

cannot be ignored. Like the private sector, however, one of the biggest constraints faced by the government is inability to effectively monitor and regulate it. There is a need, however, for policy makers to classify the extent and mode of private tutoring in a way that helps eliminate equity and quality issues. We suggest some regulatory policies that may help in the effective regulation of this emergent sector:

- Prohibit private tutoring by teachers to the children of the same school that they teach in. This policy is already adopted by some elite private schools like Aitchison and Beaconhouse. Teachers found to be giving private tuitions to children from the same schools they work in are immediately sacked. This policy ensures that teachers do not shirk from their in class responsibilities just for the sake of gaining more students for their private tuition classes.
- The education department should introduce strong regulations to keep in check big tuition centres. The regulations can include obtaining a licence for opening a tuition centre, having certain academic requirements for tutors; safety standards for the facility being used and upper bounds on the fee that can be charged. In addition they can be obliged to follow a code of conduct that specifies teacher ethics and students safety.
- Not all private tutoring occurs in huge tuition centres. Private tutoring on one to one basis or in small groups also

needs to be regulated. In order to safeguard the interests of the parents and the students, the government can form a tuition regulatory body where parents can lodge complaints against private tutors. Tutors should be registered with this body and parents should be encouraged to hire only registered tutors.

- Bray (2009)⁷ suggests that in many countries examinations are of the nature that rewards short-term cramming from tutoring as opposed to long-term fundamental understanding of the topics. Pakistan is not an exception to the norm. There is, therefore, a need for the education authorities to review the nature of their examinations systems. This may not be a simple matter but what can be done is barring the high school and other high stakes entrance exams, the rest of the basic internal school assessments of lower grades can be redesigned in a way that examination becomes a very small component of the student's evaluation. Thus, potentially minimising the need for private tutoring to pass exams.
- There are genuine cases where low achievers do need extra help but cannot afford it. For them the schools should make teachers attend to such students after school hours. This could be incorporated into their job descriptions and they should be remunerated accordingly. Parents will thus be prevented from the additional financial burden of providing the extra help that their child requires.

- Low income households who cannot afford tuition but nevertheless require tuition for their low achieving children can be helped by promoting tuition through NGOs and civil-society organisations. This model was adopted in Bangladesh (Bray 2009), where under the Community Learning Assistant Project (CLAP) community based tutors chosen by the local community and trained by the NGO provided tuition to the children. Under this program children reaped the benefits of tuition without their families being financially burdened.

⁷ Bray, M. (2009), 'Confronting the Shadow Education System: What government policies for what private tutoring', International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, Paris 2009

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Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)
 41-L, Model Town Extension, Lahore
 Tel: (+92-42) 35173005-7
 Email: aser@itacec.org

www.aserpakistan.org

