

PROLIFERATION OF SHADOW EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN

Zaylobidinova Munira Gulomovna
Ferghana State University

ABSTRACT

This article mainly discusses the aspects of proliferation of shadow education in Uzbekistan. Particularly, the triggers for demand and what makes students to hire private tutors. It also describes the quality of tutoring centers and government policy towards private tutoring centers.

Key words: *Shadow education, demand, neoliberalism, consumerism, privatization, government regulation, proliferation, Technical Vocational Colleges.*

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье в основном рассматриваются аспекты распространения теневого образования в Узбекистане. В частности, триггеры спроса и то, что заставляет студентов нанимать частных репетиторов. В нем также описывается качество репетиторских центров и государственная политика в отношении частных репетиторских центров.

Ключевые слова: *теневое образование, спрос, неолиберализм, потребительство, приватизация, государственное регулирование, распространение, профессионально-технические колледжи.*

INTRODUCTION

In the century when many countries favour neoliberalism it is, therefore, emerging at a fast pace permeating into all domains of society. Privatization is a neoliberal approach where public assets are freed up of government regulation (Verger et al., 2016). Privatization in education is also expanding and has become a global phenomenon having a different mode in different places. Verger et al. (2016) stated that education privatization is not the same process that had been witnessed in other domains such as transferring ownership to private hands, but it is a process of service provision in schools which are funded by families.

PT is hidden privatization where the values of neoliberal elements have been adjusted and developed into new sectors (Zhang & Bray, 2017, p. 64). It is fee-based teaching before or after schooling and widely known as “shadow education” because it mimics regular schooling (Baker et al., 2001; Bray, 2009; Yung & Bray, 2017b). Bray (1999) claims that the metaphor of a shadow is an appropriate alternative to PT because there is no shadow without an object and there is no shadow education without mainstream schooling. Bray (1999) also compared PT with sun-dial, as the

sun moves across the sky, its shadow aligns with different hour line on the dial which indicates the time. Similarly, shadow education aligns with mainstream schooling and cannot exist without it. According to culture and perception of PT, different terminologies, for example, private supplementary tutoring, or private tuition are used to identify the same phenomenon. (see Bray 1999; Bray and Lukins, 2012). The term private coaches replace the phrase private tutors in some countries. However, there is no appropriate translation for a private tutor or private tutoring into all languages. For example, there is no exact interpretation for the word tutor and tutoring into Uzbek. In translation, it gives meaning private teacher which does not identify the meaning of tutor. Therefore, the Russian word *repetitor* for tutor and *repetitorlik* for tutoring was borrowed to describe the phenomenon.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

In a few decades, shadow education turned into an industry and became a billion-dollar business all over the world. Its rapid proliferation throughout the countries, including, Africa, North America, Western Europe, Eastern and Southern Asia, has drawn considerable attention and led many scholars to investigate its triggering factors (e.g., Bray 2009, 2013; Silova &Bray 2006a; Baker et al., 2001; Bray et al., 2015; Bray & Lykins 2012). A number of scholarly studies describe the expanding nature of shadow education in East and South Asia indicating its strong connection with people's mindset and culture (e.g. Bray, 2013; Zeng, 1999). Education has become a priority in the countries as Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, and Taiwan. In a few decades, therefore, expenditure on PT has considerably increased in those countries. As stated in Bray and Lykins (2012) in the Republic of Korea, it reached 17,3 billion US\$ in 2010, in Japan 12 billion US\$ in 2010, and Singapore 680 million US\$ in 2008. Inspired by Confusion tradition parents in Japan, Korea, China, and Taiwan which values effort as the core factor of success, spend a considerable amount of money on PT (Bray and Kwo, 2014). Further study of Kim and Lee's found that Korean family monthly household expenditure for tutors exceeded 20% in 2009 (as cited in Bray & Lykins, 2012).

PT became a profitable business for its providers because it offers additional income opportunity and a good supplementation for slow learners to keep up with peers. Bray's (2013) study of PT gives more insights on an issue. His findings claimed that more than 50 percent of students agreed that PT had improved their examination grades, confidence in examinations and school performance, revision skills, and learning strategies. On the other hand, during of the same study, some

student noted that PT is extra spending for low-income (approximately with HK\$ 4000, HK\$ 5999 income) families in Hong Kong and puts much pressure on children and youth. 34.1 percent of students believed that PT is a burden for their parents and 17.1 percent strongly stated that it creates financial deficiency for their families (Bray, 2013). Overall, the majority of people perceive PT as a normal phenomenon or natural activity or business. However, few people believe that it raises social implication and brings forward equity and equality issues as for them it is rather a financial burden or extra spending.

In Central Asia, shadow education emerged after the collapse of Soviet Union because newly independent countries (Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) started changing their policy in all sectors by moving to the market economy (Silova, 2009b). The most urgent step for those countries was to manage and modify their education system because recession in economics and insufficient budget, particularly in Tajikistan and Kirgizstan, significantly reduced investment in education (Bray et al., 2015; Silova, 2010; Kobakhidze, 2018). Silova (2009b) claims that due to the post-Soviet transformation process, Central Asian countries faced a bunch of issues and one of them was financing education. It was also noted by OSI (2002) that a dramatic decline of state expenditure reduced the quality of education. However, the demand for higher education was evolving but the quality of education in schools did not respond to the requirements. Soviet-Union examination system for higher education could not survive any longer as corruption in admission reached its high level. Therefore, countries implemented a new examination system which requested knowledge out of school program (Silova, 2009b). Hence, parents' dissatisfaction with mainstream schooling elevated and made them seek supplementary tutoring that can cover school curriculum. Where the government services decrease as a rule private sectors take advantage.

Furthermore, other factors such as delay of teachers' salary, positively impacted on PT growing nature because it became the only income of teachers (OSI, 2002). Lack of investment in education during the first decade of independence, made the Central Asian governments attempt to decentralise education and encourage schools to raise their own revenue (Silova, 2009b). One of the reforms was to establish a formal fee for PT in schools (Silova, 2009b). This reform built up an opportunity for many teachers, even for students of higher institutions or IELTS certificate holders, to open tutoring centres and to start their business as private entrepreneurs.

1.1. Personal experience

My interest to study PT phenomenon is related with my experience being a teacher and a tutor for more than 15 years. In 2014, I was appointed to be a leader of Uzbekistan Teachers' Association of English Teachers (UzTEA) Ferghana branch. More than 2 years I worked in this position and was surrounded by many English teachers most of whom were private tutors. Moreover, I led many conversations with my students about the triggers of their demand for PT. Hence, I have my own perspectives about the driving forces of shadow education in Ferghana. According to my observations, the followings are the drivers of demand for PT:

- State examination requires knowledge out of school program
- Youth is very much job oriented and eager to enrol elite universities to obtain high-income job.
- To study and to work abroad has become a vogue in Uzbekistan.

Students in Uzbekistan, as a rule, start to attend PT 1-2 years earlier of the state entrance examination to higher education. Examination paper consists of 108 questions from 3 different subjects appointed by state testing committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Therefore, most students hire private tutors from three subjects from which they will be tested in entrance examination. According to subject relateness to the faculty, different scores are given for every correct response. For example, in law faculty history is the main subject and every question presents 3.1 points. Uzbek is a secondary important subject therefore, 2.1 points is for Uzbek and English is the third, 1.1 points is provided for every correct response. However, students from low-income families could afford only one tutoring courses from the main subject, sometimes two but rarely can afford three private tutors.

2.3. Shadow education phenomenon in Uzbekistan

Before exploring the shadow education phenomenon in Uzbekistan, it is meaningful to address the origins and historical background of the country. Uzbekistan is double landlocked country in Central Asia bordering with Kazakhstan from the north, Kyrgyzstan from the northeast, Tajikistan from the southeast, and with Afghanistan, Turkmenistan from the southwest. Uzbekistan Socialistic Republic was established in 1924 by the former Soviet Union. In 1991 the collapse of the Soviet Union brought independence to many socialistic republics including Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan rich in mineral resources, its main economy depends on cultivating and exporting cotton abroad. Uzbekistan is considered one of the leading distributors of cotton in the world. The population of the country is over 33 million people comprising of Uzbek, Russian, Tajik, Kazak, Kyrgyz, and a small percentage of Korean nationalities.

The educational system of Uzbekistan almost resembled the Soviet Union system and consisted of pre-primary (Age 2-7), primary (Grade 1-4) and high schools (Grade 5-11) at the beginning of the post-Soviet transformation period. Students of high school had two options: to finish it in 5 years, or in 7 years. Finishing 5 years of education students enrolled Professional-Technical secondary institutions which were famous by the name *profisionalnoye-tehnicheskoye uchilishe (PTU)*. However, students who finished 7 years in high school continued education in higher institutions or universities.

As stated in UNDP (2007-2008), 1997-2001 period was a time for framing national education policy in Uzbekistan. In 1997 the government adopted National Program for Personal Training (NPPT) and it was formulated into national law (UNESCO, 2011). NPPT stopped ad hoc reforms in education in the early post-Soviet period and provided with a coherent framework to undertake educational reforms (Ruziyev et al., 2018). In 1998, with the initiative of the first president of Uzbekistan a significant reform was executed in the sector. Due to this reform, Technical and Vocational Educational Training (TVET in the view of colleges) and Special Secondary education (in the view of lyceums) were established as compulsory education for all high-school-leavers. The reform reduced the length of study in high-school for 5 years. Moreover, reform stated additional compulsory 3 years education at secondary schools for high school-leavers. The purpose of TVET was to raise teaching quality, to develop professional skills of youth, and create more opportunity to enter the labour market (UNDP, 2007). Unlike colleges, lyceums were oriented to prepare students for higher education with an elaborated schedule for specific subjects (Khaydarov, 2018).

Secondary schools were introduced as compulsory education since 1998 in Uzbekistan but it failed to approve its objectives. Students' low attendance at colleges and high demand for PT in lyceums made government officials think about making changes in the system. Moreover, parents' resistance aroused by complaints on low quality of education in secondary schools. Therefore, a survey was carried out to determine more people's opinions about keeping or changing the reform which makes secondary schools compulsory education. The survey results changed the reform for secondary education. Lyceums became high schools comprising two years of schooling. After finishing lyceums students receive a high-school certificate. On the other hand, colleges are redesigned to be fee-based and accept students who finished 7 years of compulsory high-school education. The length of studying at colleges depend on the faculty and specialization that students have chosen (usually

1,5-2 years). Nowadays, students of Uzbekistan have options to enroll tertiary or secondary education. Usually, those who fail in the entrance exam for tertiary institutions go to colleges.

After the independence, Uzbekistan experienced a significant economic recession which considerably reduced expenditure in education. Uzbekistan inherited hierarchical central planning and inefficient resource allocation policy which brought many issues in budgeting not only education but also other sectors. UNESCO/ADB (2001) data suggests that government spending on education decreased to 6.8 % but voluntarily contribution of parents increased to 55% (as cited in OSI, 2002). The country cannot afford much investment in education and attempted to decentralize it simply transferring financial burden to local authorities, schools, and parents (OSI, 2002). Schools could not provide children with free books and facilitate classrooms with equipment and technology; teachers' salary was delayed for 3-4 month and many qualified teachers left their jobs. People lost their trust in qualified education at schools and decided to hire private tutors for their children. Those factors and especially salary delay made teachers seek another income to sustain their families (Khaydarov, 2018). Similar determinants made Georgian teachers migration from teaching to other professions after the demise of the Soviet Union but "For those, who stayed in teaching private tutoring became the major source of salary supplementation" (Kobakhidze, 2018, p.34). Additionally, establishing a centralised testing system *DTM* in the entrance exam for undergraduate studies increased the competition among students which caused of a wider expansion of PT in Uzbekistan. As reported by the Educational Sector Plan of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2013), 633 applicants compete for 100 seats at the Universities. Test-takers try to achieve the highest score and receive a free place because a fee-based study is expensive and many families cannot afford it. Therefore, parents occupy their children with PT to make them able to compete with contestants in the entrance exam.

The famous PT centres in Uzbekistan are run under the name *O'quv Markazi* which means education centre, it includes teaching not only school subjects but also nursery, cookery, and handicraft. The owners of those centres as usual private entrepreneurs rent the building, hire tutors and pay income taxes to the government. The license to open centres is obtained from *DTM* Government Testing Centre and PT centres should be registered in the judicial board of the government. Another type of PT centres is IELTS centres which are expanding phenomenon in Uzbekistan. IELTS centres can be opened by either; a private entrepreneur or by a private tutor. IELTS centres prepare students only for IELTS and CEFR exam. The educational

degree of the IELTS tutor is not considered, anybody who has received B2 level from CEFR or 6 score from IELTS can be a tutor. Tutors from other school subjects usually rent an apartment to conduct tutoring courses, and few of them are registered under the government. According to statistics due to this day, 220 PT centres are functioning in Ferghana region.

Another interesting phenomenon is that PT has become a family business in Ferghana, when family members are involved in the tutoring process. Puballi Ghosh, one of the shadow education researcher for doctoral degree at Hong Kong University, claimed that she had come across with this phenomenon in Karnataka, India (personal communication, April 13, 2019). However, the literature which shed up this form of shadow education is quite limited, therefore, the following part will explain how it functions in Ferghana, Uzbekistan.

In Uzbekistan, applicants knowledge is tested from three subjects in the entrance exam for at particular faculty of higher institution. These subjects took the name *blok* which is taken from Russian word *blok* and has similar meaning as well as pronunciation with English word blocks. The word *blok* is used to identify the units of 36 multiple-choice questions from any subject. Due to existing subject triangulation in the entrance exam, reputed private tutors started to create a family business by involving their family members, relatives or friends from other blocks. For example, a father from history, son from mother tongue and daughter from English are preparing a group of applicants for the entrance exam. The applicants not only study but also live in tutors' house. Approximately, 40 applicants are located in a big room which becomes a study, sleeping and dining room during a year. However, if both genders are studying together, girls' room will be separated. Intensive courses of family tutors begin usually in September and continue till the end of June. Learners visit their homes ones in two weeks to bring tuition fee and enough food for a living. Family tutors promise 90% success in entrance exams therefore, they have strict rules. Students are banned from using smartphones and watching TV but engaged in an intensive learning process. Their sleeping hours, tutoring classes, eating and self-study time are scheduled and should be followed by all tutees. Those who cannot master the knowledge or do not follow the rules can be excluded from tutoring courses. These kind of family tutoring are prevalent in the regions of Ferghana as Vadil, Kokand and Rishtan.

The main objective of most private tutors is to prepare students to the state examination which happens on the first of August every year. The usual amount of students in PT centres are 30-40 applicants. There are different prices for PT

according to the status of a tutor. If a tutor is “celebrity” as a rule his service is more expensive than others (Yung, & Bray, 2017). Besides, there are different prices for different subjects. English is considered elite and demanding, therefore, tutoring fee from English is higher. Particularly, IELTS tutors are the most expensive ones. There are master-tutors who are teaching IELTS for a long time and earn their fame during these years. Their apprentices with 6 IELTS score or above are also tutors but their service is cheaper than their masters.

CONCLUSION

The intention of many teenagers to study abroad is arising day by day and parents are often supportive of their decision. Moreover, branches of world universities in Tashkent such as Westminster (UK), Inha (Korea), Turin Polytechnic University, and Management Development Institute of Singapore accept students with IELTS score. Therefore, the number of IELTS centres is increasing to fill the demand of people and these centres are getting full classes very easily. PT from other subjects: history, Uzbek, biology chemistry are also demanding because in order to get into the prestigious universities such as University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent State University of Law, students’ knowledge is tested from history, English and Uzbek. On the other hand, students are examined from biology, chemistry and Uzbek to enter Tashkent Medical Academy. According to the prestige of Universities, PT from certain subjects is quite expanded in Uzbekistan.

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