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To cite this article: Stephen P. Heyneman (2011) Private Tutoring and Social Cohesion, Peabody Journal of Education, 86:2, 183-188, DOI: [10.1080/0161956X.2011.561662](https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2011.561662)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2011.561662>



Published online: 19 Apr 2011.



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# Private Tutoring and Social Cohesion

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Mastering the public school curriculum is so important to a child's occupational future that in many regions of the world "shadow" education outside of the public system has now become the norm. In one way, this is excellent news because private investment in human capital is a strong contributor to economic and social development. However, private demand is driving a separate and powerful private industry. According to the constitutional standards in many countries, education is supposed to be "free." This suggests that, in some instances, shadow education might be unconstitutional. The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights also says that education should be free. This suggests that in some circumstances, shadow education may be contrary to the principles of human rights. The question addressed in this article is whether shadow education is wrong. This article summarizes the arguments in favor and against shadow education and ends with a series of recommendations to better manage what has become a worldwide dilemma.

## BACKGROUND

By some estimates eight out of ten secondary school students in Japan attend "juku" schools to prepare for the examinations that may assist them in gaining access to the right Japanese university (Russell, 1997, p. 158). The annual Korean investment in private tutoring amounts to US\$20 billion (H. Kim, 2008, p. 6). In the United States, private test preparation services is a growing area of education commerce (Heyneman, 2001). The revenues of Kaplan, a test preparation company, have grown by tenfold since 1998 and now constitute more than US\$2 billion annually (<http://www.kaplan.com/aboutkaplan>). In the former Soviet Union, private fee-paying tutoring from public school teachers after normal school hours, a clear conflict of interest, is commonly considered an essential ingredient for students to advance to the next stage (Lewis & Dunder, 2002, p. 182; Silova, Budiene, & Bray, 2006). Private tutoring constitutes a "shadow" education system separate from public education and has been the focus of much prior analytic work and policy studies both internationally (Baker & LeTendre, 2005; Bray, 1999, 2003, 2009, 2010; Silova et al., 2006; Southgate, 2007; Stevenson & Baker, 1992) and within Korea (Kazimzade & Lepisto, 2010; T. Kim, 2005; Lee & Jang, 2008; Lee & Lee, 2008).

## PRIVATE TUTORING SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED

There are five reasons to encourage private tutoring. First, it is the natural inclination of all responsible parents to support the education of their children. Private tutoring can include three separate purposes: (a) enrichment, (b) remediation, and (c) preparation for examinations. In some cases private tutoring may begin in the family. It may include the purchase of educational books and toys. Fathers who read to a child, mothers who direct a child's behavior to be ready for school, are private investments in education. Although these may not be included in shadow education discussions, they are widely assumed to be a part of a family's private education investment. Without this investment, the educational task of the school is more difficult. Children without this kind of family assistance are more at risk for failure. A policy that may deny this natural inclination would be tantamount to forbidding a parent to love, protect, and raise their own children.

Second, in instances when policies have outlawed parental educational investment, the result has been catastrophic. In the 1960s and 1970s private secondary schooling in Tanzania was prohibited, and on the grounds of equality, the size and quality of the state sector was frozen. The result was that students were equally exposed to bad public schooling. This led thousands of parents to send their children to neighboring counties seeking better educational opportunity. Once the socialist government left office and private investment in education became legal in Tanzania, educational opportunity expanded, the flight to neighboring countries declined, and the quality of both public and private education increased (Knight & Sabot, 1990, pp. 37–38). Private education was also forbidden in the socialist states of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This created distortions in access as parents tried to reserve select public schools for their own purposes. Once the USSR imploded, the prohibition against private educational investment was lifted and the pressure on public schools was relieved (Heyneman, 1998, 2000, 2009). Experience suggests that prohibiting private educational investment leads to distortions worse than the cause of the problem.

Third, education is a human right. Denying a citizen's right to access education might be an abrogation of that right. In the case of a minor child, there may be more justification to regulate education than in the case of a fee-paying adult (Heyneman, 2001, 2009). But the level and direction regulation, if extreme, could result in denying educational opportunity. The implication of this is that a democratic nation cannot abrogate an individual's right to seek private sources of education.

Fourth, an investment in education is an investment in human capital. For individuals this investment has many important effects on one's career and welfare. But in the aggregate, private investment adds a considerable amount to the public's investment. In Japan and Korea, the portion of education expenditure from private sources constitutes more than 50%; in New Zealand, Australia, and Austria it is 37%; in Germany it is 27%; and in the United States it is 23% (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2009, p. 232). Relatively free of public administrative controls, these expenditures often generate a disproportional share of pedagogical and curricular innovation. The public sector benefits from the experiments and trials pioneered from these private institutions. In general private educational investments add to the nation's human capital stock in both quantity and quality.

Fifth and last, a family's investment in education is a natural outgrowth of social capital (Coleman, 1998). Social capital is an ingredient closely associated with well being and

general social welfare (OECD, 2001), and exposure to education is a primary source (Heyneman, 2002/3). Communities endowed with families who make private education investments should be considered a blessing, not a problem.

### PRIVATE TUTORING IS A CORRUPTION OF EDUCATION'S PUBLIC PURPOSE AND SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED

Corruption is an educational action that is either illegal or unprofessional or both (Bray, 2003; Dawson, 2009; Hallak & Poisson, 2007; Heyneman, 2004;). There are many compelling arguments to suggest that private tutoring is a detriment to the public good. First, among the purposes of public education is to provide an opportunity for all children, rich and poor, to learn a common curriculum and have an opportunity to compete for scarce places in more specialized training. Because shadow education is privately financed, it creates an inequality in the distribution of this opportunity. The children of wealthy homes will receive more opportunity and higher quality opportunity to learn the common curriculum and will have a better chance to advance.

Second, performance is associated with self-worth. Those who receive less opportunity to compete may well have lower performance and are at risk for having a lower sense of self-worth. This condemns those with less opportunity to a life of lowered self-esteem and higher risk for depression, and they are more likely to pass on their lowered self-worth to their own children.

Third, the rules within private tutoring schools may be different from public schools and may be in opposition to the climate encouraged in public schools. For instance, although beating may be outlawed in public schools, it may be common in private tutoring schools. This abrogates the public consensus over how best to teach future citizens. When the climate in private tutoring schools opposes the intended climate in public schools, the public's investment in social capital is diminished.

Fourth, divisions of social class are the underpinning for political and social conflict. Reinforcement of these divisions is likely to be expressed through unconstructive political dialogue and bitter recriminations within the polity. Shadow education can be used to fuel this political conflict.

Fifth, the idea that one can pay to influence student performance is dangerous. It is a thin line distinguishing an investment in learning and an investment in the result of that learning. This is an encouragement to buy performance, and this is a sign of educational corruption. In many school systems, families are able to purchase a better grade for their children, passage to the next grade, and entry into elite training (Heyneman, 2004). In these instances, privately financed supplements lead to the corruption of the entire system of public education (Heyneman, Anderson, & Nuraliyeva, 2008).

Sixth and last, public education influences community social cohesion. But that influence can be either a positive or a negative (Heyneman 2002/3). Because of its affect on equity, its effect on the self-worth of those who fail, and because of the association of more failure among those from less privileged social backgrounds, shadow education may well constitute a handicap to community social cohesion. In fact it may generate an effect in exactly the opposite direction to that posited by human capital theory. It may detract from community welfare instead of adding to it.

## WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT PRIVATE TUTORING?

Effective government policies require an acknowledgment that private tutoring has both positive and negative elements and contain some characteristics that might well be encouraged, even publically subsidized, and other characteristics that should be illegal. The key is to be able to clearly identify one from the other (Bray, 2009). Four suggestions might be worth mentioning. First, it is unnecessary to tolerate any confusion between what is legal and should be encouraged and what is corrupt and should be punished. After-school tutoring may be allowed, but a classroom teacher should not be the tutor of the same pupil enrolled in the regular class. This conflict of interest is contrary to the professional standards of educators and should be punished with a fine and/or loss of teaching license. The lesson is that corruption should be carefully defined, well advertised, and effectively sanctioned.

Second, part of the problem is the lack of statistical monitoring of the breadth and depth of private tutoring. This problem is solvable. Governments have a responsibility to require that statistical records be kept and made transparent. They have a responsibility to report those figures to the public and to the international agencies such as UNESCO and OECD, which use them for careful international comparisons. Public policy toward shadow education should be based on evidence and not hearsay. For instance, the question of the use of the SAT in Korea remains a mystery because of an absence of professional monitoring. Because performance on the Korean SAT is subject to tutoring, use of the test has been discouraged.

Yet performance on all tests is subject to tutoring, and Koreans deserve to know whether performance improvement on the Korean SAT is as high as performance improvement on the achievement-based examination. Currently Koreans do not have access to achievement score results on the grounds they would be used to rank schools. This is possible, but in a democracy, the public should have access to public information.

Third, there does not need to be silence or inaction on the part of public authorities with respect to the issues of equity in private contributions to public schooling. Low-income communities and schools with high portions of students from low-income families are at a disadvantage in the collection of private education contributions. Public policy can relieve this disadvantage. The state might contribute one additional dollar to low-income districts and low-income schools for every dollar raised by them privately. In this way legal private contributions to public schooling can be encouraged and the negative impact on inequality can be reduced.

Fourth, there needs to be legal consistency in classroom climate between public schools and examination cram schools. If corporal punishment is illegal in public schools, it should be illegal in all schools. There is no reason to tolerate schools that abrogate public standards of professional conduct in the treatment of minor children.

Fifth, it is clearly within the role of the state to equalize opportunity for those who are able but who cannot afford private fees. The state may set aside scholarships for private study for those who qualify on the grounds of both merit and need. For instance, charter schools in some American communities are required to admit a percentage of students from underprivileged groups. Similarly, the state may require private tutoring schools to take a percentage of students on scholarship. This constitutes "indirect" taxation to achieve a social benefit.

Of course the most effective way to reduce the need for private tutoring is to reduce the reason for private tutoring. In some countries, such as Korea, university entrance examinations are used for counterproductive purposes. It is counterproductive in a nation to use a university

entrance exam (rather than broader ability and interest) to determine a student's university program. Moreover, with 80% of the age cohort enrolled in higher education, a curriculum-based examination may no longer even be necessary. If students are admitted on the basis of aptitude, secondary school grades, demonstrations of good citizenship, and entrepreneurial experience, the pressure would shift from exams to other, perhaps more positive ways to prepare. Moreover, the solution to the inequity problems in Korean higher education may lie with university competition for international excellence. Because all world-class universities have a diversity in income, all seek diversity in student backgrounds because a diversity in student background augments a university's international reputation. A university that only has students from wealthy backgrounds can never attain world-class status (Heyneman, 2011). Therefore a greater diversity in income (well beyond tuition fees) would free Korean universities to seek greater diversity in student background and hence would help alleviate the demand for private tutoring.

In addition to making more use of the SAT, universities are free to demonstrate professional autonomy and courage. For instance, a courageous university might well announce that it will not accept any student who has benefited from an exam cram school. The role of the Korean government with respect to public education policy should shift from that of having tight control to that of allowing university autonomy. But institutional autonomy does not mean "no action." Education should not be treated like a bull stock market. Regulation and supervision are necessary to guide professional autonomy.

## CONCLUSION

In sum, wherever there are parents who love their children, and that is everywhere, there will continue to be the motivation to assist their children as much as possible. This motivation can be turned from a distortion of the public good to a general benefit. It can be made more transparent and less counterproductive. But it should always be assumed that parental willingness to invest in their child's education is a positive aspect of a mature democracy.

## AUTHOR BIO

Stephen P. Heyneman received his Ph.D. in comparative education from the University of Chicago in 1976. He served the World Bank for 22 years. In July 2000 he was appointed professor of International Education Policy at Vanderbilt University. Current interests include the effect of higher education on social cohesion, the international trade in education services and the economic and social cost to higher education corruption.

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