

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Case Study

University: The University of Hong Kong (HKU)
Unit of Assessment (UoA): UoA 41 education (incl. curriculum & instruction, education administration & policy and other education)
Title of case study: Shadow Education: Nature, Implications and Policy Development

(1) Summary of the impact

Out-of-school private supplementary tutoring, which has greatly expanded during recent decades, enhances learning and provides employment, but has a backwash on schooling by changing classroom dynamics and exacerbating social inequalities. The expansion of private tutoring has been especially obvious in East Asia, where it is commonly received by over 70% of senior secondary school students, and now is global. Such tutoring is widely called ‘shadow education’ because much of it mimics regular schooling: as the curriculum changes in the schools, so it changes in the shadow.

HKU research has mapped the phenomenon of shadow education globally and nationally, enhanced public understanding, and influenced the discourse of major international bodies, governments and practitioners. The research has shaped regulations in countries as diverse as Bangladesh, China and Mauritius on who is allowed to provide tutoring and under what conditions.

(2) Underpinning research

Much of the work has been conducted through the UNESCO Chair in Comparative Education awarded to HKU in 2011. Mark Bray, who leads the work on shadow education, is the Chairholder (having been employed by HKU since 1987). The foundation for the agenda was set by Bray’s book in the flagship series of UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) [2007 2nd edition; 1999 1st edition – R1], which was the first global study to address the shadow education phenomenon. IIEP is a bridge for researchers to reach Ministries of Education and international agencies. The book gained much attention in UNESCO itself, in governments, and in academia. It highlighted hidden social inequalities arising from shadow education.

A 2007 Policy Forum hosted by IIEP and directed by Bray led to a 2009 book titled *Confronting the Shadow Education System* [R2]. This volume was published in 21 languages, reflecting partnerships with governments and other stakeholders around the world who shared concern about the challenges around tutoring and desired comparative analysis to enhance understanding and inform policy. The book identified factors underlying demand and supply and highlighted both successful and problematic policies for tackling social inequalities.

The present decade has brought several regional volumes: Europe in 2011 [R3], Asia in 2012 [R4], and the Mediterranean in 2013. It has also brought deeper policy analysis in specific locations, particularly Cambodia, China, Dubai, Hong Kong, and Myanmar [R7], to show cultural variations.

From broad mapping, the research has turned to specific themes, including a 2014 book on regulations [R6] that built on a pair of Policy Forums (using the IIEP model) hosted by HKU’s Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC). The first Policy Forum brought together Ministry officers, tutoring companies, international agencies, parents, and researchers from 18 Asian countries, and was co-hosted by UNESCO and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The second Policy Forum focused on China. It was supported by the China Education Training Union (CETU), which is China’s industry association of over 1,000 tutoring companies. The CETU provided a path to impact in the industry and brought the notion of self-regulation to the table. Subsequently the Ministry of Education paid close attention to this book when devising the top-down regulations unveiled in 2018.

The 2014 book was co-published in English by CERC and UNESCO, and then co-published in Chinese by CERC, UNESCO and the CETU. The Korean and Japanese translations were similarly outcomes of partnership with national industry bodies, giving policymakers broader contextual

awareness for fine-tuning their own initiatives. In 2015, the Chinese version was launched in Zhengzhou at the CETU 10th anniversary conference to an audience of 3,000 managers and personnel from tutoring companies. A follow-up 2017 CERC Policy Forum brought together personnel from governments, companies, schools and researchers in Hong Kong, Japan, Mainland China and South Korea. Discussion focused not only on the nature of regulations but also on how regulations are commonly ignored and subverted. The Policy Forum and follow-up had a direct input to the Chinese government regulations promulgated in 2018 and to a 2019 review for enactment and fine-tuning of these regulations.

A separate research strand [R5] has focused on methods for documenting the scale and effects of shadow education. Cross-national studies, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) managed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), had definitional weaknesses causing data to be potentially misleading. The HKU research was recognised in 2011 by the OECD Education Policy Committee and led to improvements in research methods and analysis. New questions in the 2015 PISA (0.5 million students sampled in 72 countries, representing 28 million students) reflected the HKU team's work.

(3) References to the research (all peer reviewed)

- R1. Bray, M. (2nd edition 2007; 1st edition 1999): *The Shadow Education System: Private Tutoring and its Implications for Planners*. Paris: UNESCO-IIEP, 97 pp. Translations in Azeri, Chinese, Farsi, French, Japanese.
- R2. Bray, M. (2009): *Confronting the Shadow Education System: What Government Policies for What Private Tutoring?* Paris: UNESCO-IIEP, 132 pp. Translations in Arabic, Armenian, Azeri, Bengali, Chinese, Farsi, French, Georgian, Hindi, Kannada, Korean, Mongolian, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese, Sinhala, Spanish, Thai, Urdu, Uzbek.
- R3. Bray, M. (2011): *The Challenge of Shadow Education: Private Tutoring and its Implications for Policy Makers in the European Union*. Brussels: European Commission, 79 pp. Abstracts in French and German. Update in press: *ECNU Review of Education*, Vol.3, 2020.
- R4. Bray, M. & Lykins, C. (2012): *Shadow Education: Private Supplementary Tutoring and its Implications for Policy Makers in Asia*. Mandaluyong City: Asian Development Bank, and Hong Kong: HKU CERC, 98 pp. Translations in Chinese, Russian, Vietnamese.
- R5. Bray, M. & Kobakhidze, N. (2014): 'Measurement Issues in Research on Shadow Education: Challenges and Pitfalls Encountered in TIMSS and PISA'. *Comparative Education Review*, 58(4): 590-620. Chinese translation in *Research in Educational Development* [Shanghai], 2016, 33(15): 9-18. DOI: 10.1086/677907.
- R6. Bray, M. & Kwo, O. (2014): *Regulating Private Tutoring for Public Good: Policy Options for Supplementary Education in Asia*. Bangkok: UNESCO and Hong Kong: HKU CERC, 93 pp. Translations in Chinese, Korean, Japanese.
- R7. Bray, M.; Kobakhidze, N. & Kwo, O. (2019): *Shadow Education in Myanmar: Private Supplementary Tutoring and its Policy Implications*. Yangon: UNESCO, and Hong Kong: HKU CERC. Also available in Burmese language.

UNESCO (co-)funded R1, R2, R6 and R7. R3 was funded by the European Commission, which desired a regional study, having seen the 2009 global study [R2]; and similarly R4 was funded by the ADB. Each of these bodies then incorporated findings into their institutional agendas. Various bodies (co-)funded translations, including the League of Arab States [R2], Ministries of Education and affiliates [R2], NGOs [R1 and R2], and industry bodies [R6].

Other funding came from: the Hong Kong Research Grants Council (RGC) General Research Fund (GRF) for work on Hong Kong (2011), Cambodia (2013) and Shanghai (2015); the RGC Humanities and Social Sciences Prestigious Fellowship Scheme (HSSPFS) (2013); Dubai government for work in Dubai (2012/13); and UNESCO for work in Myanmar (2017/18).

(4) Details of the impact

The core messages about the need for policymakers to recognise the implications of shadow

education and to take action have been heard both globally and nationally. **Global** impact includes:

- **Commonwealth** [53 countries]: When Ministers of Education convened in Mauritius for their 2012 triennial conference, the shadow education research was referenced in the [lead document](#) (p.53) which had been prepared by Bray and a colleague. It was also given specific attention in the oral presentation. Participants learned from the host country, in which Parliament had referenced the shadow education research in 2011 when considering legal prohibition of tutoring and sought insights from Bray for their own contexts.

The sequel [lead document](#) for the 2015 Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in The Bahamas focused on Quality Education for Equitable Development. Shadow education was now recognised as a core theme (pp.10-15), and an indicator for each of the 53 country report cards (pp.162-267). Again the research was given specific attention in presentation to Ministers and senior officers, and followed up by Prof. Bray and others in individual conversations, including with the Bangladesh Minister of Education who had [reviewed policy](#) in part because of discussions in Mauritius and in Dhaka during the launch of the Bengali translation of the *Confronting* book [R2]. The Minister introduced new regulations, particularly on teachers who were providing private supplementary tutoring.

- **UNESCO** [195 countries]: The research has been recognized in assessments of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) agenda, shaping discourse on social inequalities. From 2015 stocktaking (of which Bray was part) emerged Goal 4 of the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Policies to achieve SDG Goal 4, and to monitor progress, now include a focus on shadow education. Bray has made key inputs to UNESCO's 2021 *Global Education Monitoring Report*, which will focus on non-state actors in education.

At the **national** level, actions and responses include:

- **Cambodia**. In 2016, GRF-funded findings were presented first to the planning unit of the Ministry of Education (which is staffed by former trainees of IIEP-UNESCO already familiar with earlier publications) and then to the Education Sector Working Group of donor agencies and development partners (UNESCO, UNICEF, ADB, etc.). Implications were incorporated into the agendas of the Ministry and these international agencies, including a World Bank project.
- **China**. In 2015, the China Education Training Union launched the [Chinese translation](#) of the book *Regulating Private Tutoring for Public Good* [R6] at a meeting of 3,000 practitioners from tutoring companies. Discussion by CETU leadership and member companies included a focus on self-regulation. A follow-up conference strengthened CETU's profile as an industrial association to build partnerships for legitimacy. The research has helped them realise the importance of [learning comparatively](#). For the [2018 conference](#), Bray was invited to advise further.

In December 2016, the Chinese Society of Education, which was established in 1979 as a bridge between the Ministry of Education and other actors, organised a national meeting to consult industry on the scope and mechanisms for regulation. Bray's keynote address highlighted the *Regulating Private Tutoring for Public Good* book [R6], and a team member joined a 10-person committee for the next stages of detail. In 2017 and 2019, team members returned to Beijing to work with one of the largest tutoring companies, [TAL Education Group](#), again making inputs to company policy on modes of operation.

The research was then reflected in new [government regulations](#), in which the distinction between academic and non-academic tutoring was based on Bray's conceptualization. The 2017 policy brief for the China Research Institute on Education Policy drew strongly on the *Regulating Private Tutoring for Public Good* book [R6]. The HKU team prepared policy advice with Ministry of Education partners for the State Council to finalise the document released in 2018.

Bray also provided guidance to the China Association for Non-Government Education (CANGE – the only official and national professional association representing the tutoring industry in policy formulation). Following participation in a HKU 2017 Policy Forum, the

CANGE Chief Secretary set up a committee on self-regulation and devised procedures for companies to sign self-regulation agreements. The CANGE reprinted and distributed 1,000 copies each of [Confronting the Shadow Education System](#) [R2] and [Regulating Private Tutoring for Public Good](#) [R6] for a national conference of tutoring providers, and presented key themes to the Ministry of Education.

- [Dubai](#). The Government's Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in 2012/13 commissioned the HKU team to undertake a survey and provide advice which was then incorporated into policy. [Public discussion](#) and follow-up in 2015/16 in both Dubai and [Ras al Khaimah](#) took the agenda further. In 2018 matters were taken to the national (United Arab Emirates) level by a sequel study undertaken by UNESCO for the Ministry of Education which led to national regulations.
- [Myanmar](#). In July 2016 Bray made a keynote address about governance and shadow education to the National Forum on Basic Education. The event was attended by Aung Sang Suu Kyi (pictures on [UNESCO Chair website](#)), and follow-up discussions with the Minister of Education and senior staff led UNESCO to fund the HKU team for a policy-oriented study on the roles of teachers. Detailed research in Yangon during 2017/18 generated understanding, recommendations and action not only at national but also at school levels.

(5) Sources to corroborate the impact

Many sources and impact can be corroborated by clicking the hyperlinks embedded in the electronic version of this document. Related information is on the [website of HKU UNESCO Chair](#). Policy and related documents influenced by the work include:

- S1. [Cambodia](#). Shadow education is now a core focus for the government, receiving explicit policy attention in the World Bank-supported [Secondary Education Improvement Project](#) (2017-2022).
- S2. [China](#). Review of regulations and their enactment, including English-language translations of policy documents in an [article by Zhang Wei](#) (member of the HKU team) [S2a]; report on [April 2019 CANGE meeting](#) highlighting agenda and participation [S2b]; much press coverage, of which a sample in English is: '[Mainland China's after-school tutoring industry ripe for consolidation amid tougher government oversight](#)' [S2c]. A senior Ministry of Education officer described work by Bray's team as "the only reliable and comprehensive international guide on the subject".
- S3. [Dubai](#). In 2013 the KHDA issued a [regulatory document](#) shaped by the research which set out the parameters in which tutoring institutes were permitted to work [S3a]. KHDA experience and related work by Bray and the HKU team was subsequently brought to the national (United Arab Emirates) level by the 2018 [follow-up study](#) leading to national policy recommendations [S3b].
- S4. [Myanmar](#). The Chairman of the National Education Policy Commission (NEPC) was already acquainted with Bray's work, and used further policy input in NEPC strategy. When the full report was presented to the Ministry of Education in September 2018, the Minister decided that a video of the presentation and both the full report and the Policy Brief would be distributed to every school. The [UNESCO office](#) is well connected to the Ministry and is following up.
- S5. [OECD](#): The research was considered by the [Education Policy Committee](#) in 2011 [S5a], and led to amendment of the questions in the 2012 and 2015 iterations of the [PISA survey](#) to secure better data [S5b]. Further feedback will lead to further amendments for future triennial iterations.
- S6. [UNESCO](#): The [EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015](#) was the major stocktaking document for the EFA process to 2015, from which Goal 4 of the 17 SDGs was developed [S6a]. The shadow education research was referenced on p.202. It was also recognised in the 2015 report [Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good?](#) (pp.74, 82) [S6b], which was a milestone report to revisit the renowned 1996 Delors Report. The research was further recognised in 2015 in the United Nations [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education](#) (p.17) [S6c].