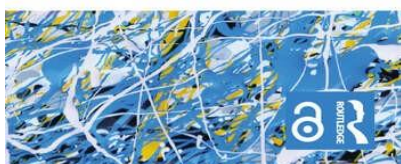




## Taming the Wild Horse of Shadow Education

The Global Expansion of Private Tutoring and Regulatory Responses

WEI ZHANG



## BOOK REVIEW

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The title of this text employs the metaphor of a wild horse as it refers to the prevalent phenomenon of a fee-charging, out-of-school, private supplementary tutoring which may be difficult for government authorities to control.

In the academic literature, private supplementary tutoring is interchangeably referred to as shadow education: “as the curriculum changes in the schools, so it changes in the shadow” (p. 2). Originally, the book draws on a Working Paper for UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report (2017). This report highlights the trajectories in education towards the fourth aim of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved by the United Nations in 2015, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (UNESCO, 2017). Nevertheless, some critics might argue that shadow education exacerbates the exclusivity and educational inequality, which is opposite to the fourth goal of SDGs.

The book is divided into three main parts. **“Part I: A Global Framework”** consists of two chapters. The first chapter, **“The Conceptual Framework”**, introduces the definitions of private supplementary tutoring and its main three components that distinguish it from private and public schooling according to Bray (1999). The author differentiates the types and venues of shadow education delivered by teaching personnel, tutoring enterprises, and a mixed type for readers to juxtapose and compare between their close boundaries. The author also highlights dominant characteristics of shadow education ranging from one-to-one and small group to lecture type and organized large classes offered by formal and informal tutoring providers.

Chapter 2 is of more significance and presents **“What Needs to Be Regulated, Why and How?”**. This chapter recollects an expanding phenomenon of private supplementary tutoring from various publications across the continents. The author suggests five main reasons why shadow education should be regulated: (1) social inequalities, (2) backwash of regular schooling, (3) corruption, (4) protection of consumers and employees, and (5) taxation. Moreover, the author elaborates a number of categories for possible regulation for tutoring companies such as registration, premises, personnel, contracts, advertising, and hours of operation. As far as the regulation is concerned, Zhang recommends tutoring providers and policy makers ponder the empirical evidence. Other suggested regulations for tutoring companies

include class size, affordability and financial management, curriculum and tutoring materials, organizational structure, as well as application of technology in registration, certification, monitoring, and consumer protection. Not only does the author suggest a five-dimensional model to regulate shadow education for companies, tutors, and consumers, but also advises an alternative approach to empower schools and teachers to provide tutoring under the socio-political condition of possibility. In addition to the diverse forms of private supplementary tutoring, the chapter discusses public-private partnerships (PPPs) in three major different modes to secure public trust and balance the institutional accountability.

Next, **“Part II: Five Countries Studies”** consists of five chapters. This second section presents a collection of the author’s previous case studies in five countries: Japan, China, India, Egypt, and Denmark from three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. Namely, **“Chapter 3: Japan - Changing Dynamics of Regulation and Self-regulation”** explains the evolution and expansion of shadow education in Japan, while **“Chapter 4: China – Strong State Confronting Strong Market”** discusses the interrelationships between the state’s regulation and the status of mainstream schooling in China. Then, **“Chapter 5: India – Diversity in a Decentralised System”** scrutinizes the complexities of decentralized systems in shadow education and challenges in legislative directions in India, whereas **“Chapter 6: Egypt – Teachers as Tutors”** highlights phenomenon of schoolteachers dual working as private tutors in Egypt. Lastly, **“Chapter 7: Denmark – Students as Tutors”** portrays a unique case study of young, untrained students working as private tutors in Denmark, which differs from its counterparts with recent emergence of shadow education as well as supplementary tutoring business models and patterns of (non-)regulations in the Scandinavian educational landscape.

In my opinion, the heart of this book lies in **“Part II: Five Countries Studies”** since the author does not only analyze the case studies individually across time and space in great depth, but she also contextualizes across these five case studies in breadth from micro- to macro-levels. This part invites the readers to actively consider possible context-specific issues, cultural diversities, and social norms in which each country values its educational system.

Furthermore, **“Part III: Conclusions”**, presents the author’s final remarks. In **“Chapter 8: Learning from Comparing”**, the author puts forward the trajectories in shadow education towards the fourth aim of the SDGs alongside aspirations, mandates, and goals in attempting to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (UNESCO, 2017). The author provides guidance to some extent regarding the professionalization and specialization of tutoring from ideal vision to policy enactment as well as possible challenges of shadow education that both tutoring companies and government authorities might encounter. Significantly, Zhang proposes four critical concepts and the author asserts that “shadow education and schooling must be considered together” (p. 116) as “takeaway” messages. Despite the educational inequalities and social disparities caused

by private tutoring, the author concludes that shadow education is “here to stay” (p. 113). Therefore, great attention should be paid to enforce regulations and policies for shadow education in an attempt to encompass several points of reference. Finally, the author advises why PPPs should transcend the commercial modes for sustainable education in response to the fourth SDG goal.

Regarding implications, the book advocates for changing the roles of stakeholders including students, parents, schoolteachers, private tutors, tutorial entrepreneurs, policy makers, and central governments. With respect to its nuanced contribution, this book can serve as a useful resource for master’s and doctoral students as well as academics who are interested in private supplementary tutoring and comparative education administration. Particularly, interested researchers may find this book valuable for not only identifying research gaps to fill, but also observing which research designs and data collection methods to replicate. However, this book is not free of limitations. Since only five case studies/countries among three continents were selected from the author’s previous works, these findings might not be generalizable elsewhere. Thus, in compliance with the fourth SDG goal, continued future investigations yielding further practical implementations from all stakeholders are urgently needed.

### **Author**

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