

Exploring the landscape of shadow education

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The diverse forms of private tutoring range from one-to-one sessions to large lecture halls with video screens. Parents and students seek this supplement to gain a competitive edge in countries where academic achievement is seen as a pathway to future opportunities. However, concerns regarding the commercialization of education, unequal access

based on socioeconomic status, and increased academic pressure on students have made shadow education contentious.

A set of articles in the *ECNU Review of Education* explores the prevalence of shadow education in different countries, the economic and [cultural factors](#) driving it, and its relationship with [government policies](#). This article was published in [ECNU Review of Education](#).

Dr. Wei Zhang, a Professor at the Institute of Curriculum & Instruction, East China Normal University, observes that, "The range of contexts in the present collection is striking. The articles include a focus on high-income countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members of the Middle East, together with Korea and Australia. Other articles focus on low-income contexts in Myanmar and India."

Shadow education is particularly popular in South Korea, where approximately 80% of students between grades 1 and 12 attend private tutoring institutions known as hagwons. The issue of the Review begins by exploring the history and evolution of shadow education in South Korea, covering its contentious past marked by a government ban in the 1980s and its persistence underground until legalization in the 2000s.

The analysis shows that shadow education has become a cultural phenomenon, remaining prevalent despite a strong school system.

The second article turns to the six GCC countries, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, where research on shadow education has been limited. It examines various strategies employed by the governments of these countries to regulate shadow education.

In some settings, teachers are prohibited from offering private tutoring, though in other settings, such work is permitted under certain conditions.

The article also notes ways in which immigration has influenced the educational landscape in these countries.

India, with a population of 1.4 billion, is an important market for shadow education. Unlike South Korea or the Gulf countries, India is distinctive in that its decentralized nature of governance gives state-level authorities more freedom to set education policies. Consequently, regulations for shadow education vary significantly across the country. The Review discusses shadow education in Maharashtra State, which has a population of 124.9 million.

It reveals that shadow education can act as a substitute for schooling as well as a supplement.

The next article focuses on research methods, drawing on insights from work in Myanmar. It stresses the diversity of forms of tutoring, which requires instruments able to discern a range of nuances rather than simple yes/no approaches. The article also highlights the value of qualitative alongside quantitative investigations.

Alongside private tutoring conducted by [commercial entities](#), in some settings, state-provided supplementation may be available. This is the case in Belarus, for example. The Review showcases a model that combines elements from both Soviet and post-Soviet cultures. This model includes regional study tours and focus on physical training, science and art.

In addition to [academic papers](#), the collection includes a Voice article by the CEO of the Australian Tutoring Association (ATA). It narrates his personal experience in provision of tutoring and in encouragement of self-regulation within the industry.

Shadow education, which operates alongside regular schooling, is on the

rise. This trend is influenced by the shift to online learning, cultural influences, and socioeconomic conditions.

Reviewing historical trends in China, Prof. Zhang remarked that "the government's discouragement and prohibition of teachers providing tutoring opened more avenues for tutorial companies, which began to boom, especially in urban areas."

"Technological advances fueled the boom, reducing travel time for clients and enabling providers to reach rural as well as urban areas. The closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic further increased the demand for supplementary services."

This picture changed abruptly with the promulgation on 2021 of the 'double reduction' policy leading to closure of large numbers of tutorial centers.

This multifaceted review on shadow education provides valuable insights for educators and policymakers regarding the factors driving shadow education and how concerns regarding it can be addressed.

More information: Wei Zhang (🔗🔗), Extending the Comparisons of Shadow Education and Its Nexus With Schooling, *ECNU Review of Education* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/20965311231218015](https://doi.org/10.1177/20965311231218015)

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