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# How is private tutoring framed?

## A mixed-methods analysis of the private tutoring literature

## Abstract

## Introduction

### Overview

In homes, schoolrooms and tutoring centers all around the world, students end their official school day and begin a second round of studies. Almost always for a fee, these students take extra lessons to better prepare themselves for exams, QQQ, or simply because that is what is expected of them. In Cambodia a students return to school after lunch for a second math class. In the United States, students are bussed to tutoring centers where they are prepared for their end of the year tests in math and language arts. In Japan, students pack into crowded juku centers to prepare for national college-entrance exams.

These are all well known examples of private tutoring, but what of other forms of supplementary education? Art lessons, cultural courses, and language classes all take place outside the regular school structure, so does the literature consider them to be private tutoring? Similarly, does a fee need to be charged before we call something private tutoring or shadow education? How does the literature describe private tutoring? As a corrupt practice that preys on disadvantaged students, or simply the natural workings of the educational market? Do people who pursue private tutoring feel the mainstream education system has somehow failed?

We can begin answering these questions by looking at how private tutoring is framed within the various publications. A complex phenomenon, private tutoring alternatively framed as corruption among teachers, a way of promoting social cohesion, or simply a way to cover material needed for national exams.

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### Relevant Theories and Past Research

#### Critical Discourse Analysis

#### Private tutoring as a field of study.

### The Present Research

In our literature analysis we wish to address the following questions:

* How do authors frame private tutoring in comparative and international education publications?
* Do authors frame private tutoring differently in different geographical contexts?
* Has the way the literature frames private tutoring changed over time?
* Do quantitative and qualitative researchers frame private tutoring differently?
* Are there differences in the way private tutoring is framed between papers with take a single-case versus a comparative approach.

## Methods

### Timeline

This project began in the summer of 2012 when the authors of this paper met to set-up the initial areas of interest. A coding scheme was developed and tested on an small selection of publications related to private tutoring. The coding scheme was then refined and tested on a larger selection of publications. In the fall of 2012, an additional graduate student was added to the project and an exhaustive literature search was conducted. Journal articles, country reports, book chapters, and dissertations focusing on private tutoring, cram schools, shadow education, supplementary education, and non-state provision of education were collected.

These articles were reviewed to ensure they focused on private tutoring. Throughout the fall of 2012 and spring of 2013, English-language articles were collected and coded. Initial findings showed changes in how private tutoring was discussed between regions and over time. At this time the literature search was expanded to include Chinese-language articles as additional graduate students were added to the team. At the World Congress of Comparative Education Societies in 2013, the concept was shared. Feedback from the conference was incorporated into the coding.

In the fall and winter of 2013, coding continued and the database was cleaned and refined. All publications were coded by at least two researchers and conflicts were resolved. A reporting system was built so findings could be shared with all group members in real-time. In March 2014 initial descriptive results were presented at the CIES conference in Toronto, ON. Feedback from the conference resulted in additional literature searches. In the summer and fall of 2014 additional publications were added to the database and coded. Group members met to code free-text answers and “other” responses for certain questions using CDQ.

In the winter of 2014, the finial rounds of coding were conducted and analysis began.

### Sample

The process began with an exhaustive search for all Chinese-language and English-language articles, books and book chapters, dissertations, and reports related to private tutoring, supplementary education, cram schools, and non-state provision of education. Publications were selected using two criteria:

* One, the focus was on private tutoring as an educational phenomenon. Publications briefly mentioning private tutoring or describing techniques to provide private tutoring were removed from the pool.
* Two, studies were written prior to March 31, 2014.

Conference papers where not included in the final analysis. This search resulted in 286 publications. This paper will focus just on English-language publications, of which there were 188. Table 1 below shows the distribution among English-language publication types.

Table 1  
*Publication Types*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Freq. |
| Journal Article | 132 |
| Dissertation | 19 |
| Book Chapter | 16 |
| Book | 8 |
| Report | 7 |
| Discussion Paper/Working Paper | 6 |

## How is private tutoring framed?

As can be seen in figure , nearly 83% of the publications framed private tutoring as being related to curriculum coverage and/or exam preparation. This is not unexpected. Many frequently studied private tutoring systems, such as the hagwon system in South Korea or the juku system in Japan, are focused on preparing students for national exams. In the United States, which has no government-based system of graduation or college entry exams, students take private tutoring as a way of preparing for informal college entry tests such as the SATs and ACTs.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Freq. |
| Related to curriculum coverage / ed. quality / exam prep | 156 |
| Equity | 105 |
| Supply & Demand / Economic Efficiency | 61 |
| Household Expenditures | 52 |
| Global Trend | 43 |
| Corruption | 25 |
| Social Cohesion | 7 |
| Culture | 3 |
| Teacher Professionalism | 2 |
| Parental Involvement | 2 |

 