

BOOK REVIEW

Regulating Private Tutoring for Public Good: Policy Options for Supplementary Education in Asia By Mark Bray and Ora Kwo (2014), 93pp. ISBN: 978-988-17852-9-9, Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre.

In this monograph, Bray and Kwo provide a list of supplementary tutoring in 32 countries in Asia which indicates the scale and spread of this type of education in this region. Private tuition has been in existence in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan for some time, whereas in parts of Central and Northern Asia, it is now gaining momentum after being muted during the Soviet era prior to 1991.

The monograph by Bray and Kwo also focus on regulating private tutoring for public good. The authors offer various policy options for governments and suggestions for implementation. Having shown that private tutoring is becoming a global phenomenon and a huge industry, they also discuss private tutoring participation by subjects and the mode of tutoring such as one-to-one either in the tutor's or the student's home, which is usually more expensive than other modes (i.e. small-group tutoring, large-classes in classrooms or lecture theatres and internet and broadcast tutoring).

The book starts with an introduction mapping out the conceptual framework and moves on to elaborate on what and who should be regulated. In chapter two, they discuss the scale and spread of private tuition, which has moved beyond Asia to become a global phenomenon. They then discuss the subjects and modes of providing tuition. The diversity of providers range from university students, mainstream school teachers, professional tutors to online tutoring. They also provide country examples, in terms of the magnitude of private tutoring.

In chapter three, the authors provide cogent reasons as to why private tutoring should be regulated. They begin with social inequalities brought about by socio-economic, racial/ethnic, rural/urban and gender differences. They also consider the backwash effect on regular schooling. They introduce the metaphor of corruption in situations where mainstream school teachers deliberately reduce the coverage of regular lessons to increase the demand for private tuition. Chapter four deals with the various requirements needed for companies providing private tutoring, regular teachers providing tutoring, students and other self-employed persons providing tutoring and Internet tutoring. The chapter cites the requirements needed for serving teachers in twenty-one countries.

In the succeeding chapter the authors state that for the implementation of private tutoring to be effective, the following factors have to be considered: (i) Deploying the necessary personnel, (ii) Educating the consumers for informed choices, (iii) Encouraging self-regulation and (iv) Building partnerships – with schools, teachers' unions, other branches of governments, community bodies and with media

The authors recommend that authorities should involve all the stakeholders for the pursuit of public good and conclude that a government's responsibility is not only to pay attention to the quality and impact of education of the public sector, but also to include the private sector to promote sound social and economic development. In the six chapters of the monograph, they trace the growth and expansion of the private tuition industry in the Asian region and discuss both its positive and negative effects on the regular school system. The authors make a strong case as to who and why the industry should be regulated. Country-specific examples in the region are provided and their experiences are discussed in depth. Also, Bray and Kwo provide suggestions as to how rules and regulations can be effectively implemented.

This monograph is a must for educational policy makers, academics, graduate research students, parents and members of the public who are interested in the subject of private tuition. The references are impressive. Readers are advised to source Bray's other publications on shadow education for further reference.

T. Marimuthu
Professor
Asia-E University