



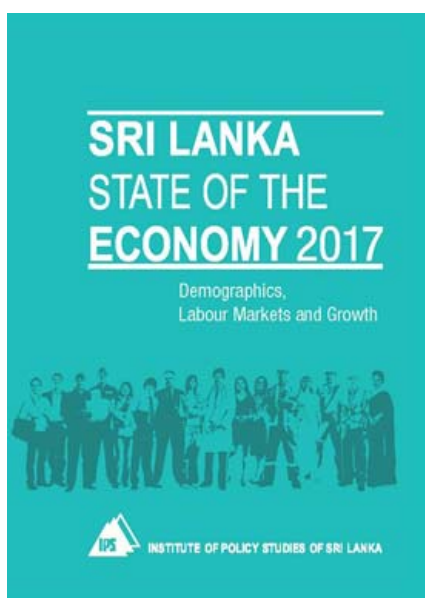
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POLICYINSIGHTS

INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES OF SRI LANKA

DISSECTING SHADOW EDUCATION

From the IPS flagship publication 'Sri Lanka: State of the Economy 2017 Report'



Policymakers have long recognized the central role played by education in reducing economic and social inequalities and promoting inclusive economic growth. However, the focus has been mostly limited to mainstream education, ranging from kindergartens and primary and secondary schooling to the tertiary sector. Although the scale and nature of shadow education, more commonly known as 'private tuition,' can have far-reaching implications for academic achievement, socio-economic inequalities, and even economic development, it has received minimal attention or policy focus to date.

The main driver of demand for shadow education is the belief that greater investments in education will facilitate superior performance in major examinations and entrance to prestigious secondary schools and universities. The private tutoring

industry has emerged as a key employment provider partly owing to low barriers to entry and a major driver of the provision of supplementary tutoring is low teacher salaries.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of Shadow Education

The most obvious impact of shadow education is in academic achievement, although the implicit assumption that private tutoring contributes positively towards academic attainment depends both on the quality of tutoring and the ability and motivation of students. Private tutoring can also be instrumental in developing a child's self-esteem and sense of achievement. Tutoring can be particularly important to slow learners who require additional support to keep up with their peers. Another positive aspect of tutoring is its potential to encourage desirable traits such as self-discipline.

Despite such advantages, there is no strong evidence that private tutoring always generates gains in learning, whereas it also focuses on narrow domains of achievement. Shadow education involves the risk of reducing education to mere academic achievement, whereas education is a much broader concept including physical, aesthetic, and social development through sports, music and arts, and relationships with members of society. Shadow education can also contribute to inefficiencies in the education system, by diverting students' attention from school teachers operating under the free education system to fee-charging tutors, and

eliminating talent from the mainstream system. In Hong Kong, for example, some of the most famous tutors are former school teachers who have left the school system in favor of tutoring. Corruption in the shadow education system is another area of concern.

Even more disconcerting is the fact that shadow education can maintain and intensify economic and social inequalities. More affluent households are able to secure and access private tutoring in greater quantity as well as quality compared to poorer households. Shadow education can thus pose a threat to free public education systems which aim to ensure equal educational access to all students. Moreover, school teachers who also engage in tutoring might spend more effort on their private tuition classes or might deliberately limit the content taught during regular school hours to ensure demand for tuition classes.

Shadow Education in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka private tutoring has become a social norm, **and features as the largest component of the household education budget.** The highly competitive nationally qualifying examinations of Sri Lanka's education system, namely the Grade Five Scholarship examination and the O-Level and A-Level examinations, generate high demand for shadow education. Other factors driving demand for private tutoring include social competition to enroll in popular schools, limited higher education opportunities with only around 18

per cent of A-Level qualified students being able to obtain admission to state universities, low school quality and teacher salaries, a low share of expenditure on education and overloaded school curriculums.

Implications for Policymakers

Shadow education has so far been a largely neglected phenomenon; yet, its increasing influence suggests that it cannot be ignored any longer. A starting point for policymakers is to recognize the existence, nature, and implications of shadow education. This requires obtaining comprehensive data on the scale, scope, and intensity of private tutoring. Given that shadow education is largely driven by overloaded school curriculums and systems of assessment and selection, changes in these systems are needed in altering the nature and role of private tutoring.

45% of Education

Budget

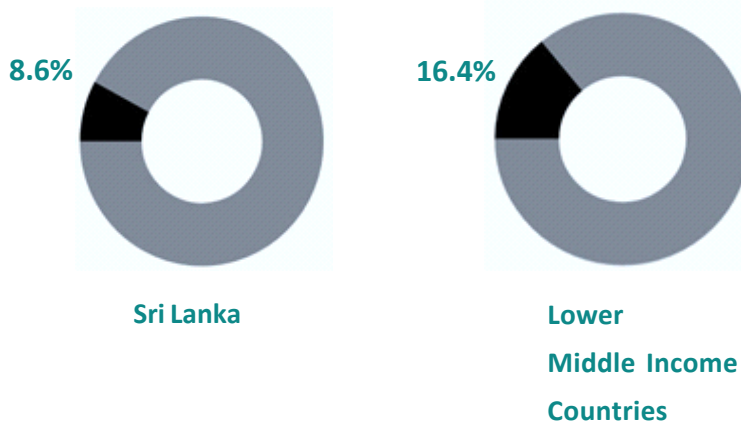
Private Tutoring



2012/2013

Expenditure on Education

(As a % of total Government Expenditure)



The positive aspects of shadow education can be strengthened by introducing government regulations. An encouraging development in this regard is a recent report prepared by the National Education Commission (NEC), which proposes several measures to monitor and regulate private tutoring in Sri Lanka. These include the setting up of an authority within the Ministry of Education to provide for the regulation, registration, and inspection of premises and facilities used for private tuition groups of 20 or more, the licensing of individuals engaged as private tutors, and specifying penalties for violating legal provisions. Regulations are also important for school teachers who provide private tutoring, particularly in ensuring that tutoring does not negatively affect the quality of teaching at school. In minimizing negative impacts of shadow education, initiating school-level programmes to support

learning is also important. Such programmes can help in ensuring the equitable access of learning material for students from different backgrounds.

This Policy Insight is based on the comprehensive chapter on "Shadow Education" in the 'Sri Lanka: State of the Economy 2017 Report' - the flagship publication of the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS). The complete report can be purchased from the publications section of the IPS, located at 100/20, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7. For more information, contact the Publications Unit on 0112143107/0112143100.



IPS
 100/20, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7,
 Sri Lanka
 T: +94 11 2143100 / 2665068,
 F: +94 11 2665065
 www.ips.lk