

Public-Private Partnerships in Supplementary Education: Sharing Experiences in East Asian Contexts

Mark Bray & Wei Zhang

The Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) at the University of Hong Kong has a global reputation for work on supplementary education. A particular focus is on academic forms of private tutoring delivered outside school hours to children and youths in primary and secondary schooling (see e.g. Bray & Lykins, 2012; Bray et al., 2015; Kobakhidze, 2018; Zhang, 2014; Zhang & Yamato, 2018). Among the latest CERC ventures is recognition that private enterprises sometimes operate in conjunction with public bodies. In December 2017, CERC in conjunction with UNESCO hosted a Policy Forum focusing on public-private partnerships (PPPs). This article reports on the nature of the event and on its significance in the wider field of extended education.



Participants

The Policy Forum brought together a unique group of participants from Hong Kong, Mainland China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. These societies share some commonalities in culture and educational provision, but also have significant differences. The Republic of Korea, for example, has a long history of private supplementary tutoring especially through institutions called *hagwons*. The government has tended to frown on these institutions because it has been concerned about marketization of education, social inequalities, and the study burden on students (Choi & Cho, 2016). At the same time, the Korean authorities have provided alternative channels through publicly-funded after-school programmes available to students in all income groups (Bae & Jeon, 2013; Ha & Park, 2017; Gim 2017). Japan also has a long history of private supplementary education, particularly through institutions called *juku*, though government policies have been more relaxed (Entrich, 2018; Sato, 2012). In Hong Kong private tutoring emerged in a significant way during the 1990s, and in the contemporary period is characterised in the commercial sector by multiple small enterprises and a few large companies made highly visible through brash advertising and mostly treated by the government in a *laissez-faire* way (Yung & Bray, 2017). Mainland China, by contrast, has witnessed rapid expansion of the phenomenon during the present century, ini-

tially treated by the government in a *laissez faire* way but more recently with directive and regulatory policies (Zhang & Bray, 2016; China, 2018). These contextual commonalities and differences provided a very instructive arena for comparison.

The invitations to participants were carefully managed to secure a balance and diversity of voices. Government and private-sector personnel commonly live in their own worlds with little direct communication about each other's aspirations, challenges and strategies. With that in mind, a major goal for the Policy Forum was to facilitate exchanges within as well as across the four jurisdictions. The original intent was to restrict the size to 25 participants in order to achieve deep conversations among a limited number of actors, but because of demand – and also supply in the form of additional funding from partners – the event ultimately expanded to 53 participants in the following categories:



- legislatures and other policy-making bodies,
- Ministries of Education,
- companies and non-governmental organisations that deliver private supplementary tutoring,
- national associations of bodies that provide private supplementary tutoring,
- public schools, and
- researchers.

The main language of the event was English, but to facilitate communications arrangements were made for simultaneous translation to Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

Contexts and Framework

Elaborating on the contexts, it is useful to commence with the global picture. As noted elsewhere in this journal and associated events, private supplementary tutoring in academic subjects, which is a subset of extended education, has greatly expanded throughout the world (Bae & Hong, 2016; Klieme, 2017; Vest et al., 2013). The phenomenon is particularly evident in East Asia, including the four jurisdictions addressed during the Policy Forum,

but is now evident in many other settings, both high-income and low-income. It is driven by a mix of factors including social competition in an era of globalisation and expanded schooling and tertiary education (Bray, 2017). Governments have been reluctant to get involved in the sector, viewing their main responsibilities as provision of public education and perhaps also in regulatory frameworks for private institutions that operate as alternatives to public ones. Indeed Ministries of Education commonly see themselves *de facto* mainly as Ministries of Schooling, and pay little attention even to adult education and many other forms of extended education. A rationale for this approach is that governments already have enough to do with their focus on schooling and perhaps also higher education. Further while education is widely seen as a public good (see e.g. Chattopadhyay, 2012), this is usually interpreted to mean schooling especially at the compulsory level.

Nevertheless, whether the authorities like it or not the scale of private supplementary tutoring, commonly called shadow education because of the way that much content mimics that in public schooling, is expanding globally. Viewed positively, some tutoring enhances learning and human capital, and it also provides employment for tutors. More problematic may be the impact on social inequalities because low-income families cannot afford either the types or the quantities of tutoring that can be afforded by higher-income families. Further, shadow education may have a backwash on the school sector by widening diversity within classrooms and shaping the behaviour of regular teachers. Some teachers assume that students can and will access private supplementary services if in need, and then themselves devote less effort to their classroom duties than otherwise they would have done. Additional factors concern the facilities, curricula, contractual arrangements and other dimensions which cause governments to consider regulations for the sector (Bray & Kwo, 2014).

Turning specifically to the four jurisdictions represented in the Policy Forum, Table 1 presents snapshots on the scale of tutoring. In each setting the phenomenon had greatly expanded in recent times, and particularly in the largest jurisdiction, Mainland China, it was set for much further expansion. In all settings some tutoring was provided by university students and similar actors on an informal basis. In some other parts of the world, regular teachers supplemented their incomes by providing private tutoring (see e.g. Bray et al., 2016), but this was not a major phenomenon in Hong Kong, Japan and the Republic of Korea, and was actively discouraged by the authorities in Mainland China (see e.g. Zhang, 2014). Thus the main focus of the Policy Forum was on institutional forms of private tutoring operated by companies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and on their relationships with public schools.

Table 1: The Scale of Private Supplementary Tutoring

Jurisdiction	Patterns
Hong Kong	A 2011/12 survey of 1,646 students in 16 schools found that 53.8% of Grade 9 students and 71.8% of Grade 12 students were receiving tutoring (Bray 2013, p.21).
Japan	A 2015 national survey found that 47.7% of Grade 6 and 60.8% of Grade 9 students received tutoring in Gakushū juku (tutoring enterprises) or with private tutors in Japanese, Mathematics and Science (calculated from data in Japan, 2015, p.66).
Korea, Republic of	In 2017, 82.3% of elementary school pupils were estimated to be receiving private tutoring. In middle school the proportion was 66.4%; and in general high school it was 50.4% (KOSIS, 2018).
Mainland China	A 2010 nationwide representative sample of students in Grades 1 to 12 found that 46.4% of urban students and 16.6% of rural ones had received private tutoring during the previous year (Liu & Bray 2017, p.212).

The opening session for the Policy Forum noted not only the above dimensions of context but also some undercurrents. Vocabulary about public-private partnerships may be deceptively positive and gloss over complexities in definitions, competencies and power relations (see e.g. Patrinos et al., 2009; Wang, 2000). First, concepts of public and of private may not be clear-cut, e.g. because governments provide public subsidies to private schools or because private actors may operate either for profit or not for profit and may contribute to public institutions. Further, partnerships do not necessarily lead to better outcomes. Schools, governments and tutoring providers can collaborate in ways that undermine education goals and corrupt the system (Zhang & Bray, 2017). In addition, partnerships may be:

- *passive*, in which public schooling and private supplements complement each other but are not coordinated;
- *moderate*, e.g. when public teachers recommend tutors to students and their families, and perhaps even monitor the activities of the tutors and liaise with the families; and/or
- *active*, in which public schools and private supplementary education providers collaborate in specific programmes.

The participants gave examples from each category, but this report focuses only on the third.

Some Examples

The representative from Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) commenced his presentation by indicating that his Ministry had once considered that *juku* attendance as a form of overheating that should be reduced by improving public education and adjusting the entrance examination system. More recently, he indicated, the Ministry had considered "that *juku* play a definite role as one of the study environments outside of school", and aimed to promote cooperation between schools and the supplementary institutions (Isashiki, 2017, p.14). As one component, MEXT had established "a community-based tutoring program for the future", called *chiiki mirai juku*, for secondary students facing financial and/or learning difficulties (Niitsu, 2016). It also supported after-

school and Saturday study support programmes in which social resources including *juku* were mobilised to provide services. In addition, various local municipalities independently subsidised classes provided by partnerships between *juku* and schools, making these classes either free of charge or with low fees. The Ministry's principal goal was to access the expertise of the private sector while reducing social inequalities and revitalising communities.

From the side of the private sector, several related remarks were made by the President of the Japan Juku Association (JJA). He noted a shift from the situation in 1987, when the Administrative Vice-Minister of Education had argued that *juku* brought harmful influences to the education sector, to the situation in 1999 when MEXT's Lifelong Learning Council had reported that "the support of *juku* cannot be underestimated when considering a myriad of children's learning activities in the context of distinctive regional educational environment" (Ando, 2017, p.6). The JJA President then highlighted specific projects, commencing with a 2004 initiative through which the JJA introduced mathematics tutors to a Tokyo school which then signed contracts with these tutors for support services. The second initiative, in Osaka, was stronger cooperation through which in 2010 the JJA acted as intermediary for *juku* to supply tutors to public schools for an Academic Performance Improvement Project; and the third was a scheme in which the government provided vouchers of up to ¥7,000 (US\$63) per month to support children of low-income families desiring extra-curricular support.

Parallel patterns were noted in the Republic of Korea. During the Policy Forum one of the Governors of Education recalled that in the 1980s the military government of the time had prohibited *hagwons* but was challenged in the courts and told in 2000 that such prohibition was unconstitutional (Lee, 2017, p.10). Following this ruling, the number of *hagwons* grew rapidly, and the authorities tried an alternative tack of setting maximum prices, restricting hours of operation, and prohibiting teachers and university professors from engaging in out-of-school tutoring. However, the Governor recognised, "all these policies had failed". Parents could see the value of out-of-school tutoring for social mobility, and "schools and shadow education had no choice but to adjust to parents' demand". The government was mindful of the need to strengthen public education so that families would not feel that private supplements were essential, and the Governor also mentioned (p.13) that his office was "subsidising workshops for *hagwon* operators to strengthen their capacity".

On the private sector side, perspectives from the President of the National Hagwon Association noted the history of government antagonism to the tutoring institutions. He suggested that *hagwons* "are no longer subordinates to schools" and that "public and private education sectors are in a complementary relationship like the two wheels in a wagon" (Cho, 2017, p.30). The partnerships that he highlighted included offer of vouchers for tutoring to children from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds in partnership with provincial governments and the Korean Community Chest. The President desired partnership with the Ministry of Education at the national level, but indicated that to date the political atmosphere had not been conducive.

Developments in Mainland China were perhaps the most dynamic among the four jurisdictions, with the national government moving towards regulation of tutorial enterprises (China, 2018). At the same time, individual institutions found their own modes of partnership. The principal of one high school during the Policy Forum noted on the one hand the

demand for supplementary education and on the other hand the prohibition of teachers from mainstream schools offering supplementary tutoring outside standard schooling (Wang, 2017, p.83). Part of the solution, he suggested, was to collaborate with tutoring institutions, e.g. in the teaching of English by native speakers and in sports. The principal indicated that when students wished to receive private supplementary tutoring during school hours, they were permitted to do so as long as they submitted to the school the applications signed by both parents and the head teachers. The principal was proud to name two students who had gained admission to the prestigious Tsinghua University with support from private tutoring in arts and physical education.

Follow-up discussion led to a consensus that tutoring in academic subjects should be distinguished from tutoring in arts and sports. Partnerships in academic subjects need to be established and operated with careful planning, monitoring and evaluation since they bring corruption risks and potential backwash on schooling. By contrast, tutoring in non-academic subjects are less likely to clash with school offerings and can be utilised more fully.

The Policy Forum also heard about two initiatives in Hong Kong. One was from the co-founder of a large company who highlighted instances in which schools sought to employ tutors from the company using financial allocations granted by the government (Eng, 2017). The schools particularly valued tips on ways to prepare for the public examinations. The company accepted remuneration in some cases and offered free-of-charge services in other cases. The second initiative was presented by a not-for-profit tutoring enterprise that had built relationships with schools with some programmes charging fees and others being free of charge (Tse, 2017).

Lessons and Further Steps

Reviewing the field in 2016, Bae and Hong (p.134) observed that:

Research in extended education is still in progress. There exist many issues that have received little attention among researchers. There are also many fields in extended education that have been less investigated.

Private supplementary tutoring is clearly a sub-field within the broader domain of extended education that needs more attention across and within individual countries; and within this sub-field, the concepts and practices of public-private partnerships also deserve further exploration. The Policy Forum hosted by the University of Hong Kong was a major step in this direction, and has been followed up by discussions among and beyond the groups that participated. Concepts from the event have taken forward in a range of ways in all the jurisdictions (see e.g. China, 2018; Ip, 2017; Japan Juku Association, 2018; Kim, 2017).

At the same time, much further analysis is needed. The President of the Korea's National Hagwon Association had a positive metaphor when describing the public and private education sectors as being "in a complementary relationship like the two wheels in a wagon"; but the wheels are of very different sizes and do not always move smoothly and in harmony. As noted above, some relationships are passive with public schooling and private supplements complementing each other but with little or no coordination. Other relation-

ships are more active but informal and driven by individual teachers and families rather than institutions; and institutional arrangements are not always smooth and sustained. These dimensions are being explored further by the authors of this article, who will welcome interactions and collaborations with readers.

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