

## Perception of Teachers and Students towards Shadow Education

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### Abstract

*This paper explored perception of teachers and students on the practices and trends of shadow education. It is a qualitative study adopting narrative inquiry. Eight students studying Bachelor in Education (B. Ed.) and Bachelor in Business Studies (BBS) and five teachers teaching in different schools were purposively selected as informants. Semi-structured interviews were made to gather perception of the participants. The findings were illustrated in narrative and descriptive ways. The findings indicated that students and teachers perceived shadow education as the part of schooling that has prevailed in schools and colleges. The learners preferred private tutoring to formal regular classes as they found private tutoring more interactive and student centric than the formal classes. Additionally, this study indicated that the learners, teachers and authorities readily involve in shadow education. The implication of the present study is important for administrators, teachers, and students to make formal schooling more effective.*

**Keywords:** shadow education, private tutoring, formal education, coaching

### Introduction

Students enrolled in the formal education institutions must appear to the prescribed or formal classes. However, it has not always been possible. In this regard, Bray (2013) remarks that the learning day does not end for most people around the world when the school bell rings for the end of classes. Besides the formal classes in schools and colleges, students also opt private tutoring or shadow education within the same institution or at any other organizations. The classes in private tutoring fulfil the course activities they often carry out inside the formal classroom. The practice of private tutoring has become an extension of formal schooling. This private tutoring has become widely known as shadow education (Bray, 1999; Lee et al., 2009; Stevenson & Baker, 1992), different practice than mainstream education system. It is shadow in the sense that much content of private supplementary tutoring imitates the schools and

universities (Bary, 2014). This phenomenon has engulfed South Asian countries such as India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan since last few decades (see Bray, 2010). Shadow education has widened globally as the trend of education system.

To add more, the term 'shadow education' which is synonymously used as 'private tutoring', 'supplementary tutoring', 'coaching', 'extra classes', 'tuition classes' (see Bray, 2010, 2014; Lee et al., 2009) conveys the image of outside-school learning activities paralleling features of formal schooling used by students to increase their own educational opportunities (Baker et al., 2001). Recent education trend has brought private supplementary tutoring, widely known as shadow education (Bray, 2010). Such tutoring is usually viewed as an investment that will increase the learners' academic achievement. It is taken as a supplementary form of formal academic practice. Similarly, Stevenson and Baker (1992) define shadow education as 'a set of educational activities that occur outside formal schooling and are designed to enhance the student's formal school career' (p. 1639). The tutors often follow the courses and the structure of the school where students attend their formal classes. They often use the supplementary materials prescribed by the formal courses introduced by schools and universities.

However, some parameters are different in shadow education than that of formal education practice. Firstly, time duration of the classes differs. In shadow education, the time duration depends on the requirements of the students and the courses. If students take longer classes, it is possible to extend. "Unlike regular schooling, in which students are assumed to attend lessons 5 days a week during term time, tutoring may be received on highly variable schedules according to demand and supply" (Bray 2014, p. 282). Nature, complexity of the course and demand of the learners vary the schedules.

Secondly, the number of students in private tutoring varies. It can take place from a single learner to the large number of students. There is no limitation in number. This may depend on the investment made by the learner's side to the tutor. Thirdly, it is the pedagogic approach that affects the number of learners. Tutors feel free to use the techniques and approaches that suit the individual learners in private tutoring. In some countries, teachers commonly provide private tutoring for pupils to whom they are already responsible in regular classes (Bray, 2009; Dawson 2010). Similar situation is there in Nepalese context.

In Nepalese schools and colleges, the growing trend of shadow education as an alternative tutoring system has been increasing (Subedi, 2018). It seems to be a

growing culture in academia (Bray, 2014). Nepal is also adhering its effect from the basic education to the tertiary level. It has become a common issue in Nepalese society (Subedi, 2018). As a witness and practitioner of private tutoring, I have also found that it is highly practised in schools and colleges of Dhading district.

There have been many researches carried in the field, but no study has succinctly explored the perception and practices of teachers and students towards shadow education. Subedi (2018) has explored processes, reasons and consequences of shadow education in the context of secondary schools of Nepal. However, this has not presented wide experience of higher-level students and teachers regarding its trends, need and benefits to teachers and students. Similarly, research studies on the effectiveness of tutoring have delivered inadequate and even contradictory findings (Bray, 2009, 2014). Being one of the types of education, it is important to explore its repercussion to the students' need and satisfaction also. This study mainly focused on how the teachers and students perceive about the practices and trends of shadow education in Nepalese context.

### **Review of Literature**

This study draws on recent trend of practicing shadow education in Nepalese context. The primary concern of the research was to explore teachers' and students' perception about the practices and trends of shadow education. The review covers areas and issues explored by the researches made in the area of shadow education.

For Mori and Baker (2010), private tutoring is a form of shadow education. It has strong implications for equity, for schools, for colleges, and for lives of children and families that it must be addressed (Truszczynski, 2011). For Bray (2014), the intensity, scales, modes, actors and, subjects of shadow education may vary from one location to another. Equally, shadow education has widened its access to test preparation of different levels and programs. Buchmann et al. (2010) extend its theoretical utility to the United States (U.S.) case, with a substantive and empirical focus on college test preparation. Their analyses show that background inequalities in family income and parental education shape the likelihood of the students' engagement in various forms of shadow education and test preparation activities that have important implications for both test performance and selective college enrollment in the United States of America (USA). Buchmann et al. (2010) consider the implications of these findings for understanding shadow education, stratification and educational mobility in the U. S. and worldwide.

Conversely, different types of tutoring dominate in diverse cultures, income groups, and remarks of the respective people on the forces of technology and globalization. Within this context, shadow education brings complex implications for policy-makers and practitioners of formal education. It has positive as well as negative dimensions, and requires sophisticated analysis and greater attention from researchers (Bray, 2010). On these grounds, recent tutoring approaches are attempting to increase the correspondence between what students need to learn and what is expected for them to know once they finish their courses. The question remains researchable whether students are taught so that they can excel on a test or they are taught to supplement formal classes. Indicating this query, Entrich (2015) stresses the importance of acknowledging the existence of a multitude of actors involved in each phase of the decision-making process, including the students themselves, especially when explaining inequalities in modern societies. Thus far, socioeconomic background and parents' educational aspirations, in conjunction with students' academic achievement, have been deemed influential to such decisions.

Moreover, talking about the student achievement, Bray, (2013) believes that private tutoring consumes considerable resources and is usually viewed by participating households as an investment that will increase the recipients' academic achievements. Valerio (2012) focused on some problems concerning language teaching in one-to-one classes, such as students' typology, curriculum implementation, and learning continuity. However, it is not only in the case of language teaching. Bray (2014) assesses the current state of the literature and makes recommendations for the future research agenda as the practice of shadow education has been prevalent in many disciplines.

Regarding Bray's assessments, as a researcher, I tried to incorporate participants from university across the disciplines and levels to explore practices and perception regarding shadow education. Thus, this study primarily investigated perception of teachers and students on existing practices and trends of shadow education. I have found the researches that deal with the issues about shadow education practice. However, I have not found about students' and teachers' perception in practice and trends of shadow education in Nepalese context.

## **Methods**

The paradigm of the present research is interpretivism which favors qualitative methods such as narrative inquiry. Qualitative method is a better way of getting at how humans interpret the world around them (Creswell, 2012; Willis, 2007). Thus, this study

tried to explore context-based understanding of teachers' and students' thoughts, beliefs, and practices as they are the primary concerns of this methodology. The study embraced narrative inquiry that allows emergent research questions, emergent modes of inquiry, and emergent reporting structure (Taylor et al., 2012). Specifically, the research design of this study was a narrative inquiry. It looks for the ways to understand and represent experiences through the narratives that individuals live and tell (Lemley et al., 2012). Similarly, this study focused on individual teacher's and student's stories and experiences that expect and value differences between students and teachers (e.g. Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry allows for the intimate and in-depth study of individuals' experiences (Clandinin & Caine, 2013) over time and in context.

For this study, I selected five teachers (three males and two females) and eight students (four girls and four boys) purposively who directly involved in the practice of shadow education to explore practices and reflection of the teachers and students on shadow education. I purposively selected three students from B. Ed., three from B. B. S. and two from Bachelor of Arts (B. A.) studying at different colleges of Dhading district for validation of data. Likewise, I selected five teachers teaching at different schools of Dhading who comprised long experience (ranges from seven years to twenty one years) of being the part of shadow education as well as formal education to elicit required information for the study. I conducted semi-structured interview to the students and teachers individually. I prepared some questions as an interview guide based on research questions to ask in order to explore the causes of attending the private tutoring and their perception towards shadow education. Along with these, cross-questions were also made while interviewing individually. Each interview lasted for about thirty minutes.

The information congregated from the interviews were coded and categorized under different themes. To maintain ethical considerations, informed consent to participate was secured from each participant (Flick, 2012). The real identity of the informants was disguised using pseudonyms as Rohan, Punita, Sbit and so on for students and Tirtha, Rahda, Puran, Hari and Sima for teachers while coding and interpreting data.

## **Results**

I perceived interpretivist insight in order to explore practices and perception of shadow education in this narrative inquiry with the teachers and students. The results are organized into four themes.

## **Practices and Perception on Trends of Shadow Education**

I asked students and teachers individually about the practices and trends of the shadow education in the interviews they involved in. Students shared the experiences of involving in private tutoring in their previous classes too. One of the students mentioned, *"I took tuition class from primary level. I am taking nowadays also"*. Punita said, *"I took coaching class from class six"*. Sbit mentioned, *"I took in school level and also taking now"*. Rohan said, *"It has become like fashion, everybody in the class take tuition or coaching"*. Preeti said, *"I can't think of going to final exam without attending coaching classes"*. The responses show that they have habit of taking coaching classes before examinations.

Besides this, all teachers also said that the trend of shadow education is extremely growing. Hari put, *"This practice could be seen from the basic education to university level"*. Puran claimed, *"Every schools and colleges run private tutoring. It's like a fashion"*. Radha mentioned, *"I think every student either from school or college takes tuition"*. Similarly, Tirtha put, *"We cannot find students who do not take coaching or tuition classes"*. They claim that it is prevalent in many colleges and schools. The trend of taking private tutoring starts from early education.

This shows that practice of shadow education is prevalent from early education to university level. Its trend is increasing. All participants agreed that it has become like the fashion among students and teachers in schools and colleges.

## **Perception on the Reasons for Calling and Taking Private Tutoring**

Teachers involved in discussions with the researcher showed that schools and colleges call for private tutoring one or two months prior to final examinations. They said that some schools and colleges officially inform students two three months before the examinations. I asked the teachers to respond regarding the reasons for calling extra classes. In this regard Sima said, *"Extra classes helped students to increase marks and pass difficult subjects."* Tirtha added, *"I claim that I have passed many weak students and increased their performance through tuition classes."* Similarly, Radha and Puran also accepted, *"We can improve students' performance taking coaching classes"*. All of the teachers' responses were similar. They also said that it would be necessary to those students who could not attend regular classes. They all strongly agreed that it was done to improve achievement of the learners in final examinations. Some of their remarks:

Tirtha: *We often call for extra classes before the final examination to improve students' performance.*

Puran: *I call for tuition class if they feel difficult in regular classes.*

Hari: *We call students for extra classes to practise more than in regular classes.*

I also inquired students about the reasons for taking shadow education. They openly responded that it was ‘their need to improve performance in examination’. To the question "Why do you take coaching classes?" the informants put:

Punita: *To give more attention to my study in hard subjects.*

Sbit: *To improve self-learning and to obtain good marks in exams.*

Rohan: *Because I had no one to guide at home.*

Preeti: *To learn and practise more with friends and teacher.*

Janak: *To improve more, because I could not give full time at home.*

Hira: *To get more knowledge than we got in class.*

Sasa: *I could not be regular in class so it would cover the courses.*

They claimed that it helped them get more information, knowledge and practice in such coaching classes. They also accepted that involving in private tutoring helped them to increase marks in examinations. The responses of teachers and students indicate similarities. Both teachers and students expect to have more activities and progress in supplementary tutoring. Based on the information from the participants, the reasons behind private tutoring can be summed up to get involve in course activities and improve students’ performance in examinations.

### **The Impact of Shadow Education in Students’ Learning Habits**

In response to the query related to the impact of shadow education in students’ learning habits, Sima accepted, *“I have found that students involving in private tutoring show more interest in studies than in formal classes”*. Puran puts similar remarks, *“In my experience, students become more active in coaching classes than in formal classes. They remain more absent in formal classes but come regularly in the coaching.”* However, Tirtha claimed, *“I do not think it is needed. If we give better performance in formal classes, students can do better. It only makes students lazy and irregular in the regular classes”*. Radha mentioned, *“Students themselves show interest to conduct coaching. I think they are killing their habits of being active in regular classes”*. Remarks and experiences of teachers show that private tutoring has affected students’ learning habits

Similar questions were asked to the students regarding the impact of coaching

classes in their reading habits. One of students, Rohan said, *"I am often absent in formal classes so that I need coaching otherwise I could not pass"*. Punita revealed, *"I do not have habit of reading courses at home. Thus, I need private tutoring. When I take classes there I'm little bit forced to practise seriously"*. Sbit said, *"Coaching class is needed to improve my reading habit. I often cannot concentrate in formal classes. But I have to pass the exam"*. Similarly, Preeti added, *"I feel more interested to study in extra classes because teachers care us individually. Sometimes teachers forced us to practise more"*. Janak also felt better in coaching, *"Coaching classes are more interesting than regular classes. Teachers actively teach there and we also like to practise more. They also give individual attention"*.

All the students involved in the interviews agreed that shadow education helped to improve their learning habits. They practised more seriously in such classes than in formal classes. Thus, the learners feel better in their studies. Similarly, for the teachers shadow education has helped their students to improve their learning habits at least before examination. The information from the participants showed that practice of coaching classes has affected students' learning habits. It hinders students' regular learning habits. They wait for coaching classes just before the examinations.

### **Perception on Needs and Benefits of Shadow Education**

Regarding the issue of needs and benefits of shadow education, students' remarks are:

Punita: *I'm fully benefited when I needed to do better in some subjects.*

Sbit: *I'm little bit benefited but I needed it to increase marks.*

Rohan: *I'm highly benefited. I have easily passed hard subjects due to extra classes.*

Preeti: *In my case, I need it to pass the exam and to increase knowledge of courses.*

Janak: *I got more benefit than in regular classes because teachers gave me special attention.*

Sanju: *It benefits students because students can take subject and the teacher of their choice.* All students felt it was necessary as well as too beneficial for their improvements.

For teachers, they were economically benefited. Radha and Puran agreed, *"We not only get chance to improve students' performance but also get good extra income*

*from coaching classes*". Teachers have sufficient chance to emphasize the course in extra classes. Hari and Sima added, *"We have extra chances to guide students easily with individual care. Students also show more interest in study"*. They found some weak students having good achievement. Hari said, *"I found that many weak students easily passed final examination after having coaching classes. They had not passed in internal examinations before having coaching"*. Tirtha asserted, *"Without coaching class we cannot pass more students because they are not regular in formal classes. Some students are regular but they do not concentrate in formal classes"*. The information showed that students and teachers involved in coaching classes were benefited. Both the students and the teachers felt benefited that coaching classes were necessary to improve students' learning habits through which their achievement can be improved.

## **Discussion**

This study mainly aimed to explore the perception of students and teachers towards the practices and trends of shadow education. Despite widespread practice of shadow education in Nepalese context, there has been a little exploration on the phenomena ( Subedi 2018). As a narrative inquiry, it was limited to the perception based on experiences of eight students studying in bachelor's level and five teachers teaching at different schools. All the informants possessed the experience of being involved in the practice of shadow education.

The experiences and perceptions gathered from the informants asserted that the trends and practices of shadow education are increasing as Mori and Baker (2010) mentioned; private tutoring has become a "global phenomenon". From the information given by the informants in this study, it shows that from basic education to higher education institutions, the predominance of this practice has become almost unavoidable. In this regard, Bray (2013) had similar experience that the expansion of scale of tutoring, at all levels of education systems and for a much wider range of social classes is increasing from recent decades. In addition to regular formal classes, formal education institutions handle extra classes or coaching classes of some courses every year. They formally announce to their students to join in such classes. However, the findings indicated different than what Bray (2014) accepted, he mentioned that in all societies much more attention is focused on the mainstream than on its shadow; and , the features of the shadow system are much less distinct than those of the mainstream system.

'Why institutions run private tutoring was an important question. The teachers and students as respondents showed their perception that shadow education was the part of an effort to increase achievement of the learners. The major aim for them was to improve academic performance of the students. Thus, they included it in their regular academic activities. It was similar to Entrich (2011 or 2015) who stresses the importance of acknowledging the existence of shadow education in conjunction with students' academic achievement that has been deemed influential to such decisions.

Similarly, the issue of need and benefit was also an important part of the study. As informants both teachers and students shared that it was beneficial to them. They also accepted that it was necessary practice for performing better in examinations. It became similar to Zhang (2011) who believed private tutoring helps teachers to satisfy students' individual needs for both remedial and expanded learning. The teachers experienced the increment of academic achievement from it. The students found themselves more active in coaching classes. However, students' regular learning habits have been affected due to inadequacies of formal education. Participants made the hopeless remarks that this system would really affect the future of mainstream education. They were despondent in the sense that it would gradually decrease students' self-learning habits. It is obvious from student informants that they neglected the courses before the coaching classes. They were sure that they would do better practice in coaching classes.

Whether the practice of shadow education was statutory or optimal, it was another point of discussion. It had become a part of institutional activities where learners perceived it was for them and teachers took it as the part of education as Yung (2011) and Zhang et al. (2012) claimed. Students readily accepted and joined extra classes either announced by the college or by other institutions. They shared the experiences that they could do better in examinations after taking extra classes or tuition classes.

## **Conclusions**

This study revealed perception of teachers and students regarding the practices and trends of shadow education in present context. In this regard, Hartmann (2013) found that it has become a 'normal' and seemingly indispensable part of the education process. The learners preferred private tutoring to formal regular classes as they found private tutoring more interactive and student centric than the formal classes.

Additionally, this study indicates that the learners, teachers and authorities

readily involve in shadow education. They consider it as their regular academic activity. It obviously hinders mainstream education practice. Conclusively, the implication of this study shows that it is potential to change formal education which is perhaps the most pressing key issue for future research as Byun and Baker (2015) mentioned. Further researches can be made to explore the effect of shadow education on formal schooling, learners' achievement and their learning habits in school and university level.

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