

# The Implications of Shadow Education on African School Systems

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## ABSTRACT

Shadow education has become a growing practice and a subject of interest in all areas of the world. As the regular education system sometimes finds itself unable to satisfy students fully, they often turn to shadow education. The practice is most commonly seen and studied in competitive areas such as East Asia and North America. As Africa's education system develops as a continent, trends of shadow education also begin to emerge. However, since the practice is relatively new, there is little information surrounding Africa and shadow education. The research paper will review the practice of shadow education in Africa and the potential situations they could face as it becomes more prominent. The information used involves surveys, statistical reports, and comparisons between countries.

## Introduction

*Shadow Education* is supplemental and privately-funded education beyond traditional hours of schooling, like private tutoring (Bray, 2003). The term "shadow education" is a metaphor developed in research about private supplemental tutoring systems developed in East Asia. "Shadow" is referencing the mimicking of mainstream education and curricula. This type of education is often a characteristic of the education systems of developed countries like Asia or the United States. However, in developing countries of Africa, where the education systems are not as formalized or as developed, there is an emergence of a different type of shadow education that may prove to be more beneficial than that of developed countries.

## Education System in Africa

The education systems in Africa are diverse due to the broadness of the continent. They range from developed, competitive education systems to classrooms needing more resources and skilled educators. Underdeveloped school systems lack resources and funding for the school, have students in poverty, and have poorly run governments. It is found that often due to the quality of education, children lose motivation, as they see no hope for themselves in learning. This causes a higher chance of dropout, especially for female students.

Gender inequality is a consequence of educational disparities. Child marriage and teen pregnancy is often results in girls receiving less education than boys. In sub-Saharan Africa, 40 percent of girls marry before age 18, and African countries account for 15 of the 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage globally. In 14 sub-Saharan countries, between 30 and 51 percent of girls give birth before they are 18. In some countries, girls are put behind and penalized for this, furthering the education equality. An example comes from Tanzania, where pregnancy checks are routinely done on girls and are punished if found positive.

On the other hand, there are fully developed education systems in some African countries. An example of this is Ghana. Ghana shows one of the most developed education systems in Africa. Education is required

for ages 6-15, consisting of pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Around 75,000 Ghanaian students take a Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), which will determine where to admit into the nation's secondary schools. While the education system shows high signs of development, there are still some flaws. For example, statistics showed that income level correlated to the years spent in education systems. Children from the wealthiest 20% of households average six more years in school than those from the poorest households. Demographics also played a role in the student's education level: income, location, and gender would further correlate to the data.

### Main Drivers of Shadow Education

The main driver of demand for shadow education is the universalization and normalization of primary and secondary education from the EFA movement. Rising enrollment rates in secondary schools now increase the number of students and households with aspirations for higher education (Bray 2017). As enrollment increases in public schools, the necessity for all-around watershed assessment methods like the ACT or SAT has increased. Therefore, students and families have searched for additional ways to seek help for these examinations, like private tutoring centers and tutors. The high demand for success on exams and in school drives students to seek external tutoring opportunities to help them practice for these examinations. Some also view private tutoring to be a way to address the needs of an individual student. Some students may need more help in a certain area or more attention than a classroom can provide.

### Suppliers of Shadow Education

Three main parties provide shadow education opportunities in Africa: commercial companies, teachers seeking additional income, and others unrelated to teaching or large companies. Commercial companies are more likely to supply tutoring in densely populated and high-income areas. This form of tutoring provided is the more expensive and 'legitimate' of the three modes. Companies that provide private tutoring usually reside and settle in urban areas and are easily searchable via an internet search in Africa. These companies justify their investment in shadow education in Africa because of its demographic. Currently, Africa has the most populous under-25 population, a rapidly growing middle class, and urbanization. However, these companies are limited to only developed regions of Africa, causing the disparity of education opportunities and stunting socioeconomic growth in other parts and countries of Africa. In other parts of Africa, many teachers that work in schools work second jobs for additional streams of income through private tutoring outside of school hours. This mode of supply for tutoring can be unethical since teachers can leverage curriculum review with private students or, essentially, students that "pay more." For example, in Sudan, there were 1,012 teachers surveyed, and 17% of teachers provided private tutoring outside of regular school hours (World Bank, 2012). Additionally, teachers require this second source of income due to the lack of school funding and focus on teacher salaries. In countries where shadow education is well developed and their education systems, such as Singapore or Japan, teachers are paid very well, and it is frowned upon to hold a second job. However, in African countries, for example, Nigeria, there is a belief that teachers will be given payment in heaven (Oyewusi & Orolade, 2014). This refers to the honor the job gives but also sheds light to the regional belief that teachers in schools should not be paid well. Other suppliers of tutoring may be through the form of students who need summer jobs or professionals that are in-between jobs or need a secondary source of income who free-lance and provide tutoring.

## Shadow Education in Africa

With the formal education system still developing, students and parents find themselves turning to other methods of education; this is where shadow education comes into play. As mentioned earlier in the paper, shadow education in Africa needs more research and is still a relatively new concept on the continent. The countries that do report it, however, see various trends occurring. One is directly (as mentioned above) because of the poor, developing education system. One reason why shadow education occurs is due to peer pressure. Students often reported that they felt as if they needed private tutoring to succeed. Receiving additional education was a way to pass tests and gain admission to higher education. Since other students received private tutoring, others felt they had to follow along. Another reason for shadow education becoming more prevalent is because it is generally more helpful than regular school. Of course, there came a problem with this. A majority of teachers at shadow education facilities were also teaching at regular schools. However, it was found that teachers dedicated more of their energy to private tutoring centers, thus using limited time and energy for teaching in schools; therefore, teaching quality in schools became very poor. A problem with this is that it benefits students of higher income. Since students of lower income can only afford to attend regular school, their quality of learning will decline because of the teachers' priorities on private education.

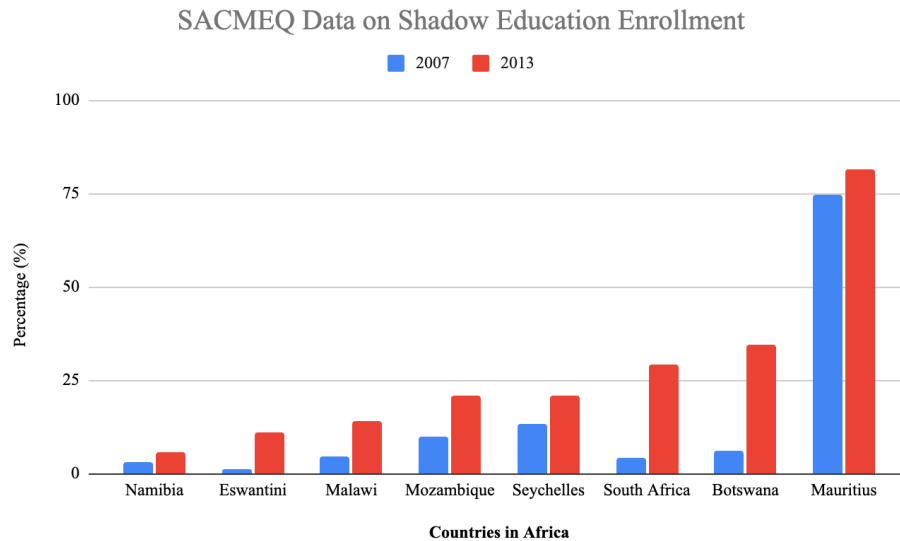
### Surveys of Enrollment Rates in Shadow Education

As Africa is still a developing region, there is not yet universal information about education and students or learners in African countries. There are limited studies done on enrollment into private supplemental tutoring systems. This section combines studies done in different regions and countries of Africa that map the growing landscape of shadow education enrollment.

The following list highlights some diverse countries across Africa and the students involved in shadow education or private tutoring.

- In one study by Chionga done in 2018, among 8,513 11th and 12th-grade students surveyed in Angola, 93.8% were receiving or had received some form of tutoring or supplemental, private education.
- In Egypt, in a study done by Assaad & Kraft in 2015, amongst surveyed grade 12 students, 72% of students were receiving private tutoring, and 18% received group tutoring.
- In Ghana, a study was also performed by Antonowicz in 2010 where a sample of 1020 households was taken, and about 48% of these households reported that they spend additional fees on private tutoring.
- In Kenya, a 2013 survey of 487 students revealed that 83.1% of students were enrolled in shadow education and supplemental tutoring of some kind. (Getange & Obar, 2010)
- In Nigeria, a 2004 national study showed that out of 4,238 households surveyed, 33.5% of primary student households and 53.2% of secondary student households spent money on private tutoring that year (National Population Commission, 2004).
- In Tunisia, a study done in 2008 stated that out of 250 households, 73.2% of the children were receiving private tutoring.

From the list above, there is a diverse landscape of shadow education involvement across Africa. Furthermore, a curated investigation into the needs of different countries is necessary. However, a sample of 8 countries in Africa shows an overall increasing trend of students enrolled in private supplemental tutoring, as shown in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1.** SACMEQ Data on Enrollment of Students in Private Tutoring in 2007 and 2013  
Facilities, Modes, and Costs

Shadow education, or private supplemental tutoring, is given in different modes and forms in Africa. There are different class session sizes ranging from one-on-one tutoring to full-sized lecture-like classes. A study in Angola also showed that these tutoring sessions are held at diverse places such as the tutor’s home, student’s home, tutor centers, and online (Chioiga, 2018). Other regions, such as Egypt, have a different system of private tutoring where this type of tutoring is sanctioned on campus and school grounds. Other places around Africa host tutoring centers at public facilities like churches and mosques. The cost of this private tutoring is hard to map due to unavailable data. But one study in Mauritius showed that parents enrolling their children in private tutoring spent about 400-1000 rupees a month with an average income of 12,000 rupees (Paviot, 2015).

## Solutions to Negative Impacts of Shadow Education

Shadow education can both be seen as good or bad for education in Africa. Viewed positively, shadow education is an avenue for enhanced and enrichment learning for the student’s socioeconomic and academic development. Shadow education can also provide a higher achievement rating for education systems, and literacy and academic competencies increase overall. However, shadow education can have many adverse side effects. Shadow education can exacerbate urban and rural economic disparities as well as stunt socioeconomic growth for individuals and households in Africa. The richer countries will get richer, and the poor will stay poor. The unregulated nature of education and the activity of shadow education causes corrupted and unethical activities to occur, such as teachers of schools teaching their own students and receiving monetary incentives. Shadow education in urban areas can also give children unnecessary burdens and exacerbate the competition that the students already feel trying to compete with other high-achieving individuals. Additionally, there are ethical concerns of shadow education and the involvement of school teachers, who will focus on teaching more after school because of the monetary incentive.

### Investing in General Education

Investing in general education is beneficial to the economy and overall success of the country itself. Policy-makers should look into investing more in education systems as education systems create the next future leaders and innovators. South Korea is one of the world's forerunners, with a massive GDP increase. During the post-Korean War period in 1950, South Korea had tremendously emphasized education and its government-funded students' tuition and aid. (The Center for Global Development). Education could also lead to better health and longer life spans. "Families with higher incomes can more easily purchase healthy foods, have time to exercise regularly, and pay for health services and transportation" (2015). Compared to families with less income, poverty can make one more susceptible to mental illness. "According to the National Survey of Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), an estimated 9.8 million adults aged 18 or older in the U.S. had a serious mental illness (SMI), including 2.5 million adults living below the poverty line" (SAMHSA, 2016).

Additionally, education reduces crime rates, primarily if influenced well during children's early years. One study focused on 3, and 4-year-old children enrolled in an education program for 15 years. It found that children who didn't participate in the preschool program, who therefore missed out on some crucial opportunity for early childhood development, were 70% more likely to be arrested for a crime by the age of 18 (Yousefei, 2016). Positive experiences in a young child's life are pivotal to how one views and approaches life when older. A safe environment with a positive role model who teaches them how to handle situations appropriately will benefit them in future experiences. This is especially important in impoverished areas, and helping children know that education can lead to a better future will reduce such crime rates. By focusing on spreading education, everyone in the nation can benefit from its results.

## Reformation of Education and Regulation in Policy

To prevent adverse effects of shadow education in African school systems, policymakers should reform and implement policies that will regulate the activity of shadow education.

### *Collecting More Data*

Through this research, it is evident that there is no formalized method to monitor and track shadow education in Africa. Due to the lack of information, there can only be speculation through separate studies that have been done in different regions. However, if policymakers created a standard comparison across all African countries, it would help monitor the education that students are receiving. Also, due to the constantly developing nature of the educational systems, this would help monitor the progress of the growth of educational systems. Data that should be collected are how much tutoring is received by whom and where and what are the demographics of these students, as well as who is providing these services at what price and quality.

### *Regulation of Tutorial Companies*

Due to the lack of data and regulation of tutorial companies, students are constantly being exploited by companies rather than keeping the focus on learning. Regulation of tutorial companies will allow students to be treated to better facilities and reasonable costs when they seek out these services. Additionally, regulations can monitor and reduce the number of teachers involved in the tutoring industry. This will reduce the corrupt nature of having teachers exploit the system and seek monetary rewards instead of focusing on their main job and responsibility.

### *Reforming Examinations and Core Curriculum*

Reforming how examinations are administered in Africa can lighten the load of students in the classrooms and reduce the need to seek private help. For example, in Egypt, the Thainawiya Amma is an exam taken by Grade 12 students that dictate the landscape of private tutoring. Due to the strong desire to do well on this exam, students sought private tutoring and frequently were exploited due to the high demand for these outside services. However, in 2012 there was a reformation that abolished the one-test system and separated this assessment so that students could take it in all three years of high school. Additionally, they implemented a stronger emphasis on grade point averages (GPA) in school. This allowed for more holistic screening by universities, and students were judged based on progress instead of their performance on one singular exam. These types of reforms can help lighten the load off of students as well as stir the attention of students back to school instead of outside private tutoring. Additionally, emphasizing a better curriculum in schools can help students learn in the classroom, and it would diminish the need to seek outside help.

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