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Private Tutoring: how prevalent and effective is it?

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ABSTRACT Many families employ private tutors to help children with their schoolwork, thus participating in a 'shadow education' system that supplements normal schooling. International surveys show that there is wide variation in the extent of tutoring in different countries. This paper considers reasons for this variation and evaluates evidence on the prevalence and effectiveness of private tutoring. The effectiveness of tutoring is mixed, with some well-designed programmes achieving large gains in attainment, whereas surveys show little impact. Some of these discrepancies arise from weak conceptualisation and methodological issues. It is argued that quality indicators should be added to analyses of survey data to provide more reliable estimates. Evidence from research on extra-curricular activities is used to explore the 'penumbra' between public and private sector involvement. Systematic monitoring of the shadow system is recommended. Policies should be developed, as it is likely that the prevalence of private tutoring will increase.

Background

Long before schools were established, private tutors were employed to teach children in wealthy families. Even today, when universal education is available, many parents employ private tutors to supplement the teaching their children receive in school. Recent international research suggests that this relatively small-scale activity is likely to grow and to have a potentially large impact on the education system in future (Bray, 2003). In global terms, private tutoring that supplements normal schooling is widespread and appears to be increasing (Baker, in preparation). It is therefore timely to consider the extent of private tutoring in the UK and to evaluate its implications for students, their families and the educational system.

There has been increasing recognition of the prevalence of private tuition around the world and of its potential contribution to national achievement. This is in part due to international comparisons of student attainment, such as TIMSS (Beaton *et al.*, 1996) and PISA (OECD, 2001), which focused attention on educational systems in high performing countries. During the 1980s there was particular interest in the teaching methods employed in countries such as Japan, where high educational attainment was coupled with economic success. More recently, attention has been drawn to the extent of private tutoring in these countries and to its impact on achievement. In many countries in East and South East Asia children have private tuition in school subjects after the end of the normal school day,

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effectively extending the amount of time they spend learning. This structured support in school subjects has been termed 'shadow education' by Stevenson & Baker (1992) as it follows the school curriculum. It has the potential to make a substantial contribution to pupils' performance in national tests. It also represents a significant financial investment by families to their children's education and in some countries is big business, with the majority of students having tutoring at some point during their school careers (Bray, 1999).

In the UK, private tutoring has long been a respectable and valued employment for university students seeking financial support and for teachers wishing to supplement their income. Such tutoring is usually provided on an individual basis, however there are also a small number of specialist 'cram' schools catering for students seeking to improve their grades in national examinations. While most tutoring is delivered by the private sector, there is also some public sector involvement through extra curricular activities offered by schools and community organisations. Many schools provide extracurricular activities, some of which have a curriculum focus, such as maths club or GCSE revision classes. These activities are included in the government definition of 'Study Support' (DfEE, 1997) together with other activities, such as sports, arts and drama that support academic development indirectly.

As there appear to be related policy implications and research findings regarding private tutoring and extracurricular activities, this review will include evidence on both. It provides an overview of international research on the impact of both private and public sector activities on achievement and other outcomes and considers reasons for participation in the shadow system. It will be argued that further research is needed to establish the nature and extent of students' participation in both public and private sector activities in the UK and to develop a theoretical framework for understanding participation from parents' and pupils' perspectives. At present there is little government policy on private tutoring, which remains very firmly in the shadows.

The Nature and Scope of Private Tutoring

There is considerable variety in the conceptualisation of tutoring by different researchers and this has given rise to some confusion in the literature. Private supplementary tutoring has been defined as 'tutoring in academic subjects which is provided for financial gain and which is additional to the provisions by mainstream schooling' (Bray & Kwok, 2003, p. 2). This definition makes a clear demarcation between tutoring that is provided by the state and private sectors. Although useful, it does not distinguish between different forms of tutoring, in particular with respect to teacher–student ratios. It encompasses both tutoring on a one-to-one basis and additional teaching in large classes in private institutions such as 'juku' in Japan and 'frontisera' in Greece. In England, the term 'private tutoring' generally refers to tutoring on a one-to-one basis, which often takes place in the home of the tutor or the student. It is clearly important to distinguish between these forms of tutoring, as their quality is very different. For this reason, the term 'individual tutoring' should be reserved for one-to-one teaching, to set it apart from supplementary teaching in large classes, and the nature and composition of other forms of provision should be made clear. It may also be worth identifying a category of 'small group tuition' to denote teaching with groups that are small enough to allow teachers to devote a significant amount of time to working with individual students, such as that reported by Mischo & Haag (2002) and Bloom (1984). As far as possible, given the lack of clarity in some original research, these different forms of tutoring will be distinguished in this paper. It is worth noting at this point that the term 'tuition' is used in England to refer to various forms of tutoring.

A second conceptual issue concerns the isolation of private tutoring from other forms of support for learning available to students outside the normal school day. For the most part, there has been little connection between research on private tutoring and the support provided by schools, parents and in the community. Although there are understandable reasons for this, the result has been that research findings tend to be reported separately for these different sources of educational support. Yet conceptually and from the students' perspective the boundaries are not so distinct, as tutoring offered in different settings may be quite similar in nature. For example, schools offer some individual tutoring and small group tuition both within and outside the normal timetable. As part of the normal timetable, students making slow progress in learning to read may receive individual tutoring or small group tuition. Outside the normal timetable schools offer small group tuition in a range of curriculum subjects as well as other extracurricular activities such as sports, drama and arts (Camp, 1990; MacBeath *et al.*, 2001). Although conceptually there is some overlap between tutoring provided by the state and private sectors, this article will consider research on provision by the two sectors separately, looking for commonalities and differences in research findings.

In addition to the state and private sectors, there are a number of voluntary and community organisations that offer supplementary education, such as West Indian supplementary schools. These schools were established for children of African-Caribbean, African or mixed race origin and are found in urban areas where West Indian families have settled. They continue the West Indian tradition of extra lessons out of school and are generally held on Saturdays when teachers, student teachers, community members and parents offer coaching in school subjects (Stone, 1981). Other forms of supplementary schooling include language schools where children of minority language groups have lessons in their mother tongue and schools run by religious organisation such as Jewish, Muslim and Hindi schools. For the most part these schools do not provide instruction in school curriculum subjects, although their work may support students' learning in school indirectly.

Parents are also involved in their children's education, helping them with homework, liasing with their teachers and enabling them to participate in educational activities both in school and in the community. They listen to their children reading schoolbooks at home and help with mathematics and spelling (West *et al.*, 1998). Some parents interact in very similar ways to teachers when listening to their children read (Greenhough & Hughes, 1998). In effect many parents are able to tutor their children themselves and may not feel the need to employ tutors from outside the family. Parents who are teachers are especially likely to be able to do this, however other members of the family or friends may also be able to act as unpaid tutors. These different sources of support by families and community organisations are of considerable interest, however they will not be included in the scope of this review.

Methodological Issues

There are a number of difficulties involved in obtaining accurate and reliable information about the nature and extent of private tutoring. First, obtaining representative samples of tutors or their students is problematic. Many tutors work independently rather than for agencies or tutorial colleges and are therefore difficult to locate. There is no professional organisation through which they might be contacted and moreover they may not wish to be identified. Contacting tutors through agencies or tutorial schools yields useful information, but may introduce bias as tutors working for these organisations are more likely to be qualified teachers, whereas tutors working independently may not be as well qualified. Obtaining information from representative samples of students also presents a

number of difficulties. Few national surveys include questions about extracurricular activities and even fewer include private tutoring.

Second, surveys may not obtain sufficiently detailed or valid information on the prevalence of private tutoring. Students may not want their school teachers to know that they are receiving private tutoring for fear that this might be considered a criticism of their teaching, which might then affect their relationship. They may not want their peers to know, as the need for additional help is often construed as a sign of a learning difficulty or low ability (Graham & Barker, 1990). Alternatively they may fear being considered a 'swot'. For these reasons, surveys that are administered by teachers may underestimate the prevalence of private tuition.

Third, the effectiveness of tutoring depends on its context and quality, as will be discussed later. Pupils' experience of tutoring is likely to be of much higher quality if it is delivered individually or in small groups than in large classes. Even individual tutoring may be of variable quality, however, as there may be little or no regulation of private tutors. Tutoring may be undertaken by trained teachers, more senior students or by volunteers and this may account for conflicting findings in the research.

Fourth, evaluating the impact of tutoring poses a number of challenges. Control groups may be difficult to establish for experimental studies, resulting in confounding variables. Relatively few longitudinal studies have been undertaken although these are needed to provide evidence on the effectiveness of tutoring and extracurricular activities.

With these methodological issues in mind, the next sections review research evidence on the prevalence and effectiveness of private tuition. This will be followed by a consideration of extracurricular activities and their impact on academic and non-academic outcomes for students. First, the main advantages and disadvantages of private tuition will be identified.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Private Tutoring

The main advantages of private tutoring are that it is highly flexible as a tutor may be employed or classes attended for as short or long a period as needed. Individual tutoring in particular can be tailored to the needs of the student as it allows the tutor to develop a good knowledge of the student's strengths and weaknesses. All types of tutoring can help students keep up with work in school or consolidate work covered. A great advantage for parents is that it is more affordable than private schooling. There are benefits for teachers seeking to supplement their income (Bray, 1999; Bray & Kwok, 2003). Tutoring also enables students to learn subjects not offered in school and to develop study skills.

In a series of reviews of the international literature, Bray identifies a number of disadvantages of private tutoring (Bray, 1999, 2003; Bray & Kwok, 2003). These differ from one country to another and relate to the nature of tutoring in place. In some countries where tutoring is pervasive, there is concern that private tuition focuses almost exclusively on academic attainment and does not encompass attitudes and educational goals of all round development. Instead, tutors tend to focus exclusively on strategies and knowledge for examination success (Bray & Kwok, 2003). In countries where children go straight from school to supplementary classes, there are also concerns about the fatigue experienced both by the students who study for long hours and by the teachers who undertake private tuition in addition to their work in school. There is also scope for corruption, for example in Mauritius some teachers only teach part of the syllabus during the school day and students are required to return for private tutoring if they wish to cover the remainder (Foondum, 2002). Although private tuition is less expensive than private schooling, nevertheless it may represent a significant cost for families. In some countries the parental contribution to their

children's education is greater than the amount spent by the government, accounting for a substantial proportion of family income (Bray, 2003). This raises equity issues, as some students will be excluded from private tutoring for financial reasons.

Factors Influencing National Take-Up of Private Tutoring

The prevalence of private tutoring varies considerably around the world. The Third International Maths and Science Survey (TIMSS), undertaken during the 1994–1995 school year, included a student questionnaire item on the amount of time spent taking extra lessons in mathematics. An analysis of the data from students in 41 countries shows large variation between countries in the percentage of eighth grade pupils participating on a weekly basis, from less than 5 to over 80% (Baker *et al.*, 2001). More than three-quarters of students in Columbia, Latvia, Slovak Republic, Philippines and South Africa reported having private tuition in mathematics. High levels of tutoring were also reported in other countries such as Japan, Hong Kong and Korea whereas low levels were reported in most European countries. In England, only about 10% of year 8 pupils received private tuition for mathematics, the second lowest proportion in the countries surveyed, with only Danish students reporting less participation. These large differences between countries were confirmed in the PISA survey undertaken in 2000 (OECD, 2001), which found that on average 25% of students reported that they attended courses in the language of assessment, in other subjects or additional courses outside their school. In Japan and Korea respectively the figures were 71 and 64%, while in the UK 20% of students reported attending such courses. The proportion of students that reported they regularly attended remedial courses in the language of assessment and in other subjects, training to improve study skills or private tutoring was 24% in the UK, compared to 17% in Japan and 58% in Korea. The ISA estimates for UK are higher than those obtained in the TIMSS survey, however the TIMSS question was confined to mathematics whereas the PISA questions encompassed a wider range of supplementary tutoring. The figures from both surveys may be affected by the social desirability of tutoring in different countries, as teachers administered the questionnaires.

A number of smaller surveys provide support for the wide variations between countries (Bray, 2003). These confirm that levels of tutoring are especially high in East Asian countries such as Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong, where over 70% of students receive tutoring at some point in their school careers (Bray & Kwok, 2002). Levels of tutoring are lower in European countries, for example in Germany recent surveys indicate that around 16–20% of students receive tutoring, usually in mathematics (Mischo & Haag, 2002). There have been very few surveys of a similar nature undertaken within the UK, however case study research suggests that many middle class families employ tutors in the final year of primary school (Reay, 1998). A small survey of the families of 107 children aged 10–11 years found that just over a third of the parents reported that they employed a tutor at some time (West *et al.*, 1998). This sample included pupils in both state and private schools in England, however the majority of parents were employed in non-manual occupations and the sample was therefore not representative. It was further biased as head teachers selected pupils to take part in the research. Nevertheless, it would appear that current levels of tutoring in the UK are similar to those in Germany, however further systematic research is needed to provide more reliable estimates.

International research suggests cultural, economic and educational factors that may explain the large variations in extent of tutoring around the world (Bray, 1999; Bray & Kwok, 2003). One cultural factor that has been the subject of much attention is the perceived role of effort in educational attainment. Stevenson and his colleagues have argued persuasively that effort is especially valued in Asian cultures influenced by the Confucian

tradition, whereas in Western cultures more emphasis is placed on ability (Stevenson & Lee, 1990; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). In support of this position, they claim that when Asian mothers and students reason about the causes of success and failure they place more emphasis on effort than ability (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). This may be an over-simplification, however, as findings from the TIMSS research show that compared with England and the United States, students in Japan, Korea and Singapore were more likely to think that ability was necessary to do well in mathematics (Beaton *et al.*, 1996). In all countries, 71–96% of students agreed that hard work was needed to do well. If effort were valued, it would be expected that students would tend to attribute their successes to effort rather than to their ability. Bempechat and Drago-Severson (1999) suggest that researchers have paid insufficient attention to the meaning of effort and ability in different cultures. For example, if ability is seen as malleable then effort is a means of increasing one's ability. If ability is seen as relatively fixed then effort will have only limited effects. Another interesting point to note about the TIMSS data is that in some countries most students agree that ability, effort and luck are all needed to do well in mathematics, whereas in other countries students emphasise one factor. This suggests that other uncontrolled variables may be significant. Reasoning by parents and students about the role of effort and ability reveals only part of a more complex process of transmission of values in the family and in society. There are likely to be variations between families within a given culture in the extent to which they value academic success and the development of particular personal characteristics. More in-depth research is needed to uncover how parental beliefs and values influence participation in private tuition.

Economic factors may also influence the take up of private tuition, especially salary differentials between those who are well educated and those who are not. Salary differentials are very marked in Asian countries, so there are potentially far greater returns on investment in education than in countries where the differentials are smaller (Bray & Kwok, 1993). Where there is a high return, parents may see private tuition as a worthwhile investment for their children. In the UK, salary differentials are much smaller and parents may therefore see it as less important for their children to achieve highly at school and go to university.

The nature and quality of educational systems may also influence the prevalence of tutoring. If the state system is considered to be of poor quality, private tuition may be used to provide an adequate level of education. In the UK, the school inspection system maintains standards across the country and this is likely to contribute to a lower overall demand for tutoring. Nevertheless, students may seek tutoring in subjects they perceive to be poorly taught in school. Parents of students with identified special educational needs may also seek private tutoring if they feel that their children are not receiving sufficient help in school. Teachers' salaries may also be influential, as it has been shown that in countries where teachers are poorly paid they tend to seek additional remuneration through tutoring (Bray & Kwok, 2003).

In highly stratified systems, with competitive entry into selective institutions and high stakes tests, students are under pressure to achieve high grades and may therefore make greater use of private tuition to boost their attainment. Although this argument appears to have some force, an analysis of the TIMSS data analysis did not find an association between high stakes testing and the take-up of private tuition (Baker *et al.*, 2001). Instead, in the majority of countries tutoring was compensatory, helping pupils keep up with work in school. The authors argue that this may be an important reason in countries with good universal education systems where education is the main route to adult employment.

Parental education and economic circumstances are likely to influence attitudes towards private tuition. Parents who are more educated tend to have higher expectations for their children and to employ more tutors (Bray & Kwok, 2003; West *et al.*, 1998). More highly

educated parents also tend to command higher salaries and are therefore more able to afford the costs of private tuition. Demographic factors may also influence the prevalence of tutoring, which tends to be more common in urban than in rural areas. Several factors mentioned above may contribute to this; however, as there is generally more competition and choice of schools in urban areas and parental income and levels of education tend to be higher.

To date, few other factors have been considered in relation to private tuition. It is likely, however, that social influence plays a part and that parents and pupils in contact with others who employ tutors are more likely to do the same. Social norms may encourage or discourage parents to seek help for their children. Such norms may form part of broader cultural beliefs about the nature of childhood and the value of educational achievement. For example, parents who see adult life as hard work and drudgery may wish to ensure that their children enjoy life while they are young and are not given extra school work (Newson & Newson, 1977). Those who see education as a way of escaping that drudgery may invest in private tutoring to ensure their children do well at school. Social psychological factors may also play a part if a high proportion of students go from school to private tutoring.

As this brief review indicates, there are many different reasons why parents offer their children private tutoring. Whatever the reason, parents who employ tutors do so in the expectation that this will improve their children's attainment in school subjects and they need to know that their money is well spent. For them it is important to have some indication of the effectiveness of tutoring, an issue that will be considered in the following section.

Effectiveness of Tutoring

Although it seems likely that private tutoring has positive impacts on attainment, Bray (1999) reviewed research undertaken in several countries and found mixed results. He concluded that tutoring does not always translate into higher achievement and that more research was needed. Similarly, a comparative analysis of the effect of private tuition on pupils' attainment in mathematics, using data collected for the TIMSS, reported no association between national levels of private tuition and national mathematics achievement for eighth grade students (Baker *et al.*, 2001). Inevitably, national comparisons of this type suffer from uncontrolled variables, which may interact with or mediate the effects of tutoring, masking its effect. As noted above, it is especially important to distinguish between individual tutoring and large classes when evaluating the impact on attainment. In contrast, a recent experimental study demonstrated that students who received small group tuition after school in private institutions in Germany made greater gains in mathematics, English, French and Latin than pupils of similar attainment who did not receive tutoring (Mischo & Haag, 2002). Half the sample of 244 students received tutoring in small groups of 4 for 90 minutes a day, four days a week from student teachers or unemployed teachers. The control group was matched on the basis of attainment in the four target subjects.

As there is relatively little research on the effectiveness of private tuition, it is useful to turn to research on tutoring in school. This shows that both individual tutoring and small group tuition can have a substantial impact on attainment (Bloom, 1984; Cohen *et al.*, 1982; Ellson, 1976; Rosenshine & Furst, 1969; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). Bloom (1984) reported that the average attainment of students who received tutoring in place of normal teaching was about two standard deviations above the average of students in control groups taught with conventional methods. This means that the average tutored student outperformed 98% of the students in the control class. Moreover, variability between students was greatly reduced with tutoring. Bloom's claim about the effectiveness of tutoring is based on research

undertaken by two doctoral students, only one of whom subsequently published their findings in an academic journal. Although this research was well designed, the evaluation of the tutoring programme, which was developed by the author, was on a small scale (Anania, 1983). Before generalising the findings, the research should be replicated in other contexts and with other samples of students. Yet Bloom's claim that tutoring offers gains of two standard deviations received considerable attention. In a review of the effects of alterable variables on student achievement, Walberg (1984) identified tutorial instruction as having the greatest influence on attainment. He compared Bloom's findings of effect size of 2.0 with other variables such as mastery learning, student time on task and improved study skills, all of which have reported effect sizes of 1.0.

In schools, individual tutoring is rarely provided except in the teaching of reading, where children receive individual help if they make slow progress in learning to read. There is now a substantial literature on the quality of tutoring and its effectiveness in raising children's reading attainment, including several reviews and meta-analyses (Elbaum *et al.*, 2000; Wasik & Slavin, 1993; Shanahan, 1998). Elbaum *et al.* (2000) identified 29 studies that compared elementary students who received one-to-one tutoring with students whose reading attainment was comparable but who did not receive individual tutoring. The majority of students were identified as at risk of reading failure, with some identified as having learning disabilities. The 29 studies contained data on 42 samples of students. One-to-one tutoring was provided by adults, some of whom were trained teachers while others were college students or community volunteers. On average, students who received one-to-one tutoring performed at a level two-thirds of a standard deviation higher that the average level of the comparison group. This translates into a rise from the fiftieth to the sixtieth percentile on a standardised measure, which would enable students to keep up with classroom instruction. Although substantial, this is lower than the effect sizes reported by Bloom (1984) and Walberg (1984) and suggests that gains made by students with particular difficulties are smaller than those made by students without such difficulties.

The effectiveness of tutoring also relates to the content and structure of the programme followed. In the teaching of reading, tutorial programmes are based on different theoretical approaches and differ substantially in content, some placing much greater emphasis on phonics while others emphasise reading books from an early stage. Programmes that devote more time to reading and writing extended text are more effective than those with a narrower focus on letters and words (Wasik & Slavin, 1993; Pinnell *et al.*, 1994). It is important to note, however, that tutoring is not equally effective for all students and that some programmes such as Reading Recovery do not meet the needs of children who experience the greatest difficulties with phonological aspects of reading (Elbaum *et al.*, 2000). The content of a programme needs to be tailored to the individual child's needs.

Although this evidence points to the effectiveness of tutoring, it also suggests that several factors influence the extent to which tutoring is likely to be effective for an individual child. Remedial tutoring is likely to confer smaller gains than tutoring provided for students who experience less difficulty with the curriculum. The content and structuring of the curriculum also influence the effectiveness of tutoring. This indicates that the quality of private tuition should be considered when evaluating its impact on pupils' attainment.

Extracurricular Activities and Study Support

As mentioned above, most research on private tutoring has been considered in isolation from other sources of educational support received by students from their families or through extracurricular activities in school and in the community. It is worth considering commonalities and differences between state and private sector activities, especially those

with a curriculum focus. In England, extracurricular activities provided in schools include sports, games, music, arts and community activities as well as clubs related to school subjects, such as maths club, creative writing, booster classes or homework club. These activities may be held after school, during lunch breaks or at weekends. Students' participation in these extra activities appears to offer similar benefits to private tutoring. International research shows that participation in extra curricular activities is associated with higher achievement and more positive attitudes towards school (Marsh, 1992; Camp, 1990; MacBeath *et al.*, 2001). Camp (1990) found a positive effect on achievement when academic ability, gender and family background were taken into account. His sample was drawn from a national probability sample of US sophomore students in 1980, which was followed up in 1982. The findings are of considerable interest as the analysis sample contained over 7000 students in public and private schools. Participation was measured by a single composite indicator derived by from student self-reported level of participation in activities as non-participation, limited participation or participation in a leadership role.

The UK government signalled the importance of extracurricular activities in its 'National strategy for study support' (DfEE, 1997). This framework defined study support as 'learning activity outside normal lessons which young people take part in voluntarily . . . Its purpose is to improve young people's motivation, build their self-esteem and help them to become more effective learners. Above all it aims to raise achievement' (DfEE, 1997, p. 1). This definition meant that a wide range of organised activities were included as study support, some of which were not directly related to school curriculum subjects. In addition, the strategy reinforced the contribution of community organisations and services and business. Funding was made available through the New Opportunities Fund to develop extracurricular activities in areas of social disadvantage as a means of improving participation. Many schools and other organisations around the country set up or extended study support schemes offering a wide range of different activities.

Structured after-school programs appear to be particularly beneficial for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, raising their academic achievement and improving social adjustment (Posner & Vandell, 1999; MacBeath *et al.*, 2001). MacBeath *et al.* (2001) evaluated the impact of study support in 51 UK secondary schools in areas of social disadvantage and found that participation had an impact on attainment and attitudes to school. Subject-focused support had the largest effect on academic attainment, increasing GCSE attainment by the equivalent of one A–C pass or 3.5 points on students' best 5 subjects. Sport, aesthetic and peer education also had strong effects on attainment, possibly by changing attitudes to school. Study support was particularly beneficial for certain groups of students, with Asian girls deriving considerable gains in attainment, whereas white boys' attainment appeared to be unaffected. It is important to note, however, that this research compared students who did participate with those who did not participate in any extra activities. Students who not participate in any extracurricular activities at all are likely to differ from other students in many ways, however the report does not provide an analysis of the characteristics of these students. They may be disaffected and alienated from school or may be prevented from attending additional activities for practical reasons such as transport or they may have other commitments such a being a carer. Alternatively they may be heavily involved in other constructive activities out of school.

To summarise, structured study support programmes have a positive impact on children's attainment and attitudes. As might be expected, activities that specifically focus on curriculum subjects have the greatest impact on attainment. Some of these curriculum-focussed activities, such as revision classes, are very similar to certain forms of private tutoring in that students participate on a voluntary basis outside school hours and often work in groups that are smaller than their normal classes. It seems that the provision of such

activities is especially beneficial for students from disadvantaged backgrounds whose families may not be able to afford private tutoring, however it may also reduce the need for private tutoring by other students.

Non-Academic Outcomes

The more individual focus of tutoring, whether provided by the school or privately, has many beneficial outcomes apart from raising achievement. Bloom (1984) found that students in receipt of tutoring in school spent more time on task and had more positive attitudes towards learning, when compared with students who followed normal lessons. Tutoring also reduced test anxiety and increased learner motivation (Mischo & Haag, 2002). Similarly, study support was associated with improved attitudes to school and better attendance (MacBeath *et al.*, 2001). In Year 11, drop-in sessions and subject-focussed study support were associated with better attendance, which is likely to have a significant effect on pupils' achievement (Ireson *et al.*, in press). Extracurricular activities helped students to have a sense of belonging to school (Gerber, 1996).

Participation in private tuition and extracurricular activities both have a beneficial impact on self-concept (Marsh, 1992; Mischo & Haag, 2002). Marsh (1992) compared students who did not participate in extracurricular activities with students who were moderately active. He found that participation level had an impact on both social and academic facets of self-concept. Mischo & Haag (2002) compared students who did and did not receive small group tuition after school and found that tutoring raised academic self-concept. In light of recent evidence that improving self-concept can have a beneficial impact on achievement (Guay *et al.*, 2003), it seems that there may be a direct impact of private tuition on achievement and indirect effects on more positive self-concept, which may be boosted by participation in both private tutoring and extracurricular activities.

Discussion and Conclusions

Even allowing for methodological difficulties in obtaining reliable estimates, there is clearly huge variation in the extent of private tutoring in different countries. The available evidence indicates that, in common with other European countries, the extent of private tutoring in the UK is relatively low. Few recent surveys have been undertaken, however, and for reasons outlined above it is likely that the reported figures are underestimates. Further research is needed to establish the nature and extent of private tutoring in this country.

Although tutoring can have beneficial impacts on students' achievement, attitudes and self-concepts, these are not guaranteed. Research findings regarding the effects on attainment are inconsistent, as well-controlled experimental studies demonstrate strong positive effects (Bloom, 1984; Mischo & Haag, 2002) whereas international surveys do not (Baker *et al.*, 2001). This discrepancy is probably due to a lack of control in surveys for the nature and quality of tutoring, which stems from the inadequate conceptualisation of private tutoring in much research. It is especially important to distinguish between individual tutoring and tuition in large classes when evaluating the impact of tutoring on academic and non-academic outcomes for pupils. Even the impact of individual tutoring can be variable, however, as the quality of tutoring and the content of the programme also influence effectiveness (Shanahan, 1998; Elbaum *et al.*, 2000). A further point to be taken into account is that tutoring programmes tend to produce smaller gains for lower attaining students than for others.

Quality is also an important issue for families who employ tutors. When employing private tutors, families are likely to be faced with difficulties in evaluating the quality of

tutoring on offer, as there is limited regulation in place. For this reason, some families will waste scarce resources on ineffective tutors. Nevertheless, for many families tutoring offers a flexible and affordable way of helping children do their best in the education system.

Participation in extracurricular activities or 'Study Support' also has beneficial impacts on attainment, attitudes and self-concept (Camp, 1990; MacBeath *et al.*, 2001). There is a direct impact on attainment, especially from activities with a curriculum focus, and also indirect effects through improving attitudes and self-concept. It therefore seems that in general participation in both private and public sector activities is beneficial for students, and that public sector provision may provide adequate support for families unable to afford private sector involvement. As yet, patterns of participation across the two sectors remain relatively unexplored and it may be that children from all backgrounds attend public sector activities, whereas private-sector activities attract children from more affluent homes, as found by Medrich *et al.* (1982) in a survey of sixth grade children and their families in California. In England, the separation between public and private sector activities may not appear clear cut when viewed from the perspective of students and their families. For them, accessibility issues such as fees and location are likely to influence participation and as pointed out above, while private sector activities are by definition fee-paid, families also pay for some activities delivered by the public sector. Relatively little is known about factors that influence the decisions of students and their families to participate in some activities rather than others. A fresh approach is now needed that incorporates the perspectives of young people and their families on participation in both public and private sector activities.

Many reasons have been suggested for the wide variations in tutoring in different countries, including economic, cultural and educational factors. Each of these factors has been considered in terms of influences at a broad, social level. Theorising should now include individual perspectives within the broader social context including the global level, which tends to influence families indirectly. Individual and family perspectives may usefully be considered to form part of a system that encompasses both the social context and the individual. This calls for an integration of wider social systems and practices with individual perspectives. The social context includes community resources and cultural practices as well as family attitudes and values that bear on and mediate the child's participation. The family and community provide opportunities for the child to learn and develop knowledge and skills, with parents playing an important role in structuring the child's activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990). Parental values and goals influence their choice of activities and the resources they are willing to commit to allow their children to participate. In turn, parents and children are located in social networks and are influenced by the values and practices of others.

The UK government investment in Study Support represents a significant attempt to improve opportunities and participation of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Even quite low levels of participation improve attitudes, self-concept and achievement (Camp, 1990; Marsh, 1992), which implies that schools would do well to ensure that every child participates in at least one activity. Further development of this scheme has the potential to offer the benefits of additional support in curriculum subjects to students who are unable to afford private tutoring. One of the strengths of the scheme is that attendance is voluntary and this means that teachers need to consider the wishes of students and provide activities that are attractive to them. Teachers therefore organise activities that differ from normal lessons, and this may have beneficial effects on their relationships with students and on their classroom teaching.

Even with additional investment from the public sector, the private sector is likely to expand. This might not mean that the two sectors develop independently but that there is further blurring of the boundaries between them. Where schools, community organisations

and businesses work together, they should be able to offer some activities that are free or paid at a lower rate. The distinction between the public and private sectors would then become one of scale, rather than a simple dichotomy. One way of thinking about this is that just as private tuition is a 'shadow' system, study support falls in the 'penumbra', a region of half shadow.

From a policy perspective, the growth of private tutoring should not be ignored, as even countries with low participation are likely to be affected by the global trend. Cultural values, attitudes and practices in European countries may limit the uptake of tutoring, but many forces are likely to encourage growth. They include the value placed on educational qualifications in the global market, high rates of participation in Higher Education, rising educational levels in the population as a whole and parents' increasing affluence. Tutoring is likely to become an important phenomenon with potential for distorting the education system. It will present a major equity issue, conferring significant disadvantages on those who are unable to afford the cost of tutors. It is time to develop more systematic monitoring and evaluation of the shadow education system.

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