

Shadow Education and Social Reproduction

Multiple Factors Promoting the Social Reproduction Functions of Shadow Education

Mei Bai*

School of Mei Bai, Chengdu College of University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

**Corresponding author. Email: yyx@cduetec.edu.cn*

ABSTRACT

Education plays an important role in facilitating the flow of resources among different social classes and thus promoting social reproduction. Shadow education, also called extracurriculum activities or after-school tutoring, also plays a role in facilitating social reproduction. The special role of shadow education, in which requires extra financial investments to participate, contributes to the greater educational inequality in the field of education and thus further contributes to the social reproduction. Shadow education has developed significantly recently in China and it also plays a role in solving the problem of educational inequities in China. Despite its fast growing and development, however, no enough review studies have been done on after-school tutoring/shadow education due to a variety of reasons. For example, relevant data is difficult to collect. Neither domestic scholars in China nor foreign scholars around the world have studied the shadow education field in China with breadth and depth. Thus, this paper reviews studies on the factors promoting the social reproduction functions of shadow education. This paper summaries that family capital (e.g., family background), social capital (e.g. school location, school ranking, class sizes), and individual capital (e.g., gender, numbers of children, cognitive level, age) have great influence on the social reproduction functions of shadow education. This paper also provides suggestions for schools, the government, parents, and the society on how to address the educational inequality further caused by shadow education. This paper has implications for scholars who is interested in exploring the role and factors promoting social reproduction functions of shadow education in China.

Keywords: *shadow education, compulsory education, social reproduction, educational equity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a dual role in the current social mobility: It is not only a channel for the flow from the lower social strata to the upper social strata; education is also a means for the upper social strata to achieve status inheritance, that is, the upper social strata makes use of their own resource advantages to ensure that their children get more educational opportunities [1]. In China, there is even a tacit view that the education of one generation affects at least three generations via social reproduction. Educational opportunities and educational resources are two concepts that are widely discussed in the study of educational equity, specifically in regard to how they are manipulated to contribute to the maintenance or flow of social classes. However, the large gaps between different social classes (e.g., the gap

between the rich and the poor; the gap between urban and rural areas) have led to the uneven distribution of educational resources and the social stratification in China. Inequities also exist in the field of education in China. To solve the educational inequities in China, the Chinese government has adopted a series of policies and measures to ensure the fairness of school education in the compulsory education stage such as the double reduction policy starting in 2021.

After-school tutoring, the so-called shadow education has developed significantly recently in China and it also plays a role in solving the problem of educational inequities in China. In the stage of compulsory education, students compete with each other. So many students would like to participate in paid extracurricular tutoring in order to improve their competitiveness in admission and employment [2]. In this

way, shadow education also plays an important role in social reproduction functions. However, no enough review studies have been done on after-school tutoring/shadow education due to a variety of reasons. For example, relevant data is difficult to collect. Neither domestic scholars in China nor foreign scholars around the world have studied the shadow education field in China with breadth and depth. Therefore, this paper aims to systematically discuss the factors that promote the social reproduction functions of shadow education from the perspectives of families, schools, and individuals.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Scholar Mark Bray [3] who has conducted significant research on shadow education made a theoretical and empirical in-depth investigation and discussion on the policy and significance of supplementary private tutoring in Laos and Hong Kong. His research mainly comes from two perspectives: (1) who and why to hire private tutors; and (2) who is engaged in tutoring and how.

Bray's survey results found that "those who hire private tutors" are mostly students with good academic performance. Specifically, he found that many students hire private tutors because their parents purposefully and consciously consider it important to their children's academic development. Those parents' consciousness---the need for their children as academically competitive---plays a role in their action of hiring private tutors. Bray's survey results found out that formal schoolteachers or retirees from mainstream schools, middle school students, and college students are the main parties participating and engaging in various forms of private tutoring such as one-to-one, small groups, large groups.

3. THE EFFECTS OF SHADOW EDUCATION

Xue Haiping [4], a Chinese scholar, found through his research on Chinese urban students' supplementary education activities. He found that participation in extracurricular activities not only caused educational inequality between different areas with unbalanced economic development, but also greatly increased the academic burdens for students in our country. It is undeniable that shadow education has its value and rationality, but this does not deny the negative impact it has brought to the education field. Therefore, China has successively introduced many policies to limit the society's overemphasis on shadow education such "sunshine sports activities in primary schools" (one hour of physical exercise class or interest class every afternoon), "burden reduction" (reduce students' academic burden) and "double reduction" (limit the

number of training institutions outside the school, training time, charge price, prohibit arbitrary capitalization; For in-school education, teachers are required to improve the quality of education, and illegal make-up lessons are strictly prohibited). However, the effects have not been significant so far and parents are still anxious about not providing shadow education for their children under the new policies. In the next sections, I specifically discuss family capital, school capital, and individual capital on the social reproduction of shadow education.

4. FAMILY CAPITAL ON THE SOCIAL REPRODUCTION OF SHADOW EDUCATION

Family capital has great influence on the social reproduction function of shadow education. Li [5] studied the specific family capitals supported by shadow education. She indicated that the family capital mainly includes family economic capital (income), cultural capital (highest educational background of parents & the collection of family books except textbooks and magazines), and social capital (the parents' highest occupation, the parents' expectation of their children's educational level, how often parents help with homework of their children during the week) and political capital (the political status of family members) [5]. Studies on the family capitals on the social reproduction of shadow education generally focused on the following: (1) factors impacted students' participation in private tutoring; (2) roles of types of shadow education; and (3) the impact of shadow education on academic performance.

Xue [6] studied after-school tutoring activities of students in compulsory education in China and found that students from better socioeconomic backgrounds and large and medium-sized cities were more likely to accept after-school tutoring. Also, students from selective schools and higher-performing schools were also more likely to attend after-school tutoring. Zeng et al [7] investigated the private-tutoring participation in lower-secondary education, with a particular focus on disparities between students from urban versus rural backgrounds. They found decisions regarding participation in private tutoring were influenced by a number of factors: location, family backgrounds, and school conditions. Xue [8] constructed a theoretical model of joint social reproduction in which family capital influences children's educational attainment, and tested the mediating effect of shadow education on the influence of family capital on junior middle school students' educational attainment by using the data from China Education Tracking Survey in 2014. Huang and Zhang [9] investigated the basic situation of primary and secondary school students in J Province and pointed out the differences of supplementary tutoring among

primary school students, junior high school students and senior high school students. They also discussed the influencing factors of private supplementary tutoring combined with binary logistic regression equation model, and compared their common and individual characteristics. The results of their research showed that academic performance, residence, father's occupation, father's education background, mother's occupation and mother's education background had a significant impact on students' participation in private supplementary tutoring, while gender had no significant impact. Their study indicated that primary school students and junior high school students' participation in supplementary tutoring was more affected by family factors, while senior high school students' participation was mainly affected by academic performance.

Liu and Xu [10] explored the relationship between family cultural capital and types of shadow education acquisition and participation, and they found that the specific (Parental education expectations), objective (Family book collection) and institutionalized (Parents' years of education) forms of family cultural capital have a significant and positive impact on the acquisition of shadow education of junior high school students. Different forms of family cultural capital play different roles, and different dimensions of the same form also play different roles. Based on the analysis of the data of CEPS panel, Wu [11] studies the group differences in the acquisition and results of shadow education, and found that there are group differences in the acquisition of shadow education. For example, families with higher socioeconomic status and cultural capital are more likely to participate in shadow education. Meanwhile, there are group differences in the impact of shadow education on academic performance: for groups with high family cultural capital, shadow education has a significant positive impact on academic performance [11].

Liu [12] studied the impact of family cultural values on shadow education investment and found that family cultural values do have a significant impact on family investment in shadow education. Specifically, the impact is reflected in that the greater the distance between family power and the stronger the sense of fairness on behalf of the family, the more families want to take measures to increase investment in shadow education in order to change the current situation through their own efforts.

From the perspective of Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory, Liu [12] studied uses in-depth interviews to investigate the educational inequality in county society and he found that children in rural areas have heterogeneous family cultural capital such as parents' education, the attitude and motivation of parents to their children's education investment, parents' educational expectations, parents' own reading habits

and hobbies, parents' investment in their children's education (time and money), and the intergenerational interaction between parents and children, as well as interaction between parents and school education, etc. Zhang Jie and Zhang Wenjing [13] explored the influence of socioeconomic status on shadow education, and found that the proportion of middle and upper class families participating in academic cram schools, interest training classes and practice expansion activities, the level of financial investment and parent-child interaction frequency were higher than those of the lower class. Qian [14] studied the class difference of junior middle school students' participation in shadow education, and found that family capital, such as family economic conditions and the highest educational level of parents affected the investment amount of shadow education. According to the data from China Education Panel Survey in 2014, the proportion of students whose parents have the highest occupation in the upper class to participate in shadow education is 72%, which is much higher than the proportion of students whose parents have the highest occupation in the middle class (47.1%) and the proportion of students from the lower class (25.3%). The proportion of students from wealthy families to participate in shadow education (68.1%) is significantly higher than that of students from the middle class (50.2%) and those from poor families (31.5 percent) [15]. Moreover, in order to attract talents, many universities in China's developed regions target couples with a PH.D. degree. The school promises not only to assign jobs to the other partner of the PH.D., but also to provide their children with free admission to the university's affiliated kindergarten, elementary school and middle school. This means that their children can get more educational channels and better educational resources. In short, the higher the family capital is, the higher the proportion of students from families participating in shadow education is.

5. SOCIAL FACTORS ON THE SOCIAL REPRODUCTION OF SHADOW EDUCATION

School factors also affect the social reproduction function of shadow education. School factors that impacts the social reproduction process of shadow education usually involve: the type of area where the school is located, the school's local ranking, the type of location where the school is seated, and the class sizes. For example, Xue [15] studied the shadow education activities of junior middle school students in China and discussed in-depth relationship between extracurricular tutoring, student achievement and social reproduction. He found that middle school students in big cities, top-ranked schools, rich families and good grades were more likely to take extra tutoring. In China, since the development of the western region is later than that of the eastern region in addition to the harsh terrain and

climate conditions, the western region is relatively poor. However, today's highly educated and high-tech talents choose to stay in developed cities to work and live in order to obtain better career development prospects, causing that the educational resources in the western region are relatively limited as compared to the eastern areas. Therefore, students with lower school rankings and larger class sizes in the western central city are more eager to obtain more and better educational resources, and are more likely to choose to participate in extracurricular tutoring [1].

6. INDIVIDUAL FACTORS ON THE SOCIAL REPRODUCTION OF SHADOW EDUCATION

Individual factors also have impacts on the social reproduction function of shadow education. Individual factors involve gender, numbers of children, cognitive level, age, and class performance level. For example, based on the data obtained from the Hybrid Research Institute, Zhang, Beray, and Li [16] studied the shadow education in Chongqing China, which is the largest municipality in China, and discussed the factors affecting the demands for shadow education. They found that 4 major factors impacting the demands for shadow education: (1) Chinese education system, (2) family income, (3) parents' level of education, and (4) the learning expectations of individual students. Their regression analysis results showed: (1) women are more likely than men to participate in shadow education; (2) families with only one child are more likely than families with more than one child to participate in shadow education; (3) lower grade students are more likely than upper grade students to participate in shadow education; and (4) students with medium grades are more likely than those with upper-middle grades to participate in shadow education. Xue and Li also found that students with higher cognitive scores are less likely to participate in shadow education. Therefore, students' gender, cognitive level and social environments affect how they view and participate in extracurricular tutoring activities [1].

7. SUGGESTIONS

To address the educational inequality caused by the over popularity of shadow education in China, I provided the following suggestions:

7.1 Suggestions for Schools

Schools should strive to improve the quality and system of mainstream learning and education. Learning can adopt a more flexible teaching model to maximize the diversified needs of students and parents. In addition, the school can also reduce the class size, pay attention to each student as much as possible, respect the individual

development of students, teach students in accordance with their aptitude, and help students maximally realize personal ideals and values. In this process, government should also provide quality teachers, materials and vast financial support for schools to carry out a variety of after-school activities.

7.2 Suggestions for Government

Chinese government should also introduce and implement more reasonable and specific policies to reduce the burden on students and to inhibit the social reproduction function of shadow education for the purpose of promoting education equity in China. Simultaneously, government can provide additional subsidies to these underachievers from poor families for them to pay for the extracurricular tuition. Government can also increase additional subsidies for teachers at schools who are willing to provide extracurricular training for these students. It is impossible and unrealistic to completely eliminate shadow education in a short time. However, government and schools can adopt these above-mentioned measures in cooperation with each other in limiting the over-development of shadow education and thus promoting educational equality and equity. In addition, government can explicitly prohibit teachers from tutoring students in their own schools and classes, and prohibit teachers from introducing students to each other as clients. School leaders can firmly prohibit paid tutoring and severely punish teachers who violate the regulations.

Government can promote compulsory tutorial services and provide more shadow education opportunities. The government can (1) form a scientific and diverse talent selection system to meet the personalized educational needs of parents and students, (2) provide extra-curricular tuition subsidies for students with poor family economic background and poor performance, (3) establish a free extra-curricular tuition platform, and (4) use extra-curricular tuition to narrow the achievement gap of students from different classes and promote educational equity. In addition, government can also improve the child development welfare policy and establish a child education development account.

The "complexity" of the college entrance examination in China is contrary to the curriculum reform of "simplifying" the curriculum outline and shortening class hours. Specifically, when the scope of the entrance examination exceeds the curriculum, people will oftentimes find that the formal school education is difficult to meet the needs, resulting in the birth and popularity of shadow education. Thus, only by adjusting the college entrance examination to adapt to the actual school curriculum can we eliminate this gap and effectively reduce the burden on families. At the same time, the change of examination content can also

affect the supplementary courses. Thus, government should change the focus of the examination content from simply taking the examination to seeking people's all-round development.

Government should provide more guidance to more urban and rural students and parents of compulsory education at different levels to not rely too much on extracurricular tutoring. More guidance should be provided on how to choose extracurricular tutoring rationally to avoid vicious competition. Government should actively guide students and their parents to make rational decisions on whether or not to attend private tutoring for students who are not suitable or do not need to attend private tutoring. Government can learn from the experiences of other countries on this matter. In many countries, the government provides parents with a list of shadow education options, encourages community parent activities, information sharing and school selection guidance, and enacts regulations that prohibit misleading advertising by tutoring agencies and help families guard against regular teachers who force students to attend classes. In South Korea, government also set up a special hotline for parents to complain and report improper tutoring practices.

7.3 Suggestions for Parents

With the polarization of classes and the increasing pressure of job competition, more and more families hope to achieve upward mobility through education. However, many parents, especially those at the bottom of the family, oftentimes blindly follow the trend of tutoring, blindly make education and training plans for their children without proper communication with their children, which not only increases the burden of children's study but also increases the family economic pressure. Therefore, parents with low socioeconomic status should actively change the traditional and backward educational concepts, learn advanced scientific educational knowledge, cultivate children rationally, plan educational learning objectives reasonably, help their children improve their academic performance, and reduce the impact of socioeconomic status on students' academic achievement. At the same time, parents should also understand that education is not only about schoolwork, but also the cultivation of moral characters and qualities. Schools and education institutions teaching discipline knowledge, parents should create a good family atmosphere for the child, pay attention to the healthy development of children physical and mental aspects, and through the subtle influence of daily life for children, set a good example to implement quality-oriented education, encourage their children to the balanced development of, the class differences in the process of narrow entrance. Parents need to know that the intention of extracurricular tutoring is to help students with low scores or lacking of

ability to improve their performance in a short period of time and to narrow the performance gap with other students, rather than strengthening social stratification, even affecting the virtuous circle of social classes and normal society flow.

7.4 Suggestions for the Society

More non-profit organizations should be encouraged to develop to actively provide compensatory education for children from poor families. Many parents in difficult families in China have fallen behind in educational methods and educational ideas, and thus neglect the educational management of their children. In addition, due to the lack of teachers' supervision and guidance during the holidays, children's learning is easily neglected and their academic performance is thus lagging further behind. In order to help families with lower socio-economic status to narrow the gap caused by this educational inequality, non-profit organizations can play an active role as a supplement to school education. With the rapid development of non-profit organizations in China, fund-raising methods are increasingly diversified and market-oriented, and charitable fund-raising activities are specialized and professional. With the help of various donation activities, more material and intellectual help and compensation can be provided to children from poor families in education. China's national conditions are also allowed to organize educational forces into the community or online to carry out the activities of free education, vigorously promote the activities of half past three classes, compulsory tutoring and other educational activities, or open official account and public interest classroom, provide free educational knowledge and educational guidance, which brings scientific and rational educational methods and practical methods to parents, provides more educational knowledge and high-quality public classes in the stage of compulsory education and carries out rich cultural practice activities for children from bottom families free of charge.

8.CONCLUSION

Ensuring equal educational opportunities and balanced educational resources is a prerequisite for achieving equality and equity in compulsory education. In recent years, the mainstream education school education system in China has been striving to maintain a balanced development of education among all social classes. However, shadow education outside of mainstream education is pushing more and better educational resources to developed regions and economically affluent families, and this has thus further widened the gap in education. Moreover, the factors affecting the social reproduction function of shadow education have existed for a long time along with social and economic development, and the reasons for

existence are complex and difficult to control. Consequently, there is still a long way to go to realize education equity in the true sense.

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