

Shadow Education Defined

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Abstract

Shadow Education is a misunderstood form of education that is pervasive throughout Asia and is found all over the world. It should be no surprise that shadow education is misunderstood, due to the wide variety of names used to describe or define it.

In this article, terminology will be discussed and further defined with the objective of assisting further research into this important, yet neglected form of education. Reasons why the terminology matters are also discussed.

Keywords: Shadow education, private tuition, supplementary education, *gakushuu juku, ibshi hagwon*

Introduction

Marimuthu et al (1991) first used the term shadow education as a nickname for the private supplementary education industry found in Malaysia. The following year, Stevenson and Baker (1992), and George (1992) also used the term in their studies, effectively giving this form of education a formal name.

The name *shadow education* helps clear up the often confusing terminology still in use today. Shadow education are the courses, usually provided by an educational industry, providing education supplementary to state-sponsored forms of education. Intuitively, people can identify the differences between these two forms of education, however it is not so easy to draft a definition of either that can be of use in further research. With this in mind, the first section of this article discusses the differences and how that relates to the choice of terminology chosen by the author.

Education Terminology

Some terms used to discuss the education sponsored by the state, typically mandatory for children, are useful, but when held to the microscope of formal research, do not accurately define, or differentiate the form of education being discussed. The topic of this report is shadow education, which is an analogy serving as a nickname representing this form of education. Parallel to that analogy, in order to define what a shadow is, one must first define light.

Many terms are used to designate the education that children typically receive which is mandated by national and local governments. Such terms include *mainstream education* (Chan, 2014; Courtenay, 2013), *regular education* (Davis, 2013; Lowe, 2015), *formal education* (Mori & Baker, 2010; Pham, 2015), *public education* (Roesgaard, 2006), and *state sponsored education* (Southgate, 2009).

Each of these terms is useful to a point, but have flaws in their implications that potentially disqualify them from being used as technical terms as intended. The term mainstream education implies that all education that teaches along topics and pedagogy as the majority of the students would be mainstream. Shadow education also teaches most of the same topics and uses much of the mainstream pedagogy. Regular education is already ambiguous, as the term regular has two possible meanings in this context. It may mean that this form of education is standardized, or it may mean that this education is administered on a regular basis. Either of these definitions may also fit the shadow education context.

Formal education contrasts with informal education. This may cause definition problems in studies such as Watanabe (2013), in which it was found that many junior and senior high school teachers were less formal than their shadow education counterparts were. Public education contrasts with private education. Being a private school does not mean it is not state-sponsored, however. Even the term state-sponsored education is not clear enough to differentiate it from shadow education. This term may be understood to mean that the state is responsible for the school's finances, which may not be the case.

When looking carefully at the actual difference between these two forms

of education, one clearly defining aspect serves as the distinction, that of accreditation. Accreditation is granted by the state. With this accreditation, a student who has successfully completed four years of elementary school, then transfers to an accredited school in another state, or even another country, will be accepted as a fifth year student without further testing. This is not the case in shadow education. A student who has attended three years of shadow education has no formal recognition that can be used for job hunting, completion of an accredited degree, or even to be admitted as a fourth year shadow education student. Admission to a shadow education institution as a fourth year student is generally dependent on admission to an accredited institution as such, but may be based on in-house levels tests.

In this report, accreditation serves as the main difference between the two forms of education. Shadow education is a form of education that is not accredited, but there are additional forms of education that are also not accredited. A shadow takes the shape of the object that casts it, and changes with changes in position or contortions of the original, physical object. In sunlight, nearly every object will cast a shadow. This is the analogy originally intended when giving this form of education a name. As accredited education changes, so does shadow education, and nearly anywhere accredited education is found, shadow education exists to supplement it. One common misunderstanding the term shadow education projects is that of an education industry that is sinister and hiding in the shadows cast by accredited education systems. This is not the original intent of descriptions of this form of education; rather, this form of education *is* the shadow, mirroring accredited education and changing shape along with it.

Other forms of education also exist that fit the criterion of lacking accreditation. In Japan, the most widespread form of education that is not accredited is often called *juku*. *Juku* are institutions that provide various forms of education to students for a fee. After school, many students go to *juku*. In Japan, calling shadow education institutions *juku* may be accurate in most cases, but on further inspection the term is not specific enough, and demonstrates some of the shortcomings of definitions. The term *juku* covers nearly every type of education that is not accredited. Searching for

a *juku* using a common search engine will give results ranging from math courses to bartending. Many students go to math *juku*, English *juku*, and piano *juku*. The term shadow education is intended to mean education that supplements core subjects of accredited institutions, so bartending and fishing *juku* would not be considered shadow education. In Japan, *juku* that are expected to teach only core subjects are often called *gakushuu juku*. This term could be used as a technical term for shadow education, but does not have international recognition.

In order to differentiate extraneous educational institutions from the definition of shadow education, it would be appropriate to include its supplementary nature. However this brings up another issue. Studies such as Gurun & Millimet, (2008) and Smyth (2008) show that the actual effects of shadow education on accredited studies are inconclusive. Rather than using supplementation itself as a criterion, it would be more appropriate to include the *expectation* of supplementation.

One more issue that has not been clarified about shadow education is the accredited education that it is expected to supplement. Studies of shadow education, such as the studies of *gakushuu juku* in Japan, or their counterpart institutions *ibshi hagwon* in South Korea, focus on courses designed to supplement core studies up until acceptance into university.

Another issue to denote is that of self-study. Students are supposed to do their homework, supplementing their core education, but this is not the image that shadow education brings to mind. Self-study has many forms, including books, videos, and internet. There are many institutions that charge a fee for supplementary space and materials, such as workbooks, DVDs, reference books, and online asynchronous courses. For the purposes of this study, these forms of study are not considered shadow education. Study that is not administered and regulated by a human teacher or coach is considered a form of self-study.

The final criterion of shadow education for this report, is that of a regular schedule. Many students have been given occasional help with their homework, or tutored for a specific test by a friend. In this report, such occasional help is not considered shadow education. Shadow education must have a regular schedule, such as daily, weekly, or even monthly.

Definition

With these issues in mind, a clear definition of shadow education can be made. Shadow education is any form of education that fits all the following criteria:

- It is not accredited
- The contents are designed and expected to supplement core subjects for testing and advancement through pre-tertiary accredited schools
- It has a regular schedule
- It is administered by a human teacher or educational manager overseeing the pacing and contents of the course

There are other parameters that deserve further discussion. The term shadow education often refers to company chains, locations, sets of educational programs, physical buildings, individual classes, or the lessons themselves. Using this term to designate a specific location proves too problematic, as does using it to denote a company or chain of companies. There are accredited schools that employ outsiders for extra lessons held on school property that fit the definition of shadow education. The reverse is also true; some accredited teachers are hired to teach unaccredited courses held outside of accredited schools. These also fit the definition of shadow education, but demonstrate the difficulty of using locations, individuals, or companies as a parameter of shadow education. With this in mind, it seems most appropriate to use the term shadow education on individual courses.

Another parameter that has been proposed is the remedial / enrichment dichotomy (Bray & Lykins, 2012; Nalty 2008). Remediation is when students feel that they have to catch up with their peers, or they are not able to keep up with their accredited lessons. Enrichment is when students are trying to get ahead, or they are simply curious and want more advanced lessons on the subject. This parameter proves problematic as a dichotomy, as many students may have both forms of motivations within the same lesson. The problematic nature of this dichotomy makes it difficult to use in research and is not considered a defining parameter for shadow education in this study.

Another possible criterion that has been used in some definitions of shadow education (Bray, 2010; Gurun & Millimet, 2008) is that shadow

education is fee-based. While undoubtedly the majority of shadow education courses impose fees, there are religious organizations and some companies that are not in the shadow education business, that offer free courses in exchange for good will and publicity. Studies of the efficacy of shadow education may wish to use financial data to determine value. In such cases, it would add clarity to use the more descriptive term *fee-based shadow education*.

Why Terminology Matters

The term shadow education is only one of many terms used for this context. Terms such as *supplementary education* are used in research published by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2014), Bray (2009), Dierkes (2010), and Entrich (2014b). In these publications, both terms are used to designate the same form of education.

In addition, other terms such as private tutoring (Bray, 2009; Chan, 2014; Park, 1990), *juku* (Cook, 2013; Dierkes, 2010; Entrich 2014a), *hagwon* (Bray & Lykins, 2012), *out of school classes* (Entrich, 2014b; OECD, 2014), *private institutions* (Nam, 2009; Ra, 1999; Ryu, 2003; Yun, 2005), *private academies* (Azuma, 2011), *private cram schools* (Chen & Lu, 2009), *private tuition* (Reddy, Lebani & Davidson, 2003), *private educational institutes* (Shon, 2011), *private sector English education* (Ryu, 2003), *academic institutes* (Sim, 2002), *extra lessons* (Stewart, 2015), and *bespoke education* (Davis, 2013) are also used to mean similar, if not identical forms of education. In many cases, authors use more than one of these terms interchangeably, while in other reports some terms are used with different meanings. This causes confusion as to which form of education is being researched (Azuma 2011; Bray & Kobakhidze 2014; Bray & Kwo, 2015).

As previously mentioned, another problem with the current terminology is whether it relates to a physical location, a company, a program, or an individual course. These terms are currently used to denote any or all of the above. In different countries, the terminology in the local language is often referred to, such as *juku* in Japan, *hagwon* in South Korea, and *buxiban* in Taiwan, each of which are overly-broad terms which include shadow education as well as other forms of education.

Researchers currently are hampered by the numerous terms which frequently overlap or are redefined by individuals. Also a researcher trying to compare or contrast forms of shadow education in different countries would need to learn all the different names in each language, of each relevant form of shadow education under scrutiny. With standardized terminology, researchers can more accurately define and report across national boundaries. Researchers who are not aware of the term shadow education may use one of the alternate terms, and searching for only that term may limit the number of studies the researcher can find.

According to Southgate (2009), the shadow education industry exists in all countries, with between 10 and 80 percent participation. People in many countries spend a comparable portion of their income on shadow education, such as in South Korea, where households spent 2.9% of the Gross Domestic Product on shadow education in 1998, which is comparable to the 3.4% for accredited education (Dang & Rogers, 2008).

With such a large amount of money being spent on shadow education in so many countries, it is natural for research to be involved, supporting its efficacy, suggesting means for improvement, or detailing shortcomings. People want to know if their money is being spent wisely. In order for research to support the shadow education industry, terminology needs to be refined and standardized so that the resulting research can be understood properly.

Within shadow education, there are various forms of educational study. Using a standardized term and definition, researchers can then go forward to define these contexts, give them standardized names or designations, and improve clarity, ultimately improving studies of this form of education. In short, with such an expensive form of education that is vastly under-researched, we need to know clearly what we are discussing in order to determine what is working, what is not, and what can be improved, leading to an understanding of its value.

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