choices, and encouraging self-regulation in the for-profit private tutoring sector. Another option is working in partnership with schools, media, teachers’ unions, other branches of government, or community bodies.

The final chapter begins by describing how the phenomenon of private tutoring has grown in prominence to the extent that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Education for All agenda has had to acknowledge its impact on mainstream schooling (UNESCO, 2014). In particular, UNESCO has expressed concern over social inequalities and the excessive focus on academic outcomes to the detriment of other educational goals. In this regard, governments have a duty to preserve the public good and to ensure that private tutoring complements or supplements mainstream schooling and does not undermine it. The authors point out that private tutoring is under-regulated compared to mainstream schooling. While they recognize the danger of over-regulation, they nevertheless urge governments to find an appropriate balance between soft and tough approaches. Far from prescribing answers, they maintain that each government has to examine its own capacity and priorities, and explore the potential for collaboration with partners in regulating private tutoring.

I highly recommend this book for academics or policymakers who are interested in the growing phenomenon of private tutoring. Even though the book focuses on Asia, there are lessons to be drawn for other parts of the world. This point about the value of cross-national comparison forms one of the major themes of the book. The authors are to be commended for having assembled and analysed a wealth of research evidence in a systematic manner.

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Emerging from the shadow: a comparative qualitative exploration of private tutoring in Eurasia, edited by Boris Jokić, Zagreb, Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC), 2013, 330 pp., (paperback), ISBN 978-953-57241-1-7

This book is an excellent qualitative study in the field of private tutoring (often called shadow education). Over the last decade, the global expansion of private tutoring has
drawn great interest in both academic and public policy communities. However, private tutoring is very complex, and no single study could cover every dimension. This book aims to examine multiple issues and elements related to familial decisions whether or not to use private tutoring.

This book is generated from the Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC) project “Private Tutoring Phenomenon: Developing Policy Options”. It draws on research over 18 months in five Eurasian countries: Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia and Estonia. Based on a previously established “diagnostic” picture of private tutoring in individual countries, the team undertook an in-depth qualitative exploration of the foundations and implications of private tutoring. Members adopted criterion and purposive sampling to identify educational stakeholders from governmental, political, professional, parental, educational and other spheres, and conducted 105 individual interviews and 18 focus group interviews.

In order to explore the elements from both proximal and distant spheres that might influence the decision to secure private tutoring, the project designed a conceptual framework. The centre of the framework is the decision concerning the use of private tutoring, and the underlying elements are contextualized within an ecological system. This ecological system is divided into five socially organized subsystems, representing a set of nested and interconnected structures with potential to influence the decision of using private tutoring. The five components are individual pupil, parents, school, education system, and society.

Unlike many books which are organized in country order, this book is innovatively organized by themes based on the aforementioned conceptual framework. Chapters Four through Nine, the core of the book, provide the research findings and an analytical discussion of the various elements. Readers gain a holistic knowledge about the elements related to the decision of using private tutoring from different levels of actors. Unsurprisingly, this structure also has its own limitations, the point to which we shall return shortly.

Elaborating, Chapter Four by Tamar Bregvadze and Boris Jokić explores specific educational features that can influence decisions concerning the use of private tutoring, and makes factual and analytical contributions to the literature. It analyses the specific features of formal curriculum including: imbalance between depth and breadth; imbalance between the content and outcome orientation; the irrelevance of curricular content to real life; and inconsistencies in the curricula. The chapter concludes that perceived deficiencies in curriculum arrangements generate a need for private tutoring. It adds that infrequent and predominantly summative forms of assessment, along with inconsistency between curriculum and assessment requirements, increase the need for private tutoring.

Chapter Five by Andrea Soldo and Boris Jokić examines elements within the sphere of the school, focusing on the teacher-related influence on private tutoring. It explores shortcomings of pre-service and in-service teacher training which plague the preparation of quality teachers and the maintenance of high teacher quality, respectively, and concludes that these weaknesses have direct and strong influence on the decision to use private tutoring. It adds that elements stemming from teachers’ professional context and working conditions, such as oversized classrooms, overloaded curricula and ineffective schedules, impede effective teaching delivery and generate demand for private tutoring.

Chapter Six by Laura Kirss and Boris Jokić explores the influence of subjective pupil characteristics on the decision concerning private tutoring, focusing on motivation for learning, personality traits, and learning abilities. It addresses a deficiency in the existing literature in which pupils’ individual characteristics are predominantly discussed in terms
of easily-measured demographic characteristics. It observes that the “one size fits all” approach of the formal education system fails to address the individual needs and characteristics of pupils, and has contributed to an increased probability of taking private tutoring.

Although parents play a crucial role in the decision to secure private tutoring, parental factors are under-researched in the existing literature. Chapter Seven by Elmina Kazimzade and Boris Jokić tries to narrow the gap, focusing on parental dissatisfaction with formal education and their perspectives on parental roles. It demonstrates that parents’ perceived shortcomings of formal education influence the inclination towards the decision to use private tutoring. Parents view private tutoring as a method to ameliorate the teaching and learning processes their children experience at school.

Chapter Eight by Zrinka Ristić Dedić, Boris Jokić, and Elmina Kazimzade discusses the relationship between elements in the larger society and decisions on private tutoring. It is widely believed that education is a valuable, future-oriented investment for professional and personal success, and families consider private tutoring to be a tool to improve the chance of achieving personal educational aspirations. Furthermore, the decision concerning private tutoring is especially driven by the existence of selective and competitive transitional points within the educational systems.

In addition to the analysis about influence of elements stemming from the five spheres in the conceptual framework, Chapter Nine by Zrinka Ristić Dedić and Boris Jokić examines the patterns of private tutoring use amongst families of different socio-economic status and the impact of tutoring on educational and social inequalities. It shows that the main source of inequality related to private tutoring might come from subtle and complex issues related to differential patterns of use, the quality and quantity of private tutoring, and the broader educational and social functions of private tutoring.

All in all, based on a well-designed conceptual framework, this book provides an integrated picture about the elements underlying the decisions to take private tutoring. However, strength and weakness are two sides of the same coin. Because the book is organized by themes rather than by countries, it is difficult to identify the implications of the social and cultural contexts of every country. All the information collected from the five Eurasian countries was deposited in a common database and was subsequently analysed according to the conceptual framework. Thus the data from individual countries were separated into small fractions as examples or quotes in the book to support specific points, and readers thus cannot find a complete picture about the elements underlying the decision of taking private tutoring in particular countries. The book also has some other limitations. For example, it is explorative research and could not reach conclusions regarding causality of the decisions concerning private tutoring.

These critical observations should not discourage readers from reading this excellent book. Both the research and its findings provide fertile ground for future examinations of both the decision concerning the use of private tutoring and the phenomenon of private tutoring in general.

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