

Extra tuition in Southern and Eastern Africa: Coverage, growth, and linkages with pupil achievement

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Abstract

The phenomenon of extra tuition is witnessed in many countries and some educationalists have described it as a parallel education system. However, the incidence and impact of extra tuition have often not been studied systematically, especially in Africa. In this article cross-national data for six African education systems (Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Zambia and Zanzibar) collected by SACMEQ, the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality, have been used to assess: (a) the incidence and growth of extra tuition, (b) the characteristics of students who received extra tuition, and (c) the association between extra tuition and student achievement. The analyses presented in this paper showed that extra tuition was a widespread phenomenon in all six education systems, and that receiving extra tuition was positively associated with the socio-economic levels of students' home backgrounds. The association between tuition and student achievement was mixed. The issues and challenges associated with tuition have been discussed and some suggestions for further research made.

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1. Introduction and method

The provision of extra tuition for children in school subjects outside school hours has become a growing and global phenomenon. While the issue has only recently become subject to investigation and many aspects still remain inadequately explored, it is clear that extra tuition is taking place on a substantial scale. As a result, extra tuition is often referred to as a “shadow education system” (Stevenson and Baker, 1992; Bray, 1999, 2006; Kwok, 2004).

In industrialised countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan, extra tuition has been described as a “largely invisible, unregulated and fragmented new industry” in which parents invest important amounts of money in order to assure that their children will succeed in school (The Economist, June 2005). Ireson and Rushforth (2005) found that almost a third of year 6, year 11, and year 13 pupils in the United Kingdom received tutoring because parents wanted to help their children do well in entry tests for secondary schools and in national examinations. In Germany, between 20% and 30% of 17 year-old students received private tutoring at least once in their lives (Schneider, 2004). Finally, Bray and Kwok (2003) found that between 35% and 70% of secondary students

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Table 1
Planned and achieved samples for SACMEQ I and SACMEQ II projects

Country	SACMEQ I				SACMEQ II			
	Schools		Pupils		Schools		Pupils	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
Kenya	185	184	3700	3233	185	185	3700	3299
Malawi	155	148	3100	1983	140	140	2800	2333
Mauritius	159	158	3180	2919	159	159	3180	2945
Namibia	160	160	4940	4457	275	275	5500	5048
Zambia	165	157	3300	2558	175	173	3500	2611
Tanzania (Zanzibar)	128	128	2560	2286	151	145	3020	2514

in Hong Kong (depending on grade level) took supplementary classes.

In some developing countries the incidence of extra tuition also appears to have reached endemic proportions (Foondun, 1992; Buchmann, 2002; Chimombo et al., 2005). Bray (2003, 2006) cited several studies that describe the extent of the phenomenon: a study in Egypt, for example, reported that more than 50% of primary school children had taken extra classes, while research on India found that almost 40% of the pupils took extra lessons. In the case of Kenya, Nzomo et al. (2001) pointed out that more than two thirds of Standard 6 students received extra lessons. In such countries as South Africa, the Philippines and Colombia, more than three quarters of seventh and eighth graders took extra lessons (Baker et al., 2001). Yet while there is considerable anecdotal evidence that the scale of extra tuition is substantial in many countries, there has been little systematic study of its coverage, modalities and impact.

This article sheds some light on the coverage and impact of extra tuition in Southern and Eastern Africa. It is based on the rich information resources contained in the large-scale data archives developed by the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ). These archives contain data from two sets of cross-national studies (the SACMEQ I and SACMEQ II Projects) on the conditions of schooling and the quality of education (Ross et al., 2004).

The sample designs employed in the SACMEQ research programme follow the scientific sampling procedures described in (Ross and Rustf, 1997). Schools were selected with probability proportional to the size of the target population and then a simple random sample of 20 pupils was selected in each

sample school. Sampling weights were applied in order to compensate for different probabilities of selection, and also to account for small losses of data due to non-response. The sampling errors for each statistic were calculated using the specialised software that applies the Jackknife error estimation procedure. This approach made appropriate adjustments for statistical and clustering effects associated with the data.

The desired target populations for the SACMEQ studies consisted of all pupils enrolled in Grade 6 during the ninth month of the school year who were attending registered government or non-government schools. The countries studied in this article (Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Zambia and Tanzania (Zanzibar)) participated in both the SACMEQ I and the SACMEQ II Projects which took place in 1995 and 2000, respectively. In Table 1 two headings have been used: “Planned” and “Achieved”. The planned samples of schools and pupils represented the numbers that were initially selected for the data collection. The achieved samples of schools and pupils represented the numbers from which data were obtained. The “losses” of schools and pupils for both studies were relatively small in comparison with other large-scale studies. In the case of schools, some data were lost because occasionally school principals declined participation in the study. In the case of pupils, some were lost due to absenteeism on the day of the data collection.¹

In the context of this article, the terms “extra tuition” and “extra lessons” have been used

¹Further information concerning the validity and reliability of the SACMEQ studies can be found in chapter II of the SACMEQ I and SACMEQ II Country Reports available at: www.sacmeq.org.

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