



Patterns and determinants of private tutoring: The case of Bangladesh households



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ARTICLE INFO

JEL classifications:

I21

I22

I24

Keywords:

Private tutoring

Socio-economic inequality

Education

Households

Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

This study analyses the decision to take private tutoring and the associated tutoring expenses by the households in Bangladesh, using information collected from more than 13,500 households by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in 2000, 2005 and 2010. Employing the double-hurdle model estimation procedure, this study econometrically demonstrates that the likelihood of purchasing private tutoring has been increasing over the years. Urban households are more likely to purchase private tutoring services for their children than the rural households, which can widen the socio-economic inequalities. Policy recommendations are drawn based on the findings.

1. Introduction

It is widely observed that private supplementary educational systems not only exist in high-income nations, such as Japan, Korea, USA, and Singapore (Bray, 2007; Tan, 2009; Buchmann et al., 2010; Kim and Lee, 2010; Kwo and Bray, 2014), but it is also a growing phenomenon in emerging economies such as China, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Kenya (Buchmann, 2002; Hamid et al., 2009; Pallegedara, 2012; Azam, 2016; Zhang and Liu, 2016). As private tutoring only exists because of the mainstream education system and it usually mimics the mainstream education system, it is increasingly recognized as a shadow education system (Lee et al., 2009; Bray and Lykins, 2012), which has become a global phenomenon (e.g., Bray, 2009; Bray and Lykins, 2012; Zhang and Liu, 2016).

Despite the fact that private tutoring has increasingly been considered a shadow education system, there are some significant differences between mainstream education and private tutoring systems. First, private tutoring tends to be less regulated by government authorities or agencies, and therefore, private tutors may not possess any formal education qualifications. In some countries, teachers provide private tutoring to their own students after school hours, and in some cases, senior school students or university students provide this service (Bray and Lykins, 2012). Second, in general, the purpose of taking private tutoring services is mainly to pass exams or obtain higher

grades. For example, in most countries where private tutoring is excessive, there are usually extremely competitive entrance examinations to enroll in universities and other popular secondary schools (Kim and Lee, 2010; Liu, 2012; Pallegedara, 2012; Zhang, 2013). In contrast, mainstream education systems typically consider a broad level education with an aim to develop the human capital of the students. Third, private tutoring is often profit-oriented, whereas mainstream education is usually not-for-profit. For example, school teachers provide private tutoring services for their own students in most developing countries such as Cambodia (Dawson, 2009), Georgia (EPPM, 2011), Kazakhstan (Kalikova and Rakhimzhanova, 2009) and Tajikistan (Kodirov and Nodir, 2009) due to low salaries received from their mainstream teaching jobs (Bray and Lykins, 2012). Large profit-oriented companies provide private tutoring service in countries, such as Japan and South Korea, where there are strict laws to prohibit school teachers from providing private tutoring services (Bray and Kwo, 2014).

In South Asia, where large portions of the population are extremely poor (those who live on less than USD1.90 day), students begin to receive private tutoring (commonly referred to as 'private tuition') starting from the primary level (grades 1–5). For example, according to Nath (2011) cited in Bray and Lykins (2012), around 37.9% of primary school students and 68.4% of secondary students in Bangladesh received private tutoring in 2008, and the private tutoring participation rate increased to over 80% for students in grade 10. Moreover, around

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85% of urban students and 61% of rural students received private tutoring in English, which indicates geographic and socio-economic differences in demand for private tutoring (Mahmud, 2016; Mahmud and Bray, 2017). In Nepal, over 50% of secondary school students and around 68% of grade 10 students receive private tutoring from their schools (Thapa, 2011; Jayachandran, 2014). At the primary level, Sen (2010) stated that 57% of students receive private tutoring in the Indian state of West Bengal, and Bray (2007) reported that 80% of Sri Lankan sixth grade students receive private tutoring. Furthermore, Nazeer (2006) mentioned that private tutoring is also pervasive in the Maldives, as all nine secondary school teachers interviewed in his qualitative research provided private tutoring to their own school students.

The pervasiveness of private tutoring in South Asia can be attributed to several factors. First, the quality of mainstream education may be poor in particular subjects, such as English language and mathematics. For instance, Hamid et al. (2009) found that due to the less qualified and inadequate numbers of English teachers in schools, English learning in the mainstream education system is weak, and therefore, students in Bangladesh often need private tutoring services in English. In addition to teacher quality and supply constraints, in many cases students are forced to take private tutoring due to irregular attendance of the teachers in the schools (Sen, 2010). Second, social competition to enroll in good-quality schools, colleges and universities is another main driver of the higher participation rates of private supplementary tutoring. In most South Asian countries, there is a strong perception that the grading of schools and universities has implications on the graduates' careers. Thus, many parents spend money on children's private tutoring in order to make them more competitive, not only for the good-quality popular schools, colleges and universities but also to make their children more competitive in job searching. Third, as it is increasingly recognized that parents with more income tend to spend more money on their children's education, the rapid expansion of the middle income class households in South Asia as a whole is another factor that drives the private tutoring business. According to Kohli et al. (2011) cited in Bray and Lykins (2012), as the proportion of the Indian middle class expands due to increased economic growth, it will further contribute to more spending on private tutoring by middle class parents.

Given this background, the objective of this study is to examine the determinants of the demand for private tutoring in Bangladesh, and particularly to examine the income (expenditure) elasticity of private tutoring in Bangladesh. The case is worth investigating for several reasons. First, the country currently has a population of 161 million, and it is projected that by 2050, the population will grow to 178–230 million (UN, 2016). With this increase in population, the number of the school-aged children will increase substantially, and thus it is important to understand the private tutoring demand in Bangladesh to formulate effective education policies. Second, Bangladesh has been growing rapidly economically for the last two decades; since 2000, the annual economic growth has been between 4.0% and 7.1% (World Bank, 2016). Consequently, the per capita nominal GDP has increased from \$363 in 2000 to \$1115 in 2014, a 52% increase in four years (GOB, 2015). The process of urbanization in Bangladesh is also rapid. In 2001, about 20% of the population lived in urban areas; the share increased to 32% by 2012 (World Bank, 2016). It will be interesting to examine the demand for private tutoring in an emerging economy, where changes in income and demography are rapid. This study uses three waves of nationally-representative Household Income and Expenditure survey (HIES) data: HIES2000, HIES2005, and HIES2010 collected by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). This is the first attempt to examine the demand for private tutoring in Bangladesh using a nationwide household survey over a ten-year timescale. The present study first models a household's decision to take private tutoring, and second examines the factors influencing a household's absolute private tutoring expenditure after a decision has been made, and finally, estimates the share of private tutoring expenditure to total household expenditure.

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the

data and the general findings; Section 3 specifies the model and econometric estimation procedures; Section 4 presents and discusses the econometric findings, and Section 5 concludes with policy implications.

2. Data and general findings

2.1. Data

This study relies on the Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES) conducted in 2000, 2005 and 2010 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). After independence in 1971, the BBS conducted the first round of HIES in 1973-74. Since then until the HIES 2010 rounds, the BBS has successfully conducted 15 rounds of HIES. The HIES data series are the major source of information on growth and poverty in Bangladesh. Until the HIES2000 rounds, the information on household expenditures was absent as BBS mainly collected information on the sampled households' income. Since the HIES 2000, BBS started including detailed information on household incomes and particularly expenditures on all food and non-food items in detail, including education, health, housing and energy.

In the HIES2000, HIES2005 and HIES2010 questionnaires, there were nine main modules: household information (including members' age, sex and employment status), housing, education, health, economic activities and wage employment, agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises, other income and assets, and consumption. The education expenditures at the household level were collected in detail, including admission fees, annual session fees, registration, tuition, textbooks, exercise books, uniform costs, private tuition expenditures, hostel expenses including food, transportation and tiffin (a light meal at lunch time) costs, internet and email costs and donations on yearly basis for the school-going members who are older than four years. The questionnaire was administered in Bengali, but the English version of the questionnaires was also developed by the BBS targeting the national and international researchers. The English version of the questionnaires is available online.¹

With the financial support of the World Bank, and the technical support of the Development Economics Data Group, World Bank (IHSN, 2017), the BBS applies a two-stage stratified random sampling process to enhance precision in data collection. In the first stage, the BBS selects primary sampling units (PSUs) including both rural and urban areas consisting of specific geographical areas. In the second stage, BBS randomly selects around 20 households from each PSU that represent rural and urban areas. In the HIES 2000 survey, a total of 442 PSUs were selected primarily, and in the second stage 7440 households were randomly selected from all administrative divisions (currently eight divisions), 63 districts and 303 sub-districts. In the HIES 2005 survey, 504 PSUs were primarily selected, with a total of 10,080 households randomly selected from eight divisions, 64 districts and 364 sub-districts. Finally, in the HIES 2010 survey, a total of 1000 PSUs was selected primarily from which 12,240 households were randomly selected located in seven divisions, 64 districts and 372 sub-districts.

One can observe that the number of PSUs and the sample size have increased over the sampled HIES rounds. The major reasons for this are the changes in the administrative units and rapid increase in population. For example, in 1984 there were 20 districts and four divisions in Bangladesh with a population of 90.6 million (UN, 2016). By 2010, with a population of 151.6 million (UN, 2016), the old 20 districts were divided into 64 districts and the previous four divisions were further divided into nine divisions.² To make the data nationally representative

¹ The HIES questionnaires, sample designing and the data collection process can be found online: <http://catalog.ihns.org>.

² Most recently declared division is the Maynamati division created by splitting the Chittagong division.

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