

THE SHIFTING BOUNDARIES OF TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM:

EDUCATION PRIVATIZATION(S) IN THE POST-SOCIALIST EDUCATION SPACE

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Abstract

This chapter explores how teachers from Southeast/Central Europe and Southeast Asia navigate (neo)liberal education reforms through their participation in private tutoring activities. The findings reveal that teachers may have accepted the logic of market-based education service provision (as reflected in their private tutoring activities), but have simultaneously used the newly created “private” space to evade and perhaps even defy multiple (neo)liberal regulations permeating their work in public schools, such as student-centered learning and curriculum standards. Similar to Sassen’s (1991) work on “global cities,” we view private tutoring as a de-nationalized national space, where global flows “touch down” in national territories and are serviced by local actors, but in ways that are oriented towards sustaining local visions of “quality” education and “good” life. The result is a double entendre of privatization: (neo)liberal reforms contribute to the de-professionalization of the teaching profession while at the same time enable teachers to actively resist (neo)liberal reforms in unexpected and innovative ways. The chapter examines how teachers re-draw the boundaries between the global and the local (as well as the public and the private) in ways that enable them to reclaim professionalism and, equally important, redefine the global (neo)liberal agenda itself.

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Educators worldwide have been caught in the middle of complex globalization debates. One such debate has centered on the role of international education “experts”—usually of Western origin—in the construction and dissemination of “best practices” globally. Whether advising national governments or consulting for international development agencies (such as the World Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or the United Nations), these “experts” have operated on the assumption that there exists a common and legitimate “blueprint” of educational policies and practices, which would lead (if implemented properly) to increased educational opportunities and improved educational quality worldwide. In the context of (neo)liberal globalization, they have been called upon to advise governments on such salient policy topics as education governance, teaching methods, curriculum reform, or (in the case of American international development assistance) anti-terrorism. More often than not, their advice has focused on the diffusion of global education policies and practices that, for many scholars in comparative education, have been central in analyses of the coercive spread of (neo)liberal education reforms such as standardization of curricula, decentralization and privatization of schools, or the introduction of national educational assessment and international testing (Apple 2006, 2009; Arnove & Torres 2007; Dale 2000; Rizvi & Lingard 2010; Robertson 2007; Torres 2009).

From the post-socialist countries of Central Europe to the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia to the non-aligned—yet funded by the former Soviet Union—countries in Southeast Asia,

policymakers have embraced these (neo)liberal educational reform “packages” to pursue an allegedly linear transition from communism to democracy (Silova 2010: 5). In some cases, these reform “packages” were imposed by such “expert” organizations as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank; in other cases they were voluntarily borrowed by policymakers in the former socialist states who were fearful of “falling behind” internationally (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe 2006: 189; see also, Silova & Steiner-Khamsi 2008). While contributing to the dissemination of (neo)liberal ideology, the implementation of new reform “packages” in various post-socialist contexts has inadvertently reinforced the power of international “experts,” enabling them to speak for those who supposedly lack expert knowledge to “help” themselves. Furthermore, it has undermined the power of education professionals in national and sub-national settings, reinscribing a dependency of local education communities on international “expert” knowledge (Rancière 1991).

Directly affected by the “touch down” of global educational flows—whether education privatization, decentralization, or child-centered learning—school teachers have been affected the most. In the public eye, teachers embodied the success (or failure) that the post-socialist education transitions set out to achieve. Teachers were thus expected to reject “old” teaching practices (generally associated with teacher-centered approaches prevalent in the socialist past) and instead embrace “new” Western teaching methodologies and classroom management techniques that focused on child-centered learning. They became subject to a multitude of new policies and the accompanying national and international in-service trainings and professional development activities. Their professional lives no longer belonged to them, but were rather governed by globally circulating “norms” about curricula, textbooks, tests, and teaching methods. In this context, international “experts” were positioned to possess the “know-how” that

local teachers were required to master. Instead of pursuing various opportunities for innovative teaching and learning in their own educational settings, teachers were thus expected to become merely “the implementers of reform policies designed and controlled by others” (Popa 2007: 23; see also Ginsburg 1996, Lingard 1995).

While acknowledging the very real threats to teacher professionalism in the context of (neo)liberal globalization, this study explores how teachers have attempted to redraw—purposefully or not—their occupational boundaries in order to regain professional authority and autonomy by working within and between rapidly changing educational spaces. Embedded in a sociological discourse, the concept of “re-bounderying” thus acknowledges the power of sub-national actors in (re)negotiating the occupational boundaries that constitute the national education space, as well as (re)defining its content and orientation through their individual and collective daily work. Taking a broader perspective on teacher “professionalism,” we specifically focus on instances of resistance and pursuit of alternatives among teachers as a professional group. From this perspective, teacher “professionalism” goes beyond the issues of teacher competency and accountability, to reflect rather “an expression of struggle over the control and purpose of schooling” (Lawn 1989: 154).

By locating the discussion within the two different post-socialist contexts—Southeast/Central Europe and Southeast Asia—we approach the concept of occupational “re-bounderying” from two analytical angles. First, we explore how teachers navigate (neo)liberal education reforms in their daily lives by focusing on their participation in private tutoring activities. We argue that teachers may have accepted the logic of market-based education service provision (as reflected in their private tutoring activities), but have simultaneously used the newly created “private” space to evade and perhaps even defy multiple (neo)liberal regulations

permeating their work in public schools, such as student-centered learning and curriculum standards. Second, and equally important, we suggest that the post-socialist education space itself presents a continuing challenge—and perhaps an alternative—to (neo)liberal capitalism. Neither resembling socialist pasts nor approximating (neo)liberal futures, the post-socialist education space contains a complex set of education phenomena in the early stages of its formation, where its fate “still belongs to the future, or rather, to one possible future” (Epstein 1995: 331). It represents a state of “unfinished global transitions” where the boundaries between global and local (as well as public and private) imperatives are being constantly challenged and (re)negotiated.

Following a historical overview of the emergence of the international development “expert” (including the changing notions of “professionalism,” “authority,” and “expertise” in education development during the post World War-II and post-Cold War context), this chapter examines the changing notions of education professionalism in two post-socialist settings – Southeast/Central Europe and Southeast Asia. We purposefully chose to focus on these two seemingly disconnected contexts to highlight some of the common reactions and counteractions triggered by the introduction of one of the most widespread (neo)liberal reforms worldwide – education privatization. Drawing on three studies on private tutoring conducted in Southeast/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union (Silova, et al., 2006; Silova, 2009) and Cambodia (Brehm, Silova & Tuot, 2012), we discuss how teachers navigate (neo)liberal reforms by embracing, resisting, and (re)defining education “expert” knowledge depending on the various education spaces they create and occupy at different times of their professional careers. An insight into their experiences thus opens an opportunity to examine the emerging formation

of new ethical and political educational projects that not only comply with but also contest the (neo)liberal agenda.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE EDUCATION “EXPERT” IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Firmly institutionalized in the areas of mass schooling and international development, the notion of the education “expert” has important historical roots. It is embedded in Western Enlightenment thought that emerged in the eighteenth century and grew based on the belief in the ability of human beings to apply rational, scientific analysis “to bring progress and prosperity to humanity” (Parpart 1995: 223; see also Foucault 1986). During the nineteenth century, the Enlightenment project led to the increased specialization of knowledge, which played a pivotal role in the creation of Western modernity and subsequently led to the division of the world into the knowing and the ignorant, the enlightened and the uninformed, and the developed and the developing. In this context, Western scientific knowledge was presented as universally valid and “experts” assumed a central role in collecting, transferring, and controlling scientific knowledge between West and East, as well as North and South (Parpart 1995: 223).

The construction, collection, and transfer of “expert” knowledge occurred in different disciplinary fields, including comparative education. As early as the 1800s, Marc-Antoine Jullien (1775-1848)—who is frequently referred to as the “father” or “precursor” of comparative education—made one of the initial attempts to conceptualize the field of comparative education within the social science institution of modernity (Sobe 2002). In particular, Jullien emphasized the importance of international travel that would enable Western observers to study education through systematic (and scientific) observation for the practical purposes of societal progress. He

argued that such study would identify “deficiencies of the systems and methods of education and instruction” in various international contexts and thus enable the transfer of “improvements” from one country to another (quoted in Gautherin 1993: 6). From this perspective, education was instrumental to the advancement of Western modernity:

In the long run, education alone is capable of exercising a decisive and radical influence on the regeneration of man, the improvement of societies, true civilization and the prosperity of States. Each generation, if entrusted to teachers worthy of their mission, should be the more perfect continuation of the generation it replaces. Thus would the human race advance with firm and confident step along the broad avenue of progress where the body social, wisely and strongly constituted, would no longer be a prey to the grievous upheavals, periodic crises and fearful disasters that all too often lead to backsliding. (Jullien quoted in Gautherin 1993: 3)

While Jullien’s experience may be seen as one of the initial (although not entirely successful) attempts to institutionalize comparative education within the modernity project, the theme of “progress” appears to have been systematically embedded in comparative education scholarship throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. In the post-World War II context, the study of “foreign” education systems became a “tool” for achieving broader ends, directly “relating education to economic growth, social amelioration, and political development” (Noah and Eckstein 1969: 116). Perhaps not coincidentally, the melioristic approach to comparative education further intensified during the period of the Cold War, when the study of “best practices” became paramount not only to ensure each country’s educational competitiveness globally, but also to pursue other strategic interests—frequently expressed in the “concern for the plight of less fortunate people” (Noah and Eckstein 1969: 38)—in non-aligned countries.

Whether working in the capitalist West or the socialist East (or South), education “experts” benefited from the “development turn” of the 1960s and 1970s (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006), positioning themselves on the frontier of the international development industry. In this

context, each superpower had its own development assistance strategy that these “experts” advanced. Commenting on the comparative education activities during the Cold War, Holmes (1981) found that, regardless of various geopolitical contexts, British and American experts almost always favored the introduction of a decentralized system of educational administrators, whereas Soviet and German Democratic Republic experts always recommended the introduction of polytechnical education in countries they advised. Similarly, Steiner-Khamsi (2006: 26) observed that the U.S. model of international development emphasized economic growth, decentralization, decreased public expenditures, and privatization, whereas the Soviet model focused on human capacity building, centralization, increased public expenditures, and collectivization. In these contexts, technical assistance strategies did not necessarily address local needs in various national and sub-national contexts, but rather reflected the existing political ideologies that the two superpowers advanced through international development efforts.

Notwithstanding differences in international development strategies and political ideologies, what both superpowers had in common was the underlying assumption of the inequality of intelligence among the “developed” and “developing” nations. Echoing the 19th century myth of “progress,” the development strategies of the superpowers reinforced the “old intellectual hierarchies” (Rancière, 1991: 109) through the division of the world into the knowing and the ignorant, the enlightened and the uninformed, the developed and the developing. According to this logic, people and countries in power were positioned at a (perceived) higher intellectual position than those on the receiving end, enabling them to justify the transfer of expertise from developed to developing countries. It is this presupposition of the inequality of intelligence that framed international development assistance by both the (capitalist) West and the (socialist) East.

And while the Cold War offered some (limited) alternatives in terms of the transferable “expert knowledge,” the path towards modernity became reoriented exclusively towards Western ideals of market economy and political democracy after the socialist bloc collapsed beginning in 1989. “Singular Western models” became the main yardstick for international development, while the sight of alternatives — “whether alternative capitalisms, alternative socialisms, or other utopias” — was lost (Burawoy 1999: 309). In this context, international development efforts focused on identifying “best practices” that could be shared worldwide to help countries move down a linear, predictable path towards political democracy and market economy. Almost exclusively, these “best practices” reflected (neo)liberal ideals that were translated into such globally “travelling policies” as standardized curricula; decentralization, devolution, and privatization of schools; national educational assessment and international testing; and managerialism and rationalization of universities, among others. Backed by scientific data from robust experimental designs and empirically validated studies, international transfer of (Western) “expert” knowledge became a tool not only for solving national educational problems, but also for promoting educational development on a global scale through such initiatives as the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). What remained unchallenged, however, was the foundational belief in the superiority of Western “expertise” and the underlying assumption that international development, led by Western “experts,” would lead towards a better world for all.

Manufacturing crisis and demand

While there is no agreement on whether the global spread of (neo)liberal reforms has been consensual or imposed,ⁱ international “experts” seem to have played an important role in not only identifying educational needs (and thus manufacturing the demand for the reforms), but also delivering the solutions. Commenting on international development in the African context, Samoff (1999) notes that education sector reviews (written by international “experts”) appear to be “remarkably similar” in their analysis as well as in the presentation of the solution to the problem (p. 249). Written in a diagnostic style, these reviews identify problems (often expressed through “crisis” narratives) that need to be urgently remedied, thus manufacturing demand for (neo)liberal reforms with a sense of uncontested authority. Although highlighting commonalities of education sector reviews in Africa specifically, the quote below is equally applicable to post-socialist contexts from Croatia to Kazakhstan to Cambodia:

African education is in crisis. Governments cannot cope. Quality has deteriorated. Funds are misallocated. Management is poor and administration inefficient. From Mauritania to Madagascar, the recommendations too are similar: reduce the central government role in providing education; decentralize; increase school fees; encourage and assist private schools; reduce direct support to students, especially at tertiary level; introduce double shifts and multi-grade classrooms; assign high priority to instructional materials; favor in-service over pre-service teacher education. (Samoff, 1999: 250)

Not surprisingly, such education sector reviews produced a perception of a “crisis” situation that required an immediate international assistance, which involved the flow of foreign aid and the transfer of “expert” knowledge. In Central Asia, for example, international experts and agencies insisted that educational systems of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were approaching a “crisis situation” following the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1991. This was clearly expressed in the titles of their numerous field reports—*A Generation at Risk: Children in the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan* (Asian Development Bank 1998), *Youth in Central Asia: Losing the New Generation*

(International Crisis Group 2003), and *Public Spending on Education*. While the notion of “crisis” had to be manufactured to a certain extent in the Southeast/Central European context to justify an increase in international aid into these countries, an actual crisis was well underway in the Cambodian context as illustrated in such publications as *Anatomy of a Crisis: Education, Development, and the State of Cambodia, 1953-1998* (Ayers, 2000) and *Education and Fragility in Cambodia* (IIEP, 2011).ⁱⁱ

What the emerging rhetoric of “crisis” meant for education systems in the former socialist countries was that schools needed to be normalized—redefined, recuperated, and reformed—usually (but not exclusively) against the prevailing Western models (Silova, 2010, 2011). In this context, the West has been unproblematically presented as the embodiment of progress, whereas the East (and the South) emerged as underdeveloped, chaotic, and undemocratic. More importantly, solutions to the “crisis” situation were presented through the familiar narratives of “progress,” “hope,” and “salvation,” which the West inevitably promised to bring to the newly emerging societies of the post-socialist regions. Following the influx of foreign aid in Cambodia in the 1990s, for example, the narratives of “hope” and “progress” appeared in reports commissioned or authored by the international development agencies: *Rebirth of the Learning Tradition: A Case Study on the Achievements of Education for All in Cambodia* (UNESCO, 1996), *A New Beginning: Children, Primary Schools and Social Change in Post-Conflict Preah Vihear Province, Cambodia* (Save the Children Norway, 2006), and *Expanding Primary Education Access in Cambodia: 20 Years of Recovery* (UNESCO, 2009). Describing the country as undergoing some level of “progress” was thus an attempt to attribute the (perceived) improvement to the very actions of the international development agencies.

As Lindblad and Popkewitz (2004) explain, these narratives of “progress” and “salvation” invoke a “social obligation to rescue those who have fallen outside the narratives of progress” (pp. xx–xxi). Furthermore, the promise of “salvation” for the “developing” post-socialist societies would be in abandoning the socialist past (or any other alternative) and embracing the logic of Western modernity, including the (neo)liberal education reforms. For example, reports from Southeast/Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Cambodia discuss “unqualified teachers,” as well as a declining status of the teaching profession. In particular, the *Education and Fragility in Cambodia* report (2011) explains the reasons for these ills: “The poor salary, working conditions, and social status accorded to the profession have left many teachers disenchanted and aggrieved” (p. 17). The solutions offered to these problems—whether in Central Asia or Cambodia—revolve around notions of decentralization and deconcentration, whereby the national government passes control and authority to the sub-national and local levels.

In practice, this means a greater emphasis on “new public management,” which encourages community based accountability structures. Additionally, it calls on principals, head teachers, and headmasters to initiate formal accountability structures within their schools. In Cambodia and Central Asia, for example, the emphasis is as much on reducing dis-incentives (etc., low teacher salary) as creating incentives (i.e., performance based pay) for improving the quality of education (see NEP 2007; Steiner-Khamsi et al. 2008). More often than not, these incentives are directly connected to teacher competencies in other areas—whether classroom management or teaching/learning methodologies—reflecting particular ideals and ideologies of (neo)liberal reforms. The assumption is that “progress” can be achieved through the right combination of (Western) education policies and practices, which should be diligently enacted

by teachers. As Rancière (1999) warns, this logic leads to one outcome: “the integral pedagogization of society—the general infantilization of the individuals that make it up” (p. 133).

In the post-socialist contexts and beyond, the implementation of (neo)liberal education reforms thus entails a total (re)regulation of public education space, including the processes of bureaucratization and technicalization of teachers’ work. Left unregulated are spaces outside of public education. And although one may expect the (neo)liberal “logic” to prevail in private education spaces, we argue that this is not necessarily the case. An examination of teachers’ experiences in the domain of private tutoring reveals that there is a clear distinction between what is considered to be “good” or “proper” education in public and private education spaces. A closer examination of what happens in this “private” education space can thus reveal important insights into how teachers embrace, modify, or defy (neo)liberal reforms as they cross the boundaries between public (governable) and private (non-governable) education space.

INSIDE THE PRIVATE (TUTORING) SPACE

A constant, multi-directional movement between the “public” and “private” education spaces inevitably creates many contradictions in teachers’ lives. On the one hand, teachers work within an environment where user fees, incentive-based performance, and other market-based solutions are routinely used to engender better teaching (as measured by student outcomes). On the other hand, various regulatory schemes and codes of ethics discourage (and frequently forbid) teachers from turning education into a business within the public education space. The division of space into public and private not only separates what can and cannot be governed, but also creates an environment within which those who are governed—in this case, the teachers—internalize some

of the very (neo)liberal logic used to order and regulate them, yet use it to pursue their own purposes. In some instances, for example, teachers use private tutoring in uniquely (neo)liberal ways to supplement their meager salaries with additional income. In other cases, however, they turn the (neo)liberal logic around to “correct” the shortcomings of public education, which they believe are stemming from the (neo)liberal reforms. Finally, and more importantly, teachers use private tutoring to reclaim their professional authority and thus (privately) defy the logic of (neo)liberalism outside the public school realm.

Using private tutoring to supplement low salaries

Private tutoring is generally associated with income generation activities among teachers who seek to supplement their low government salaries (Bray 2007). The need to supplement salaries is often attributed to dilapidated government institutions, such as non-functioning tax systems, that make it difficult to properly fund public education. However, (neo)liberal policies have encouraged governments to reduce government expenditures on all public services, including education. While recognizing the potential inability of governments to create effective tax structures to pay for services such as public education, it is also necessary to acknowledge the equally important possibility that the lack of education expenditures may be one of the implications of (neo)liberal policies themselves. When education resources are limited and when education is perceived as a commodity, it is not surprising that teachers find private tutoring particularly advantageous.

In the context of Southeast/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, private tutoring is primarily attributed to declining education expenditures that affect teacher salaries (Silova et al. 2006, Silova 2009). Immediately following the collapse of the former socialist bloc in 1991,

most of the newly independent countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union experienced significant economic decline, which had a direct impact on education spending.ⁱⁱⁱ As public expenditure on education declined, private contributions were encouraged by government officials and international experts. Among the most adversely affected have been teachers. According to the studies of private tutoring conducted in twelve countries of Southeast/Europe and the former Soviet Union (Silova et al. 2006; Silova 2009),^{iv} teacher salaries were below the national wage average in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Slovakia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine. Although teachers' salaries were above the national wage average in the remaining countries, they were actually below the minimum subsistence level in Azerbaijan (69 per cent of the minimum subsistence level) and barely exceeding it in Georgia (at 108 per cent of the minimum subsistence level; Silova et al 2006, Silova 2009). In many countries, teacher salaries declined so dramatically that they could no longer provide for average-sized families.

Similarly, there has been a broad consensus among Cambodian educators, union leaders, administrators, and society in general that teachers' salaries are insufficient to cover their expenses (Benveniste et al. 2008). In 2007, for example, a primary teacher's base salary was US\$44 per month, which made it difficult (if not impossible) for many teachers to afford the basic necessities of food, housing, and health care, as well as supporting any children or elderly family members (Benveniste et al. 2008: 59).^v Commenting on the implications of the "unlivable" wage," one teacher explained that her concern about the survival of her family became so great that it was difficult to focus on teaching: "Only [my] body comes to school, but [my] soul stays at home." This reflects both the overall economic decline and scarce allocation of government resources for education. In particular, education expenditure as a percentage of GDP

constituted 2.3 per cent in Cambodia, which is significantly below the world's average of 4.8 per cent (European Commission 2012). Despite the increases in education spending as a proportion of total government spending since the 1990s,^{vi} the percentage of recurrent expenditures devoted to teacher salaries had actually decreased from 78 to 60 per cent between 1997 and 2005. As the report commissioned by the World Bank points out, “this is low in comparison with both developed and developing economies where the wage share ranges between 70-80 per cent” (Benveniste et al. 2008: 74).

In both contexts, underpaid teachers have sought supplementary income in order to survive. In Cambodia, the majority of teachers (nearly 70 per cent) have been supplementing their incomes by giving private lessons, driving motorbike taxis, working at the markets, farming, or in other ways (Benveniste et al. 2008: 38). Similarly, teachers in Central Asia have been surviving by engaging in petty trading, farming, teaching in more than one school, and/or taking other jobs in addition to mainstream schooling (UNICEF 2001: 80-81). To some extent, private tutoring has helped underpaid teachers to re-establish their economic independence by providing opportunities to generate additional income. For example, private tutoring is a common second occupation among Cambodian teachers, especially in urban primary schools (42 per cent at the primary level and 87 per cent at the lower secondary level). Earnings from private tutoring can represent approximately two thirds of the monthly average base salary with basic allowances (Benveniste et al. 2008: 38). Similarly, more than half of the students (64 per cent) surveyed in Southeast/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union reported engaging in private tutoring activities (Silova et al. 2006, Silova 2009). The scope of private tutoring varied by country, with over 80 per cent of sampled students in the Caucasus (Azerbaijan and Georgia) receiving tutoring, and below 60 per cent of sampled students in the Balkans (Bosnia and

Herzegovina), Slovakia, and Kyrgyzstan. In the context of market-driven reforms, many teachers have thus eagerly adopted the logic of ‘service provision,’ using private tutoring as a key income-generation activity (Silova & Bray 2006).

What is important, however, is that private tutoring has been primarily associated with economic *survival*, and not necessarily profit-making among teachers. For example, the majority of the respondents (63 per cent) in the 2006 study agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that one of the main reasons for private tutoring was for teachers to receive additional financial income (Silova et al. 2006). The proportion of the respondents agreeing with this statement was larger in the three countries with particularly difficult economic conditions—Mongolia (74 per cent), Ukraine (74 per cent), and Azerbaijan (71 per cent). A study of private tutoring in Romania (Popa 2007: 136) also confirmed that the majority of teachers regrettably referred to private tutoring in terms of “survival” and “making ends meet.” Interviews with teachers interviewed in other geographic contexts echo similar sentiments:

[It is] difficult in Cambodia: If we talk about [teacher] salary, it is low. Therefore, private tutoring must be pushed. It *must* happen. (Cambodian teacher)

If my salary was sufficient to meet my basic needs, which are really modest, I would gladly stop this slave tutoring work. . . . (Azerbaijani teacher)

Using private tutoring to address the perceived shortcomings of official curriculum

In addition to economic reasons, teachers engage in private tutoring to address the perceived shortcomings of public education. These shortcomings are generally associated with the implementation of (neo)liberal education reforms, including the reduction of education expenditures, the introduction of double- or triple-shift schooling, or the standardization of curriculum. Changes in structural issues such as school-day length, class size, and curriculum requirements thus generate dissatisfaction with public education and create the need for private

tutoring. For example, an introduction of double- and triple-shift schooling in Cambodia during the 1990s entailed the reduction of the school day to 4-5 hours.^{vii} According to Cambodian teachers, this was simply not enough to cover the required curriculum. As one teacher explained, “If we teach for quality, students would fall behind the official curriculum; but if we teach to keep up with the curriculum, students would not receive quality education.” Similarly, parents believe that school days are too short to cover the entire curriculum, explaining that “complete” education thus necessarily spans both public schools and private tutoring lessons: “You learn 50 per cent in a government school and 50 per cent in private tutoring.” Despite the few reported cases of teachers purposefully “slowing down” content delivery to create a market for private tutoring (Bray 1999: 55), the reduction of the school day nonetheless leads to a perceived need for more instructional time simply to provide requisite coverage of the national curriculum (Brehm & Silova 2012).

Similarly, curriculum changes introduced in Southeast/Central Europe and the former Soviet since the 1990s were generally associated with an “overloaded” curriculum, which was a commonly criticized feature of the Soviet schooling inherited in the post-Soviet context (Pitt & Pavlova 2001, DeYoung et al. 2006). As new knowledge and skills became desirable during the post-socialist period, new subjects (such as civics, information and communication technologies, and foreign languages) were added to the existing curriculum without major revisions of the existing curriculum content (DeYoung et al. 2006). As a result, curricula became even more overloaded in terms of the number of academic subjects, while the hours spent on some of these subjects (e.g., history, physical education, or music) became significantly reduced. Furthermore, curriculum remained largely scientific and subject-driven, with the primary focus on teaching facts rather than developing skills that would allow students to apply knowledge in various

situations (Bagdasarova & Ivanov 2009). Reflecting on curricula changes in her school, one Romanian teacher explained, “the curriculum is jam-packed with too much knowledge... [leaving] no time to teach everything in my classes...” (quoted in Popa 2007: 153).

In addition to an “overloaded” curriculum, teachers were also expected to radically change their teaching styles. Teacher-centered instruction went out of fashion, while child-centered learning (such as collaborative learning and project-based groups work) became increasingly encouraged by government official and international agencies. And although numerous in-service teacher-training programs took place, what the international “experts” did not foresee was that many of these “new” methodologies were not necessarily appropriate for the unique contexts of Southeast/Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, or Cambodia. Apart from a few “islands of innovations” (Niyozov 2006: 224), often funded by international development agencies, many schools faced major difficulties in implementing new reforms. Commenting on education reform in Southeast/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, a UNICEF report (2007) vividly summarized the local frustrations with the never-ending education reforms:

Active learning is not an option in a small classroom where children are crammed three to every two-seater desk and the teacher has barely enough space to stand near a scratchy blackboard. Self-directed, project-based learning is not an option in a school without an atlas, a dictionary, an encyclopedia or room for children to work, or where homes have no books. Where two or even three shifts a day share the same classrooms, teachers cannot display work on walls and children cannot store work in progress in their desks... Where Ministers and their agendas change every six months, where several parallel reforms descend on schools at once, where some prestigious schools are declared “pilot” or “model” and receive computers or science labs while others have no running water, reform becomes no more than externally imposed, piecemeal change, a source of fear and unfairness, rather than renewal and opportunity. (48)

In this context, it is not surprising that many education stakeholders became concerned with the quality of education in public schools, thus turning to private tutoring to compensate for what they thought public schools could no longer provide. In Central Asia, the majority of surveyed

private tutoring users reported that they took private tutoring because school curriculum was overloaded (61 per cent) and because they believed that school curricula did not cover everything required on university entrance examinations (58.5 per cent). Furthermore, the surveyed students explained that they took private tutoring because they “wanted to learn more” (72.0 per cent) (Silova 2009). Of twelve countries participating in the private tutoring surveys (Silova et al. 2006; Silova 2009), an overwhelming majority (over 80 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “the quality of mainstream education system should be such that no one would need private tutoring.” By implication, decisions of students to take private tutoring may indicate their lack of satisfaction with the quality of education in mainstream schools. For example, almost 60 per cent of respondents in Azerbaijan and over 50 per cent in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan—the countries with the largest scope and highest intensity of private tutoring—believed that private tutoring was “the only way to get a high quality education.”

Using private tutoring to regain professional authority

Finally, there is evidence that teachers use private tutoring as a way to re-claim autonomy of their classroom because it has been overregulated—albeit decentralized—by the government. In this context, private tutoring presents a “private” education space, which is outside of government regulations and international “expert” advice. It is an education space where teachers themselves have the authority to determine what is “good” education for their students. A study on private tutoring in Southeast/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union (Silova et al. 2006) highlighted that private tutoring presents an opportunity for teachers to engage in more innovative and individualized learning compared to what they are expected to do in mainstream schools. For example, some teachers argued that private tutoring enabled them to meet individual

student needs more compared to their efforts in public schools. One teacher in Poland offered a stark comparison of the “public” and “private” education space: “... a large number of students, little time, lots of material, no time for what’s really the most important—developing a passion in students...” (Silova et al. 2006: 49). Other teachers added that private tutoring lessons allowed for a more individual contact between students and teachers, as well as more opportunities for building students’ self-esteem, developing their talents, and closing the existing educational achievement gaps.

Similarly, the existing research on private tutoring in Cambodia reveals that that teachers use different instructional materials and methodologies to teach in private tutoring classes (Brehm & Silova 2012, Brehm, Silova, & Tuot 2012, Brehm, forthcoming 2013a). In particular, teaching materials are perceived to be of a higher quality than the government textbooks. Furthermore, these materials are chosen by teachers themselves to meet the specific needs of their students. One student elaborated on her education experience in public schools and private tutoring by noting the use of different teaching/learning materials: “In government classes teachers follow school textbooks, whereas in private tutoring teachers find lessons and exercises from many different sources.” Importantly, students participating in private tutoring noted that curriculum content is often strategically split between classes in public schools and private tutoring lessons. When asked about the differences, students repeatedly explained that public school classes were primarily reserved for learning theory, whereas private tutoring allowed for practical application of theoretical concepts. In students’ experiences, teachers used both more and better quality examples in private tutoring lessons than in government school classes. The major distinction, however, revolved around the idea of splitting curriculum into theory, which is typically taught during public school hours, and practical application, which is available during

private tutoring lessons. One student gave a detailed description of how some teachers split curriculum content between public schools and private tutoring:

Government class is mostly about giving introductions, theories, and a little bit of practice, while private tutoring has a lot of problem solving and practice... However, having private tutoring alone is difficult too...because practice alone is not enough. Learning theoretical introductions during school hours and practicing applications during private tutoring lessons is also necessary.

Additionally, we have observed teachers using different teaching/learning methodologies in public schools and private tutoring classes. During private tutoring lessons, for example, teachers generally use more one-on-one teaching strategies, while frequently avoiding group work. These pedagogical differences highlight the reality that the cost barriers to entry in private tutoring keep private tutoring classes small, allowing teachers the freedom to work with their students in new ways with new material. Teachers are also able to adjust their teaching methods depending on the student and have a greater ability to work with individual students, something that is impossible in public school classes where over 50 students sit in a 7 by 8 meter room. According to students, private tutoring lessons provide more opportunities for independent work and problem solving, whereas government school classes tend to group students by mixed ability to solve problems in groups more frequently. Similarly, high ability students are less likely to help the teacher during whole class instruction in private tutoring lessons, thus allowing more time for their own learning. Commenting on the class size, several students stated that private tutoring lessons also encouraged more active student participation in the learning process:

Attending private tutoring makes me brave and able to ask questions and learn better.
(Cambodian student)

Private tutoring classes are smaller and it is easier to ask questions. (Cambodian student)

With so many students in government school classes, I sometimes feel shy to ask questions. This is not the case in private tutoring lessons. (Cambodian student)

Overall, the participating students and parents unanimously agreed that private tutoring was a “good” and “necessary” part of the education system. None of the participants discussed private tutoring in negative terms; instead, the multiple benefits of private tutoring were repeatedly discussed in terms of immediate academic success, future studies, or employment opportunities. As some students argued, attending private tutoring would help them “reach [their] goal in life,” “get to high school,” or “open up job opportunities.” The majority of students emphasized that it is through private tutoring that they can acquire “all knowledge.” In other words, the vast majority of the respondents believed that private tutoring was a necessary component of the education system without which complete (quality) education would be unattainable. More importantly, both Cambodian students and parents praised teachers for their efforts to maintain quality education through the extension of schooling into the “private” space.

What the preceding discussion reveals is that teachers used private tutoring as a mechanism to raise their professional status, which was undermined by the aggressive implementation of (neo)liberal reforms, including the increasing centralized control over school curriculum, a growing emphasis on academic testing, or mounting demands for accountability. Stripped of their professional authority in the public school classroom, many teachers associated private tutoring with “the very notion of professionalism,” including its “technical culture, a commitment to service ethic, and autonomy in planning and implementing their practice” (Popa & Acedo 2007: 98). In other words, private tutoring served as a mechanism to maintain control over what teachers themselves believed constitutes “best practice.” To some extent, it also became a space to challenge the globally “travelling” reforms and, perhaps, avoid these reforms

altogether. Commenting on the rise of private tutoring in Romania, Popa and Acedo (2007)

explain:

We interpret the process of private tutoring in terms of empowerment in an upbeat rather than defeatist fashion. We see this (“illegal”) process of tutoring students as a little victory for teachers as individuals and as an occupational group, albeit on a minor scale, by offering an alternative to union struggles and electoral politics as a model: it creates some kind of protected zone... (109)

THE DOUBLE ENTENDRE OF PRIVATIZATION

The rise of private tutoring in post-socialist contexts offers a unique window into the complex nexus between (neo)liberal policy discourses, globalization, and local visions of education reform. In particular, there is an image of global policy “experts” and national governments pressing (neo)liberal reforms down into national education systems. These reforms—including standardization of curricula, outcomes-based accountability measures, decentralization and privatization of schools, and the introduction of national educational assessment and international testing—have contributed to de-professionalization of the teaching profession. As teaching becomes increasingly prescribed, regulated, individualized, and controlled through the introduction of (neo)liberal reforms, many educators become concerned about losing their professional authority in schools. At the same time, however, there is also evidence of teachers actively engaging with globalizing processes—as illustrated by the example of private tutoring discussed above—to press back against (neo)liberal reforms in unexpected and innovative ways.

As the examination of private tutoring practices in Southeast/Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Cambodia reveals, teachers have simultaneously embraced and defied the logic of (neo)liberal market-driven education reforms. On the one hand, private tutoring precisely reflects the logic of the market, turning education into a commodity, while contributing to the valorization of educational services—both (neo)liberal objectives. On the other hand, the

non-public education spaces where private tutoring lessons are held enable teachers to reclaim their authority by defying some of the (neo)liberal education policy reforms implemented in public schools. In private tutoring lessons, teachers are able to use teacher-centered teaching methods, materials outside of the prescribed national curriculum, and not (necessarily) concentrate on national examinations. This skillful negotiation of what it means to support “private” education spaces creates a double entendre of privatization. While private tutoring itself is the outcome of the (neo)liberal privatization of public education, it is at the same time a “private” space where local knowledge trumps international “expertise.” In a way, the private education space created by the international development industry has enabled teachers to re-draw professional boundaries, allowing teachers to (privately) pursue their own visions of “good” education, while at the same resisting the Western educational reforms and “best practices.”

A better understanding on how teachers cross the boundaries of the public/private (neo)liberal educational landscape opens possibilities for theorizing “private” space as a site of resistance and possibility, illustrating that local knowledge has not necessarily been undermined and de-professionalized but rather has been displaced from the governable space of public education into the private sphere. Despite being a “protected zone” from international regulation and national control, however, the reliance on the private education space has important occupational consequences. While strategically re-drawing the occupational boundaries of post-socialist education space, teachers nevertheless continue to make individual choices to “survive” economically and professionally by engaging in private tutoring activities. In particular, the neoliberal logic of individualism offers a new territory for teacher professionalism to thrive; yet

it remains an individual endeavor and therefore seriously affects occupationally anchored collectivity of teachers in the context of (neo)liberal globalization.

While recognizing complications that these new arrangements entail (for instance, the embrace of private space affects the social contract between governments and citizens; see Brehm, forthcoming 2013b), we nevertheless argue that these “private” education spaces play an important role in both pursuing local education interests and challenging the hegemony of (neo)liberal reforms. Similar to Sassen’s (1991) argument about the “global city,” private tutoring could be viewed as a de-nationalized national space, where global flows “touch down” in national territories and are serviced by local actors, but in ways that are oriented towards sustaining local visions of “quality” education and “good” life. As these visions flourish in “private” education spaces, they simultaneously challenge the hegemony of (neo)liberal reforms. The urgent task for researchers is thus to uncover the complicated “private” education spaces and examine how teachers re-draw the boundaries between the global and the local (as well as the public and the private) in ways that enable them to reclaim professionalism and, equally important, redefine the global (neo)liberal agenda itself.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ See, for example, the world culture debate in comparative education.

ⁱⁱ Cambodia experienced nearly three decades of civil unrest beginning in the 1970s, which resulted in genocide under the rule of Democratic Kampuchea (known as the Khmer Rouge).

ⁱⁱⁱ While real public spending on education did not substantially change in some countries of Eastern and Central Europe (e.g., Poland, Lithuania), it fell by 77 per cent in Azerbaijan and 94 per cent in Georgia during the first part of the 1990s (Micklewright 2000: 21; UNICEF 1998). In some countries of Eastern Europe and the Baltics, trends in real spending were offset by declining numbers of children, so that per student expenditure was not affected (Micklewright 2000). However, this was not the case in the Caucasus and Central Asia, which experiences

population growth during that period of time (Micklewright 2000). By the end of the 2000s, education spending as a percentage of GDP varied greatly across the region, with the majority of countries in the study spending around 4-6 per cent of GDP on education (an average for OECD countries), while Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Kazakhstan spent below 3 per cent of GDP (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2009).

^{iv} The first study, *Education in a Hidden Marketplace: Monitoring of Private Tutoring* (Silova, et al. 2006), was conducted in 2004-2005 and examined the scope, nature, and implications of private tutoring in nine former socialist countries, including Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine. The second study, *Private Supplementary Tutoring in Central Asia: New Opportunities and Burdens* (Silova 2009), was conducted a year later (2005-2006) and extended the geographical scope of the research to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan in Central Asia. Follow-up data were collected in 2007/2008 to examine various policy contexts and the changing government responses to private tutoring in the twelve countries in the study.

^v According to the World Bank report (Benveniste et al. 2008), salaries increased after 16 years of experience by around 20 per cent and after 28 years they increased by about 30 per cent of the initial base salary. Salary levels also depend on grade/subject taught and location of school. For example, senior teachers in the 6th grade can earn between US\$80-100 per month (personal communication, March 31, 2011).

^{vi} In Cambodia, government recurrent expenditures on education increased from approximately 13 per cent in 2000 to nearly 18.5 per cent in 2002 (European Commission, 2012). Between 2003 and 2007, the overall budget for education increased 29.5 per cent in real terms, leading to an increased educational recurrent expenditure as a percentage of total government spending (from 11 per cent in 1999 to 19.2 per cent in 2007 back to 16.4 per cent in 2009; as cited in Engle 2011).

^{vii} In 2005, approximately 81 per cent of primary and 41 per cent of lower secondary schools held two shifts (Benveniste et al. 2008).

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