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**When Whole-Person Development Encounters Social Stratification:  
Teachers' Ambivalent Attitudes toward Private Supplementary Tutoring in Hong Kong**

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Abstract

In many settings a perplexing scenario is unfolding in which school systems claim to move towards whole-person development while students and parents run in the opposite direction of narrowly-defined academic achievement enhanced by private supplementary tutoring. Such tutoring is widely called shadow education because much of its content mimics that of regular schooling. It has long been clearly visible in Asia, and is now increasingly visible elsewhere. This study focuses on school teachers' perceptions of shadow education in the context of a flourishing sector that parallels and to some extent contradicts progressive education reforms. Drawing on 47 in-depth interviews with teachers from 12 secondary schools in Hong Kong, the research found ambivalent views towards private tutoring. This ambivalence reflected intrinsic contradictions between the educational ideals of whole-person development and the function of schooling in social stratification. Such tensions are likely to become increasingly evident elsewhere as commercialised forms of private supplementary tutoring expand.

**Key words:** Private tutoring; shadow education; teachers' perceptions; whole-person development; social stratification

**Introduction**

Recent decades have witnessed inconsistent trends in educational development around the world. On the one hand, progressive education has been promoted in many systems to expand the narrow goal of academic learning to a more holistic aim of whole-person development. On the other hand, national and international competition and rankings centred on academic knowledge acquisition, such as national examinations for university entrance and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) managed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), have intensified. Competition and rankings have contributed to a booming industry of private tutoring that extends beyond school walls (Aurini et al., 2013; Bray & Lykins, 2012). Thus a perplexing scenario is unfolding in which many school systems claim to move toward whole-person development while students and parents run in the opposite direction to pursue narrowly-defined academic achievement enhanced by private supplementary tutoring.

Private tutoring is widely called shadow education because much of its content mimics that of regular schooling. The shadow sector only exists because the school sector exists, and as the curriculum changes in the schools so it changes in the shadow. Shadow education has been clearly visible in parts of East Asia, including Hong Kong, since the 1990s (see e.g. Bray, 1999; Zeng, 1999). Subsequently it has greatly expanded both in East Asia and elsewhere including South and Central Asia (Bray & Lykins, 2012; Silova, 2009), Africa (Antonowicz et al., 2010; Napporn & Baba-Moussa, 2013), Europe (Runte-Geidel, 2015), North America (Buchmann et al., 2010; Davies & Aurini, 2006), and South America (Ventura & Gomes, 2013). The rise of the shadow sector in the face of the general shift in the educational aims toward life-wide learning and all-round development deserved further investigation.

This paper observes the rise of private tutoring in the space between the grand paradigm shift toward whole-person development and the persisting function of social stratification of education. High-stakes examinations are an arena for competition, sorting children into different bands of educational institutions which to a large extent correspond to hierarchical social strata (Zeng, 1999; Anyon, 2011). As economic globalisation has increased inequality and class division, and the opportunities for upward mobility have declined in many countries (Stiglitz, 2002; Hsiao, 2014), the function of education as an instrument for social stratification has been reinforced (Lui, 2011). The purpose of whole-person education presumes sufficient equity and acceptable diversity, whereas the function of stratification often hinges on narrowly-defined criteria, especially academic achievement, to maintain and reproduce unequal social structures (Anyon, 2011; Blau & Duncan, 1967; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). These forces create intrinsic contradictions within education systems for students, parents, and teachers.

The growth of shadow education perhaps indicates that many students and parents prioritise practical concerns about social mobility over whole-person cultivation. Teachers, who are charged with the contradictory dual functions in their work, are situated at the centre of these contradictory orientations. However, little research has investigated the impact of the contradiction on teachers' work. Drawing on interviews with 47 secondary teachers, this paper identifies how teachers perceive private tutoring. Most teachers interviewed were ambivalent about shadow education, accepting their own students' use of tutoring yet lamenting the wider impact. Such ambivalence arguably reflected a contradiction between the ideal of whole-person development espoused by the government (e.g. Hong Kong, Education Bureau, 2010: 3) and appreciated by many teachers, and the role of schooling for social stratification in a competitive environment.

### **Whole-person development encounters social stratification**

Since 2000, Hong Kong's education system has undergone comprehensive reforms that downplay examinations and memorisation. The official reform statement, *Education Blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, declared a consensus that the overall aims of education should be:

To enable every person to attain all-round development according to his/her own attributes in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics, so that he/she is capable of life-long

learning, critical and exploratory thinking, innovating and adapting to change; filled with self-confidence and a team spirit. (Hong Kong, Education Commission, 2000, p.2)

Around the world, comparable statements of educational aims stress the importance of wide horizons and integrated social development. For example, the Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (Delors, 1996) is known for its four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. The report has influenced many national governments (Tawil & Cougoureux, 2013); and it is easy to find official statements that resemble the Hong Kong government's stress on whole-person development. These statements parallel much advocacy in the professional and academic fields (e.g. Education International, 2012; Egan, 2008; Marples, 2002; Walker & Soltis, 2009).

Despite the spread of the seemingly-progressive reform, the role of school systems in sorting people into hierarchical social strata according to their academic performance has remained unchanged. Sociologists have long observed that education is the major instrument for social stratification and class reproduction (Anyon, 2011; Blau & Duncan, 1967; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Competition in school is the prelude to competition in the pyramid-shaped job market, which ultimately produces hierarchical social classes. With the expansion of higher education after World War II, middle-class jobs increasingly require university degrees, which render competition for university admission a life-changing event. School systems screen children and maintain class distinctions through curriculum and pedagogy (Anyon, 2011), racial and/or social segregation (Grant, 2009; Wilson, 2012), and cultural and social capital possessed by students and their families (Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1988; Jaeger, 2009). Education systems correspond to and maintain the social hierarchies and inequalities; but for most families the only hope of advance is to join the competition and strive for upward mobility.

Educational competition has arguably been reinforced by economic globalisation. Internationally, it has both been given expression and exacerbated by PISA rankings of education systems (Jensen, 2012; Meyer & Benavot, 2013; Pereyra et al., 2011). Within national borders, globalisation has aggravated social inequality (Stiglitz, 2002) and in some developed economies, including Hong Kong, further reduced the mobility opportunities even for the middle class, creating the phenomenon of the "downwardly mobile society" (Hsiao, 2014; Lui, 2011). The intensified social inequality has put an extra premium on university degrees, making competition for university entrance even more intense. Young people are made aware from an early age of the limited number of places in post-secondary education – and the even more limited number in prestigious institutions and programmes – and of the desirability of competing to gain those places for improved life-time earnings.

Thus when the goal of whole-person development meets the school system's function of social stratification, the lofty goals may be compromised by the intense competition for university enrolment. Especially in systems at which entry to post-secondary opportunities is governed by high-stakes examinations, the competition leads to narrowly-focused scoring in examinations (Zeng, 1999). For example evidence from

China, where progressive reforms were launched in 2001, shows that stratification-oriented examinations obstruct the implementation of reforms at the classroom level (Wang, 2006; Yang & Yu, 2004).

The high-stakes examinations have fuelled work of entrepreneurs in the shadow education industry who claims expertise in enhancing students' competitive edge for examination success. The scale of shadow education around the globe may be indicated by a few statistics. Survey data in Japan have indicated that in 2010 approximately 40% of elementary students and 65% of junior high school students received private supplementary education (Watanabe, 2013: 70). In the Republic of Korea, 81.1% of elementary pupils were estimated to be receiving private tutoring in 2014, with respective proportions in middle schooling and general high schooling being 69.1% and 56.2% (KOSIS, 2015). A pair of studies of former Soviet countries showed that the majority of first year university students had received supplementary tutoring in the last grade of high school, and that the scale of private tutoring ranged from 50% in Kyrgyzstan to over 90% in Azerbaijan (Silova, 2009; Silova et al., 2006). In Egypt, a 2005 report indicated that 64% of urban and 54% of rural children were receiving private tutoring (Hartmann, 2013: 60).

Most research on private tutoring has focused on demand and supply, intensity, effectiveness, and social implications. Few inquiries have been conducted to examine the rise of shadow sector in relation to the grand shift in educational aims toward whole-person development. The present paper reduces this gap by examining schoolteachers' perceptions of private tutoring vis-à-vis their teaching duties. School teachers are important subjects for the purpose of the study because their work is influenced by both whole-person development policies and the booming private tutoring industry.

### **Education Reform and the Shadow Sector in Hong Kong**

The priority goal of the Hong Kong reforms launched in 2000 was to enable students "to enjoy learning, enhance their effectiveness in communication, and develop their creativity and sense of commitment" (Hong Kong, Education Commission, 2000, p.2). The reform sought to downplay the significance of assessments by reducing the number of territory-wide examinations at the senior secondary level from two in Grades 11 and 13 to only one in grade 12 for university entrance (and with the years of secondary schooling shortened by one year while university education was expanded for one year). Further, the reform intended to alleviate student workload by confining the curriculum to four core subjects in the university entrance examination, namely Chinese, English, Mathematics and Liberal Studies. In short, the reform aimed to re-orient Hong Kong's education from "teaching to the test" to "all-rounded development".

During the era leading up to and following the launch of the education reform, economic inequalities increased. The Gini coefficient averaged 0.43 between 1971 and 1976, but climbed to 0.54 in 2011 (Hong Kong Government, 2012). In 2013, 1.4% of employees received monthly salaries over HK\$100,000 (US\$12,900), while 93.4% received salaries below HK\$50,000 and the median salary was HK\$13,000 (Hong Kong, Census & Statistics Department, 2014, p.50). Economic polarisation strengthened the role of tertiary education in social mobility. Under globalisation, Hong Kong's economy shifted from labour-intensive manufacturing to capital- and knowledge-intensive producer services. One common requirement for the high-

paying professional and administrator positions was tertiary education. Among employees aged below 40, nearly 90% of upper-middle-class and over 50% of lower-middle-class personnel held university degrees (Lui, 2011, p.33). The figures for older employees were much lower: 69.2% for upper-middle-class and 30% for lower-middle-class. Tertiary education had become the watershed between the middle and lower classes. The dwindling mobility opportunities intensified competition for university places and reinforced the function of education in social stratification.

Thus despite the education reform, economic signals accorded even greater value for examinations which in turn contributed to significant expansion of the tutoring industry. A 2004/05 expenditure survey of 6,100 households indicated rates of tutoring of 36.0% at primary level, 28.0% in Grades 7-9, 33.6% in Grades 10-11, and 48.1% in Grades 12-13 (Hong Kong, Census & Statistics Department, 2005). The survey conducted by the authors in 2011/12 and reported below found even higher proportions in Grades 9 and 12. Much tutoring is provided through informal arrangements by university students and even secondary students. More formally, Hong Kong has many tutorial centres. In December 2013, 6,754 institutions “following nonformal curriculum” were registered and listed on the government website (Hong Kong, Education Bureau, 2013). Many were single enterprises with parallel registrations for different branches and for morning, afternoon and evening sessions; and some focused on non-academic subjects such as computing and sports. Consolidation of multiple registrations and exclusion of enterprises which would not be classified as offering shadow education reduced the number to approximately 1,200. By comparison, Hong Kong had 1,088 primary and secondary schools.

Much tutorial provision is on a one-to-one basis in the centres or homes of the students or tutors. Other tutoring is provided in groups of two or three students with similar arrangements. At the other end of the scale are classes in lecture theatres with overflow sections served by video screens. Many of these classes are run by ‘star’ tutors, also known as tutoring queens and kings, who cultivate images along the lines of film personalities and popular musicians (Koh, 2014). This phenomenon may be found to some extent in Taiwan and is emerging in Mainland China, but has reached an extreme form in Hong Kong. The tutors appeal to teenage culture through their hairstyles and clothing, and some use slang vocabulary in the tutorial classrooms which would be considered unacceptable in schools. The companies place huge advertisements on buildings and double-decker buses. They also advertise on television, on the internet, and through flyers. In addition to live classes, some companies offer video-recorded classes that are slightly less expensive and also popular.

The thriving tutoring industry reveals a paradox for Hong Kong’s education system. Despite the reform mandate to cultivate all-rounded talents, public examinations continue to determine individuals’ opportunities for further study and future careers. Therefore, social stratification remains a major function of schooling, parallel to the new mandate of all-rounded development. Families depend on education to sharpen their competitive edge in the job market, and private tutoring has expanded disregarding the whole-person development reforms.

## Research Methods

The focus on this study is on fee-based tutoring and thus does not include support given by family members, teachers or others free of charge. Additionally, the paper is only concerned with academic subjects as defined by the school sector, i.e. mathematics, languages, sciences, etc.. It excludes sports, music and other activities that are not part of the academic work of schools.

The research reported here was part of a larger project on relationships between mainstream schooling and private tutoring in Hong Kong. Mixed-methods were employed to collect data from 16 secondary schools selected through cluster sampling (Bray & Kwo, 2015). The sample included schools with all three ability bands, and private schools as well as government and government-aided ones.

In 2011/12, the first year of the study, the focus was on students' experiences and views about private tutoring. Since students at the transitional grades were more likely to receive private tutoring (Bray, 2009; Kwok, 2001), the research team targeted students in Grades 9 and 12. A questionnaire gained responses from 1,628 students in the 16 institutions, representing 3.0% of the total number of secondary schools. Among these respondents, 969 (59.5%) were in Grade 9, and 659 (40.5%) in Grade 12. The questionnaire collected details on the scale and intensity of tutoring, the students' motives for seeking tutoring, comparisons of teachers and tutors, and family backgrounds. In addition, individual interviews were conducted with 105 students for more qualitative insights.

In the second year of the study, the team focused on teachers of Grade 9 and 12 classes in the participating schools. Two of the 16 sample schools agreed to the student survey but not the teacher survey. Among the remaining 14 schools, questionnaires were completed by 160 teachers, among whom 48 from 12 schools were interviewed individually. Teachers of core subjects (Chinese, English, Mathematics and Liberal Studies) accounted for 81.3% (39 of the 48). As one teacher did not answer sufficient interview questions, this report draws on 47 interviews only. Table 1 indicates sample characteristics of the interviews. Details on the survey and interview questions are provided by Bray and Kwo (2015). This paper is mainly based on the teacher interview data, but also draws on responses to the student and teacher questionnaires for comparison and triangulation. During the data analysis, teachers' repeated self-conflicting views caught the authors' attention and emerged as a theme. The authors then identified four types of teacher attitudes toward private tutoring. Cross-tables were created to count the cases of each type and compare teacher attitudes by school band, gender, career stage, and subject. Additional codes were constructed to identify the reasons for teachers' views using their own articulations.

*Table 1 near here*

## Findings

### *Student participation in private tutoring*

The student survey demonstrated high participation rates in private tutoring. Across the 16 sampled schools, 53.8% of Grade 9 students and 71.8% of Grade 12 students reported having received private tutoring during

the previous 12 months (Bray et al., 2014: 29). Concerning the types of tutoring, the interviewed teachers made clear distinctions between Grades 9 and 12. The teachers indicated that Grade 9 students usually received one-to-one or small-group tutoring, and indeed this matched the students' self-reported data. The primary purpose of these types of tutoring, the teachers said, was homework checking or facilitation. In contrast, the tutoring participation of Grade 12 students, as reported by both teachers and students, was mainly driven by the university entrance examinations. Students often attended the large lectures, live or video, offered by the commercial tutoring companies in order to gain tips for the examinations.

*Ambivalence: Teachers' mixed attitudes toward private tutoring*

Among the most interesting findings were the ambivalent and even contradictory attitudes of teachers. When the teachers were asked how they felt about their students receiving tutoring, most (33 teachers) responded positively: "okay", "acceptable", and "good". A few teachers even strongly encouraged their students, particularly the under-performing ones, to seek tutors. Yet in evaluation of the social impact of tutoring, a significant number (27 teachers) were critical and negative.

A typical illustration of ambivalence was an English teacher in a Band 3 school, teaching both Grade 9 and 12 students. She considered it "a good thing" that her students received tutoring, both in the large commercial classes and one-to-one. She had phoned the parents of low-achievers at the beginning of the term to indicate that their children needed one-to-one tutoring. She said: "I forced the parents to do so. Just hire someone to take care of the homework." Most parents followed her suggestion. Then she kept in contact with the tutors and informed them of her teaching schedule. She stayed in touch with three tutors at the same time. She told the tutors what should be covered in the examination so that the tutors could do what she wanted. She found the practice "very effective", and called it a "win-win situation".

This teacher also considered the attendance by advanced students at the large commercial centres to be "a good thing", though she observed that the centres mainly taught testing skills and shortcut tips rather than content knowledge. She argued:

To be more competitive with outside students, [our students] need to be more motivated and active.... The elite students want more than what we can provide in school. [In theory] they can come to me at lunch time or after school. I can provide tutoring or supplementary notes to them. But the fact is that we [teachers] do not have the time and cannot afford that.

From her practices and explanations, this teacher appeared to appreciate private tutoring with little reservation. Yet when asked about the social impact of tutoring, she responded: "I don't think it is a good thing at all!" She explained:

From the teachers' perspective, I am happy to see my students seeking more information outside my classroom. That's good. From a parent's view, no! I do not want my kids to attend more lessons after six o'clock and go home with tired bodies. It is not healthy for the society. Why don't they just go to the library and read? ... Students just follow trends. They do not have their own minds.



The teacher added that the students like the tutors:

because of the way the tutors present themselves, their presentation, and their images.... Tutors have lots of luxury goods and often show off in tutoring classes.... The [centre-based] tutoring is exam oriented. They show off their exam tips. Usually they have exam tips at the end of the course. They will give you a booklet of tips [in which] they foresee the kinds of questions that will most likely appear in the exam.

The inconsistency was conspicuous between this teacher's embrace of tutoring for her own students and her wider discomfort.

This teacher was not alone. Such contradictions were evident in the responses of many interviewees. Thirty three (70.2%) of the 47 teachers were positive about their own students taking private tutoring. Only seven teachers expressed firm objection, and another seven had mixed feelings. Yet when invited to comment on tutoring as a societal trend, 20 of the 33 "positive" teachers contradicted their earlier views with negative remarks. These cases were coded as "ambivalent". The other cases were classified as "consistent" and further categorised into three types: consistent-positive, consistent-negative, and consistent-mixed/neutral (Table 2). Responses were further analysed by gender, subject, career stage and school type, but no clear patterns were identified in these categories.

*Table 2 near here*

The fact that nearly half of the teachers were ambivalent demanded further scrutiny. The following sections analyse further this contradiction in the relationships between the mainstream schools and private tutoring. The teachers' ambivalence revealed a deep conflict between ideals and realities in the competitive and stratified society.

#### *Positive attitudes: Tutoring as a supplement to teaching*

Like the teacher who desired the tutors to "do what she wanted", most teachers did not mind their students seeking extra help as long as the tutoring complemented school learning. Some teachers described tutoring attendance as a sign of effort; some saw tutors as necessary substitutes for parents who were unable to offer academic guidance to their children; and others felt positive simply because the students spent more time on study and had more exposure to subject knowledge. Even the teachers who doubted the tutoring effectiveness supported participation if it could boost the students' examination confidence. In all these cases, the teachers accepted or even encouraged tutoring, but on the condition that it complemented school learning.

Indeed, only a few teachers (seven cases) objected to their students' receiving tutoring because the students reversed the priorities between schooling and tutoring. One teacher felt that her students relied too much on tutoring notes, especially because those notes contained mistakes. Also, she was unhappy that

students “may not complete their homework because they spend too much time on tutoring.” Another teacher reported that tutoring in commercial centres had made students disrespectful:

They take out the tutoring materials in your lessons. They don't care what you are teaching.... In some extreme cases, students no longer complete homework we assign to them.

The teacher felt that tutoring had become a major locus of activity rather than a supplement. Now, she stated, school had become a place to play and sleep. When asked about private tutoring as a social phenomenon, she said: “Personally, I don't think it should have existed.”

Other teachers considered the supplementary role of tutoring to be better than none. Even the large tutoring classes organised by commercial centres, which were described as teaching mechanical skills and focusing on examination tips, were considered more or less helpful. These perceptions were corroborated by the questionnaire responses in the teacher survey. About 90% of the respondents considered one-to-one and small-group tutoring to have medium or large effects on student learning. Even the large tutoring lectures in commercial centres were evaluated by over half of the teachers as having medium or large effects (Table 3).

*Table 3 near here.*

The large tutoring classes in commercial centres were recognised by the interviewees to offer at least two domains that mainstream schools did not offer. First, teachers did not provide as much focus, or as effective focus, on examination skills as the tutors. Teachers had to teach the full syllabus, while the tutors concentrated on drilling narrow skills. Yet the examination skills and drilling were perceived by teachers as necessary for students who aimed for high examination performance. Second, 29 teachers mentioned that tutors in the commercial centres produced attractive tutorial notes. The notes provided visual help through tables and charts in contrast to teachers' notes which were usually in paragraphs, and they analysed past examination papers. Some teachers had borrowed the tutorial materials and incorporated some contents into their own teaching. Additionally, tutors were seen as an important second avenue for students to ask questions because teachers were not always available for individual needs.

These rationales raised the further query why so many teachers considered themselves unable to train students in examination skills or produce attractive notes. The answer lay in priorities: teachers had to teach the full syllabus and focus on knowledge and higher-order problem-solving. One teacher stated:

We need to teach in a very short time. We cannot squeeze some time to teach skills. Even though I try to teach some examination skills, I find that some students cannot really understand how to master those skills in day school. That's why they need tutoring.... Those tutorial notes are much more effective to help them get high grades. They provide the shortcuts.

Teaching was conceived by the teachers as having a fundamentally different orientation from tutoring. One comment was typical: “We teach students in all-rounded perspective. Even if I know that some topics are

seldom tested, I still have the responsibility to teach them.” To realise the ideal of all-rounded education, teachers had to deal with tasks associated with multiple dimensions of school work. For academic matters, most teachers taught two or more subjects to three or four classes in different grades. Their teaching loads were usually around 30 lessons per week, which permitted little time after class for individual communication. The commercial tutoring centres had even larger classes, but employed assistants for support. Moreover, teachers were responsible for moral education, extra-curricular learning, liaison with parents, and administrative work, all of which distracted their energy and time from instruction. One quarter of the teachers (12 out of 47) cited “time”, “busy” or “workload” as the reasons why they were unable to offer extra support for individual students.

Despite the goal of whole-person development, teachers still operated under high examination pressure. One teacher stated that: “We feel the pressure from the management about the [examination] passing rate”, and she “passed pressure onto students.” The constraints of time available for instruction and student individual needs became a critical reason for teachers’ acceptance of students receiving private tutoring. Ironically, the lofty goal of all-rounded development espoused by the mainstream schools drove students into the arms of private tutors for examination drilling, and made private tutoring a desirable supplement.

#### *Criticisms: Tutoring distorting the purpose of education*

While tutoring could helpfully supplement teachers’ work, 20 interviewees felt that it distorted the purpose of education. The interviewees referred mainly to the mushrooming commercial tutoring centres which drilled senior students in examination skills and tips. One teacher lamented: “Tutoring shapes students by treating spoon-feeding as a way to get good grades.... It also gives students a wrong perception that they don’t have to work hard. They can just rely on tutoring”.

Even worse than the examination-driven attitude, in the eyes of the teachers, were the values brought by commodification and privatisation of learning. Repeatedly, the teachers called private tutoring “a business” or “an industry” for “profit” and “money making”. Tutoring sent a message that, in one teacher’s words, “if you can pay, you will receive higher and better quality education.” He continued: “Certainly this is not correct. In terms of fairness, it is not right that one just pays the premium rate and receives better education.” Almost all the teachers predicted further expansion of the industry. They felt that “it is the trend” and “it cannot be avoided”, even if they did not like it. One teacher identified the contradiction between whole-person development and the real-life function of the educational system:

We want to evaluate students from different perspectives, but in the end university admissions count the exam scores only. We cannot avoid the exam-oriented feature. Therefore, the tutoring industry will not diminish.

These remarks disclosed teachers’ deep feelings of frustration. They also explained the contradictory attitudes held by the teachers toward private tutoring. Schools and teachers were committed to the ideal of whole-person development, but such aim encountered strong challenges posed by another important function

of schooling in social stratification. Teachers were caught in this dilemma. They accepted tutoring at the individual level, but critiqued it as a social trend.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Private tutoring has become endemic in many parts of the world including Hong Kong. In parallel with more overt policies of privatisation, the tutoring market has penetrated the public schools where it has influenced the processes of teaching and learning. The current study explores the attitudes of teachers toward this phenomenon, noting that most teachers in the study were ambivalent. On the one hand, the progressive reforms seemed to be welcomed by the teachers. Interviewees repeatedly claimed that their job was to cultivate all-rounded persons so as to distinguish themselves from private tutors who focused on examination drilling. This demonstrated a strong reception of the reform goals among teachers. They further asserted that tutoring allowed money to reign supreme in education, exacerbated the examination-driven culture, and reduced education from a public good to private investment. These findings echoed the moral conflicts observed by Ball and Youdell (2008) between teachers' professional values and the market values promoted by privatisation.

On the other hand, ironically, when it came to their own students many teachers showed a pragmatic and therefore tolerant approach that acquiesced or even encouraged tutoring attendance as long as students prioritise tutoring over classroom learning. This pragmatic attitude resulted from teachers' awareness of the keen competition that their students had to face for university places and for jobs. Teachers cannot afford to ignore the examinations on which not only their students' life chances but also the institutional rankings of their schools would depend. The attention to the examinations in Hong Kong parallels features in Turkey reported by Altinyelken (2013). She quoted a head teacher (p.196) who observed that:

The education system is highly competitive. The schools announce the lists of their students who received high scores at the entrance exam and are admitted to good quality [secondary] schools. These are announced as 'Our Honour List'.... The schools try to outperform other schools in their neighbourhood.

The Turkish teachers felt that high rates of examination failure would make the teachers look 'unsuccessful' regardless of their achievements in promoting critical thinking, creativity, communication, etc.. Such feelings are doubtless widespread, though few studies have focused on the roles of private tutoring to bridge the gaps. The fact that these tensions have arisen both in Turkey and in Hong Kong, which are very different types of societies, suggests that research elsewhere might reveal similar features.

It is ironic that the examination-driven culture has been intensified in the face of the proactive reforms to promote whole-person development and reduce the weight of testing. Underlying these patterns is the persistent role of examinations in social stratification through selective entry to the next stages in the educational ladder – secondary schools in the case of the Turkish study, and post-secondary institutions in the

case of this Hong Kong study. Government-devised reforms may downplay examinations and encourage all-round development of students, but the wider social reality pushes in the opposite direction.

This analysis shows that even though the official goals of education systems may stress humanistic ideals of whole-person development, harsh social realities require educational processes to fulfil a function of social stratification. While teachers are heavily occupied with non-academic work alongside teaching, their students' futures remain contingent on performance in academic examinations. Private tutoring thrives on this divide. Teachers' ambivalence toward the industry has revealed their sense of helplessness as well as the impotence of the lofty aims when confronted by powerful forces of social stratification. It should be a wake-up call for teacher educators and policymakers to reconsider the social conditions of whole-person development. Without committed effort to reduce social inequality or to remove the stratification function of the education system, whole-person development is likely to be compromised. In this regard, the Hong Kong case may shed light on other societies whose education systems are trapped in similar social realities and engaged in similar struggles. At the same time, comparative research in systems which are less dominated by examination cultures may provide useful benchmarks for further analysis.

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Table 1: Teachers' perceptions of tutoring as received by their own students and as a social trend

Teachers' Perceptions	Count	Percentage
Ambivalent	20	42.5%
Consistent - positive	13	27.7%
Consistent - negative	7	14.9%
Consistent - mixed/neutral	7	14.9%
Total	47	100.0%

Table 2. Survey question 10: In your opinion, how effective are the following types of private tutoring? (N = 153)

	No effect	Small effect	Medium effect	Large effect
Private one-to-one	0.0%	3.9%	43.8%	52.3%
Small group	0.0%	13.2%	57.2%	29.6%
Lecture by tutors	2.0%	45.1%	47.7%	5.2%