



Shadow Pedagogy: Educational, Psychological, Social, and Economic Consequences and Developmental Blunder

 **Kinjal Chakraborty**

Visiting faculty, Department of Education, Kalyani Mahavidyalaya, West Bengal, India

Corresponding Author: *Kinjal Chakraborty 

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21547869>

Abstract

Shadow pedagogy, commonly referred to as private supplementary tutoring or shadow education, has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of education across the world. Originally developed as a supplementary academic support system, private tuition has increasingly transformed into a parallel educational structure that mirrors formal schooling. In many countries, particularly in South Asia, East Asia, and parts of Africa and Europe, participation in private tutoring has shifted from being an optional educational service to an almost compulsory component of academic success. While supporters argue that private tuition enhances examination performance and compensates for weaknesses in school education, its rapid expansion has generated significant educational, psychological, social, ethical, and economic challenges. This paper critically examines the negative consequences of shadow pedagogy and argues that excessive dependence on private tuition undermines the purpose of formal education. It weakens classroom engagement, promotes rote memorization, increases educational inequality, intensifies student stress, commercializes learning, and widens social disparities. The paper further explores how coaching culture affects children's cognitive development, intrinsic motivation, mental health, family relationships, and educational justice. Finally, policy recommendations are proposed to restore confidence in public education while ensuring equitable learning opportunities.

Manuscript Information

- **ISSN No:** 3139-6313
- **Received:** 13-06-2026
- **Accepted:** 23-07-2026
- **Published:** 25-07-2026
- **IJCRP:**1(4); 2026: 05-08
- **©2026, All Rights Reserved**
- **Plagiarism Checked:** Yes
- **Peer Review Process:** Yes

How to Cite this Article

Chakraborty K. Shadow Pedagogy: Educational, Psychological, Social, and Economic Consequences and Developmental Blunder. Int. J. Creative Res. Publ. 2026;1(4):05-08.

Access this Article Online



www.jcrp.in

KEYWORDS: Shadow pedagogy, Private tuition, Coaching culture, educational inequality, Student stress, Commercialisation of education, Mental health, educational psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Education has historically been regarded as a public institution designed to develop knowledgeable, ethical, creative, and socially responsible citizens. Schools were expected to provide equal opportunities for learning regardless of socioeconomic background. However, the rapid growth of private tuition has fundamentally altered this educational vision. Today, learning frequently continues long after the school day ends, with millions of students attending coaching centres, private tutors, and online learning platforms. This parallel educational system has become so widespread that many students believe academic success is impossible without private coaching. The term **shadow pedagogy** refers to this supplementary system because it closely follows the formal curriculum, expanding whenever schools introduce new subjects, examinations, or competitive requirements. While supplementary learning is not inherently problematic, excessive dependence on private tuition raises important concerns. Instead of supporting classroom education, shadow pedagogy increasingly competes with it, often replacing meaningful classroom learning with examination-oriented instruction. This paper argues that the widespread expansion of shadow pedagogy has created a hidden educational crisis. Rather than strengthening education, excessive private tutoring often weakens students' confidence in schools, increases psychological pressure, deepens educational inequality, and transforms education into a commercial commodity.

Understanding Shadow Pedagogy

Shadow pedagogy refers to paid educational activities conducted outside formal schools that are designed to improve students' academic achievement. According to Mark Bray (1999, 2009), shadow education possesses three defining characteristics:

- It supplements mainstream schooling.
- It focuses on academic subjects taught in schools.
- It requires private payment.

Unlike school-based remedial instruction, shadow education operates within a competitive market where educational success becomes closely associated with purchasing additional instructional services. Over the last three decades, private tutoring has evolved into a multibillion-dollar global industry. Competitive examinations, parental aspirations, technological advancement, and increasing educational competition have accelerated its expansion.

Educational Consequences

Declining Trust in Schools

Perhaps the most damaging consequence of shadow pedagogy is the gradual erosion of confidence in formal education. Many students increasingly believe that genuine learning occurs only in coaching centres rather than classrooms. Schools become places for attendance, whereas tuition becomes the primary site of learning. This perception weakens the authority of classroom teachers and diminishes the educational significance of public schooling.

Passive Classroom Participation

Students who receive private tuition frequently attend school merely to complete attendance requirements. They often disengage during lessons because similar content has already been covered by tutors. This passive participation reduces classroom interaction and weakens collaborative learning environments.

Rote Memorization

Most coaching centres prioritize examination performance over conceptual understanding.

Students become trained to:

- memorize model answers,
- predict examination questions,
- follow standardized solution methods,
- maximize marks.

Such practices discourage critical thinking, creativity, inquiry, and independent reasoning.

Curriculum Narrowing

Formal education seeks to develop intellectual, emotional, ethical, social, artistic, and physical capacities.

Private coaching narrows learning toward:

- examination scores,
- ranking,
- admission tests,
- competitive success.

Subjects perceived as "non-examinable" receive limited attention.

Psychological Consequences

Academic Stress

Students attending both school and coaching often experience twelve to fourteen hours of continuous academic work.

The absence of adequate leisure, recreation, and sleep contributes to chronic stress. Research consistently associates excessive academic pressure with anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and reduced life satisfaction.

Burnout

Burnout refers to emotional, cognitive, and physical exhaustion resulting from prolonged stress.

Symptoms include:

- chronic fatigue,
- declining motivation,
- emotional detachment,
- reduced academic satisfaction,
- irritability.

Students gradually begin viewing education as an obligation rather than an opportunity for intellectual growth.

Anxiety and Fear of Failure

Shadow pedagogy often reinforces the belief that every examination determines future success.

Consequently, students experience:

- examination anxiety,
- fear of disappointing parents,
- perfectionism,

- performance pressure.
- Learning becomes driven by fear rather than curiosity.

Loss of Intrinsic Motivation

According to Self-Determination Theory, meaningful learning depends upon autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Coaching culture replaces intrinsic motivation with external rewards such as:

- marks,
- ranks,
- admission,
- certificates.

Students study because they must succeed rather than because they wish to understand.

Reduced Creativity

Private coaching frequently relies upon repetition and standardized procedures.

Students become increasingly reluctant to:

- ask novel questions,
- explore alternative ideas,
- experiment,
- solve unfamiliar problems.

Consequently, divergent thinking gradually declines.

Cognitive Consequences

Shadow pedagogy may improve short-term examination performance but often weakens deeper learning processes.

Students become dependent upon:

- ready-made notes,
- predicted questions,
- shortcut techniques,
- formula-based solutions.

Such dependence reduces:

- metacognitive awareness,
- self-regulated learning,
- reflective thinking,
- problem-solving ability.

Instead of constructing knowledge independently, learners increasingly consume prepared information.

Social Consequences

Educational Inequality

Perhaps the most serious societal consequence is educational inequality. Children from affluent families can afford:

- experienced tutors,
- premium coaching institutes,
- online learning subscriptions,
- personalized mentoring.

Economically disadvantaged students often rely solely on school education. As a result, examination success increasingly reflects financial capacity rather than academic potential.

Commercialization of Education

Education gradually transforms from a public service into a market commodity. Knowledge becomes something that can be purchased. Parents increasingly perceive expensive

coaching as an investment guaranteeing future employment. This commercialization undermines the democratic ideal of equal educational opportunity.

Family Financial Burden

Private tuition consumes substantial household income. Many middle-class families allocate significant portions of their earnings to coaching fees. Lower-income families frequently experience financial hardship while attempting to provide similar opportunities. Educational aspiration thereby becomes a source of economic stress.

Ethical Concerns

Shadow pedagogy raises several ethical questions. Some school teachers provide paid tuition to their own students. This situation creates potential conflicts of interest. Students may believe classroom instruction is intentionally incomplete in order to encourage private tuition. Although such practices are not universal, even the perception of unfairness weakens public trust.

Impact on Childhood

Children require opportunities for:

- play,
- recreation,
- sports,
- creativity,
- social interaction,
- emotional development.

Excessive coaching substantially reduces these experiences. Many students spend evenings and weekends attending tuition rather than engaging in healthy developmental activities. The result is an increasingly examination-centered childhood.

Impact on Teachers

Shadow pedagogy also affects teachers. Some teachers experience pressure to compete with coaching centres. Others may unconsciously prioritize examination preparation over meaningful learning. In extreme cases, coaching institutions attract experienced educators away from schools through higher financial incentives.

Digital Shadow Pedagogy

The emergence of digital platforms has expanded shadow education beyond physical classrooms.

Online tutoring now includes:

- AI-assisted tutoring,
- recorded lectures,
- adaptive learning software,
- subscription-based educational platforms.

Although technology improves accessibility, it also intensifies commercialization and extends academic pressure into students' homes.

Long-Term Consequences

If current trends continue, several long-term risks may emerge:

- declining confidence in public education,
- widening educational inequality,

- increased student mental health problems,
- commercialization of educational opportunity,
- reduced creativity,
- examination-driven learning,
- weakening democratic access to quality education.

Ultimately, societies risk producing students who perform well in examinations but struggle with innovation, critical reasoning, and lifelong learning.

Recommendations

To reduce the harmful consequences of excessive shadow pedagogy, governments and educational institutions should consider the following measures:

- Strengthen classroom teaching through continuous professional development.
- Reduce dependence on high-stakes examinations.
- Introduce competency-based and inquiry-oriented curricula.
- Provide free remedial support within schools.
- Establish clear regulations for private coaching institutions.
- Prevent conflicts of interest involving teachers and private tuition.
- Expand school counselling and psychological support services.
- Promote balanced development through sports, arts, and co-curricular activities.
- Increase public investment in equitable, high-quality school education.
- Educate parents about healthy learning habits and realistic academic expectations.

CONCLUSION

Shadow pedagogy emerged to supplement formal education, but in many educational systems it has evolved into a dominant parallel institution. While private tuition may offer short-term academic advantages, excessive dependence on it has produced profound educational, psychological, social, and ethical consequences. It weakens confidence in schools, encourages rote learning, intensifies stress and anxiety, widens socioeconomic inequalities, and transforms education into a commercial enterprise.

A truly effective education system should not require students to spend their evenings and weekends purchasing additional instruction simply to keep pace with school expectations. Instead, schools should be capable of providing meaningful, equitable, and engaging learning experiences that foster curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, and emotional well-being. Reducing excessive dependence on shadow pedagogy is therefore not merely an educational challenge but a social imperative for ensuring educational justice and sustainable human development.

REFERENCES

1. Baker, D. P., Akiba, M., LeTendre, G. K., & Wiseman, A. W. (2001). Worldwide shadow education: Outside-school learning, institutional quality of schooling, and cross-

- national mathematics achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23(1), 1–17.
2. Bourdieu, P. (1986). *The forms of capital*. Greenwood.
3. Bray, M. (1999). *The shadow education system: Private tutoring and its implications for planners*. UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.
4. Bray, M. (2009). *Confronting the shadow education system: What government policies for what private tutoring?* UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.
5. Bray, M. (2017). *Shadow education: Comparative perspectives*. Oxford University Press.
6. Entrich, S. R. (2018). *Shadow education and social inequalities in Japan*. Springer.
7. OECD. (2019). *PISA 2018 results*. OECD Publishing.
8. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). *Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective*. Routledge.
9. Silova, I. (Ed.). (2009). *Private supplementary tutoring in Central Asia*. UNESCO.
10. UNESCO. (2021). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO Publishing.
11. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Creative Commons (CC) License

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution–Non-Commercial–No Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license. This license permits sharing and redistribution of the article in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes only, provided that appropriate credit is given to the original author(s) and source. No modifications, adaptations, or derivative works are permitted under this license.

About the author



Kinjal Chakraborty is a Visiting Faculty in the Department of Education at Kalyani Mahavidyalaya, West Bengal, India. Her academic interests include teacher education, educational psychology, curriculum development, and contemporary issues in education. She is committed to promoting quality education through teaching, research, and scholarly engagement in the field of education.