

Students' Motivational Factors behind Acquiring Shadow Education and Reasons for Creating New Generation Schools in Cambodia

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ABSTRACT

The current study explores the motivational factors behind acquiring shadow education in Cambodia. We adopted documentary design, which is one of the qualitative methods. We collected relevant documents on shadowing in Cambodia and analyzed them qualitatively using the proposed content analysis. This study indicated that the leading motivational factors behind acquiring extra education in Cambodia were students' grades and overemphasis on examinations, school quality, teacher economic benefits, or teacher corruption. The findings from these studies could be used to discuss and generalize the motivational factors behind acquiring shadow education in the Cambodian educational context. Along with the existing shadow education, causing difficulty for the poor, the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) have taken measures to eliminate this type of education by turning some schools into New Generation Schools (NGS).

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1. INTRODUCTION

Shadow education, also called private tutoring, is becoming a significant growth industry worldwide. This is because of the demand for exemplary performance in essential entrance examinations to upper secondary schools and universities and educational returns [1], [2].

Various scholars have contributed significantly to the term schooling in the shadows. [3] described it as shadow education offered by informational schools or teaching provided informally by individual teachers or others not affiliated with the schools. It is termed

shadow education because it fills the gaps between students' expectations and real classroom learning or because its curricula mimic mainstream classes [4]. This means that the study of shadow education concerns subjects taught on the national curriculum, not extracurricular activities. Similarly, [5], [6] describe shadow education as educational activities, such as classes and tutoring, that take place outside the normal channels of the education system and are used to determine the likelihood of student success by going through the placement process. It is intended to enhance performance. The sole purpose of shadow education is to supplement general education. Therefore, as general education changes, so do the content and approach of shadowing [7]. Each shadow education has three similar elements [8]: tutoring in academic school topics, supplementary provisions outside mainstream instruction, and the purpose of financial benefits.

Rien Kuo (extra-private class) refers to shadow education in Cambodia, divided into two categories: public-private hybrid education and shadow education [9]. **Rien Kuo** (Additional Classes) and **Rien Kuo Pel Vissmakkal** (Additional Classes on Vacation) are two components of a hybrid public-private education system [10]. **Rien Kuo**, or after-school tutoring, is the most common form of shadow education in Cambodia, offered to students by certain teachers [11]. Teachers focus on the compulsory education curriculum that is not taught in class. Classes are also known as **Rean Bam Porn** (Supplemental Study) [9]. In these classes, the teacher is the teacher of the previous class that has finished the curriculum for that class or the teacher of the next class that begins the curriculum before the next grade comes [12].

In shadow education, there are **Rien Kuo Pises** (extra-special study), **Sala Akchoan** (private tutoring schools), and **Rien Kuo Anglais/Barang** (the extra class of French or English) [13]. A **public school teacher tutors Rien Kuo Pises** during recess [8]. They teach lessons to students one-on-one or in small groups, who are typically from their classes at the public school [9]. **Sala Akchoan** Sala Akchoan is open to everyone from English schools to private and technical training centers [8]. These schools are considered **Sala Akchoan** (private study) [14]. A type of private study within this classification is a component of the shadow education system, though [15]. Phnom Penh (and perhaps other urban areas) has few exam preparation centers that fill classrooms every night due to the influx of students for national and university entrance exams [9]. **Rien Kuo Anglais/Barang** starts at the lower secondary level, and the national curriculum behooves students to learn a foreign language, either English (Anglais) or French (Barang) [13]. Even though these languages are taught in the school curriculum, some students pay money to enroll in language classes outside of state schools at many private educational institutions [9]. These types of education, shadow education and **Rien Kuo** (extra class) are discussed in this study, which is also the most concerning issue in the current Cambodian educational system.

Shadow education is a noticeable trend existing in most countries in the world. It has emerged ominously in both developed and less-developed societies [8]. For example, in China, 80% of 10th graders received shadow education, 73.8% of primary school students received shadow education, and 85.5% of high school students received shadow education. Similarly, up to 77.2% of Indian students in grades 4-8 took shadow classes,

while 60.5% of general high school students in South Korea took shadow classes. Similarly, 46.5% of her 10th-grade students in the Philippines received shadow education [7]. In England, 68% of shadow education, which lasted for one hour, was usually conducted at students' homes [16].

In Cambodia, shadow education has emerged since the early 1990s [9]. It has been considered a corrupt act and officially banned [17]. This is consistent with the principles that teachers who provide shadow education are pampering a practice that contradicts the professional standards of educators; therefore, many teachers who conducted extra classes have been advised to pay a fine or lose their teaching license [3], [8], [14]. Despite the official ban, extra classes are still increasing dramatically. Many students from all academic levels, both from high- and low-income families across the country, are taking shadow education. All day long, apart from their regular study hours, they spend time taking shadow education [8], [17], [18]. They appear to devalue their lessons during the regular hours at public schools but give more value to their shadow education [19]. Hence, some do not regularly attend regular school hours but enthusiastically join shadow education [18]. Also, the teachers involved in shadow education seem to ignore their public school curriculums [3]. During regular school hours, those teachers were reported to have taught carelessly [7]. However, their private classes teach all aspects of the lessons [18]. Shadow education in the current Cambodian education system is one of the most concerning issues being discussed [2].

Shadow education in public institutions has harmed the state's education system [17]. These adverse effects include: 1) Teachers hide their knowledge of public time to teach correctly, and teaching public time seems irresponsible. They teach a diminutive theory, while real knowledge is left to the part-time classes. 2) Students themselves do not make an effort when studying in regular-hour classes and indulge in waiting when they should study, which makes public time even more useless. 3) Many poor students need to quit because of a lack of money for their extra classes. 4) Students spend too much time studying because they have to study during both regular and extra classes [8]. They leave home in the morning and come back home in the evening. They have no time to go to the library, nor do they have time to study on their own. Thus, shadow education has been hindering the ambitions of disadvantaged students [17]. Shadow education creates inequality in students' access to knowledge, meaning that students from middle- and upper-class families have a better chance of acquiring knowledge. It increases pressure and tension on young people in learning [14], and it is also a daunting hindrance to Cambodia's achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly the goals connected with education for all (EFA) [18].

Since the rising and widespread reliance on shadow education is one of the most significant and concerning issues being debated in the current Cambodian education system [20], it is imperative to examine and ascertain the motivational factors behind this growth. This study has three objectives:

1. To examine the dominant motivational factors triggering students to take shadow education.
 2. To identify the pressure requiring students to take shadow education.
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3. To determine the effective strategies to reduce the particular forms of shadow education in Cambodia.

When conducting research, it is essential to focus on the key questions. The research question guides the process of finding a concrete answer to the stated problem. Therefore, to achieve the above research goals, this research attempts to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the dominant motivational factors triggering students to take shadow education?
2. What pressure triggers students to take shadow education?
3. What are the effective strategies to reduce shadow education in Cambodia?

Being concerned with the perceptible growth of shadow education, which is affecting the quality of education and educational equity, a study on the motivational factors behind acquiring shadow education in Cambodia was conducted. The outcome of this study is very beneficial for policymakers and other relevant stakeholders, particularly teachers, as it reveals the significant factors causing the escalation of shadow education in Cambodia, the pressures triggering students to take shadow education, and strategies to shrink it. Policymakers can determine what to do in the mainstream to make shadow education less desirable. Additionally, poor oversight and regulation, especially compared to mainstream schools, allow regulation for the tutoring industry to be developed and enforced. Now that the factors behind shadowing have been identified and shadowing regulations have been implemented, the quality and efficiency of the education system will be improved, and inequalities and disparities in education between student groups will also be eliminated.

1.1. Student's Grades and Overemphasis on Examinations

It is speculated that students may take shadow classes to improve poor grades and poor comprehension. From this perspective, it is assumed that students with lower grades will take more shadow classes than students with higher grades. However, [21] noted that it had been reported that high-performing students take more shadow classes than low-performing students.

Besides improving their grades at school, students use shadow education to prepare for their exams. The two motivational drives that force students to take shadow education are having a high degree of apprehension about the national examination and getting good grades. The typical example is ninth- and twelfth-grade students. Preparatory courses for a particular exam are common in Cambodian education. Usually, before the new academic year starts, students take shadow education. Before they take an examination, those students attend shadow education to improve their knowledge. They believe that taking these preparatory courses will help them catch up with the lessons and get used to how to take the national examination.

According to [22], many adolescents experience significant anxiety before taking college admission examinations, and this worry is only exacerbated when parents express an eagerness to obtain flashy high marks. Then, without caring about their parents' loss of money and social and sports activities, students prefer attending shadow education after

school. Moreover, they were supposed to have a high chance of passing the examination with good grades [7]. [23] also showed that the use of shadow teaching by Korean students improved their school performance and prepared them for national university entrance examinations. In addition, students participate in shadow education courses to apply for admission to higher education. [23] (2005) found that most Koreans pursue shadow education to enter college. When we surveyed the reasons for using shadow teaching, 44.5% of junior and senior high school students cited reasons that gave them an edge over other students rather than rational reasons such as poor grades in school or insufficient specialized knowledge. It turns out that to compensate for the poor quality of their schooling.

1.2. School Quality

Low-quality formal education has been most commonly pointed out as one of the significant drivers of shadow education. Students are more interested in shadow education since they have discovered that mainstream schooling is somewhat inadequate. During their regular school hours, students do not have sufficient time to discuss examination questions and answers, nor do they have challenging exercises to practice. Sometimes it is difficult for them to understand what is taught, as some teachers do not give instructions on how to answer questions correctly. According to a survey conducted in Sri Lanka by [7], more than half (53%) of the 2,378 10th-grade students do not receive enough practice in school and do not include a complete curriculum, and He said he took a shadow class. 50% said they had difficulty understanding what they were taught in school.

Similarly, in Bangladesh, as reported in a study by [24], shadow education was required due to the failure of schools to teach English. In this sense, if English were taught properly at school, there would not be any need to take shadow education. Sometimes, it is not because of poor education but because teachers do not teach. It was also stated that in India's West Bengal, teachers do not usually come to school, yet they often attend their shadow education because there is a direct connection between effort and income. Consequently, families invest in shadow education to gain an extra edge and cover basic skills and concepts, as mainstream schools are unprepared to allow even hard-working and talented students to learn the relevant materials.

Also, as shown in [7], in some parts of the former Soviet Union, 52.7% and 59.5% of 1,019 high school students and 913 first-year college students, respectively, said that shadow education improved their grades. I believed it was the only way to raise quality education. Also, 500 junior high school students, as shown in [7]. 48% of students agreed that the primary reason for participating in shadow education was the quality of education in schools. The remaining 41% agreed that their students attended shadow classes because the lessons were poorly explained.

1.3. Teacher Economic Benefits or Teacher Corruption

Another motivator for shadow education is the teachers' economic benefit or teacher corruption. In this sense, shadow education has been notably correlated with teacher corruption and the shadow education market [17]. According to [25], shadow education is part of Cambodia's comprehensive system connected to low teacher salaries. Teachers are

looking for another income opportunity by offering shadow classes or charging unofficial fees from students (e.g., students buy snacks from teachers). Teachers deliberately alter their behaviors to increase demand for shadow education or maximize the benefits for those who do attend. There are two noticeable scenarios for their shadow education.

First, paid extra classes are treated as informal obligations for students enrolled in regular classes. Students unable or unwilling to attend additional sessions receive less attention during regular class hours than their paying peers. Second, teachers may slow down teaching during regular hours to increase the need for additional time or conserve energy (or important content) for shadow teaching sessions to maximize effectiveness [19], [25].

Similarly, [17] argued that the phenomenon of private tutoring is related to a shadow economy and is referred to as shadow education because government spending on social sector services, including education, has decreased, and there has been an increase in private financing of education to close the funding gap. As a result, costs are being passed to households, and some aspects of public education are being extended into shadow markets. Therefore, as shown in the above discussion, low teacher salaries are a critical driver of shadow education, offering a beneficial source of supplementary income. This factor is one of the most problematic in the equation, as several settings are possible. However, it is generally true that low salaries will encourage teachers to engage in shadow education. In both settings, if students do not participate, they will not benefit from the lessons taught in the shadow education sessions, but they will suffer adverse effects during the regular school day.

1.4. Measures to Reduce Shadow Education in Cambodia

[26] noted that student learning results and school reputation had greatly improved due to the high caliber of instruction provided by the NGS. Modern educational infrastructure, such as newly constructed classrooms and playgrounds, updated instructional materials, competent teachers and principals, and teachers' enhanced knowledge and skills via professional development programs, makes this advancement feasible. Additionally, students are engaged in various learning activities, particularly in STEM fields, which helps them expand and improve the information and abilities they need to seek further education or future employment. Therefore, the NGS program should be expanded to help Cambodia produce the skilled labor it will need to achieve its development objectives. Additionally, [1], [2] stated that turning schools into NGS is a sign of saying goodbye to shadow education since all the teachers working in the NGS are not allowed to teach extra classes to claim student benefits.

Table 1. New Generation Schools in Cambodia

No	School Name	Location	Level
1	Preah Sisowath	Phnom Penh	Upper Secondary School
2	Hun Sen Prek Leap	Phnom Penh	Upper Secondary School
3	Preah Yukunthor	Phnom Penh	Upper Secondary School
4	Hun Sen Kampong Cham	Kampong Cham	Upper Secondary School

5	Peam Chikang	Kampong Cham	Upper Secondary School
6	Prek Anchanh	Kandal	Upper Secondary School
7	Kork Pring	Svay Rieng	Upper Secondary School
8	Sala Anovat	Kampong Cham	Primary School
9	Angkor Ban	Kampong Cham	Primary School
10	Preah Reach Akamohesey	Kampong Speu	Primary School
11	Svay Prohaut	Svay Rieng	Primary School

As of December 17, 2019, there are 11 NGS schools in Cambodia. Seven are high schools in Phnom Penh capital city, Kampong Cham, and Kandal provinces. The provinces of Svay Rieng, Kampong Cham, and Kampong Speu are home to the other four primary schools. However, a few other NGS schools have been created in the Kingdom in the last few years, not formally announced yet. As anticipated, MoEYS aims to boost the number of NGS schools to roughly 150 across the country to enhance the education sector in the digital age. According to [26], NGS schools aim to provide innovative curriculums and instructional practices, technology and school facilities, STEM and ICT skills, and teacher professional development activities.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

In this study, a documentation method, one of the qualitative approaches, was used. According to [27], documentary research is a type of research method that uses both public and private records as sources of information. Newspapers, diaries, stamps, directories, leaflets, maps, government statistical publications, photographs, works of art, gramophone records, tapes, and computer data are just a few documents.

2.2. Data Collection

For the current study, relevant materials on shadow education in Cambodia were gathered. The selected materials are written in English. The main points, which were focused on, included dominant motivational factors triggering students to take shadow education, the pressure requiring students to take shadow education, and practical strategies to reduce the particular forms of shadow education in Cambodia.

2.3. Data Analysis

As proposed by [28], content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data in the current study. Identify or recognize terms in qualitative data. (i.e., text). Researchers use content analysis to find specific words, themes, or concepts within qualitative data and quantify their presence, meaning, and association with other words, themes, or concepts (such as text) I can do it. Content analysis allows researchers to measure and evaluate the presence, meaning, and relationships between specific words, topics, or concepts. In addition, we can infer the meaning of the text, the author, the intended audience, and even the social and historical era in which the work was produced [28]. Three methods were used in the large-scale data processing process of the current study: repeated reading,

coding, and continuous comparison. Then the points of the document read were treated and sub-addressed. Finally, the data were interpreted accordingly.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper sought to reveal the inducing factors behind acquiring shadow education in the Cambodian educational system: (1) to investigate the dominant inspirational factors triggering students to take shadow education, (2) to reveal the pressure needing students to take shadow education, and (3) to determine the effective strategies to reduce the particular forms of shadow education in Cambodia. The outcomes will be discussed regarding the objectives of the research paper, and the discussed data will be based on the existing literature reviews compared with the findings from previous scholars in different settings. According to the literature review, three main motivational factors behind acquiring shadow education in Cambodia are students' grades, overemphasis on examinations, school quality, teacher economic benefits, and teacher corruption.

3.1. Findings

The dominant motivational factor triggering students to attend shadow education in Cambodia is students' grades and an overemphasis on examinations. As seen in the literature review, the overemphasis on examinations is the primary motivational factor driving Cambodian students to take shadow education. Indeed, preparatory courses for a particular examination are prevalent in Cambodians. Every year, many students from all backgrounds seek prep-shadow education courses to strengthen their knowledge before taking an examination (Theme 1).

Two inspirational drives force them to take shadow education: 1) being too nervous about the national examination and 2) wanting to get good grades. They believe that with this preparatory course, they will be able to catch up with the lessons and get used to how to take the national exam. Also, they expect a high chance of passing the exam with good grades. With a good grade result, they will have a high probability of getting the scholarship. It is revealed that in Cambodia, the passion for shadow education at the secondary level, especially in Grades 9 and 12, indicates that parents and students are worried about national examinations (Theme 2).

It is also agreed that many students experience significant anxiety before taking college entrance examinations, and their anxiety level is increased more when their parents express an interest in seeing colorful high grades. Then, students attend shadow education despite their parents' money loss and lack of confidence and after-school social and sports activities (Theme 3).

The central pressures triggering shadow education in Cambodia are school quality, teacher economic benefits, and teacher corruption. The first burden that generates shadow education is school quality. Students are more interested in shadow education since they have discovered that mainstream schooling is somewhat inadequate. During their regular school hours, students do not have sufficient time to discuss examination questions and answers, nor do they have challenging exercises to practice. Sometimes, it is difficult for them to understand

what is taught, as some teachers do not give instructions on how to answer questions correctly in public classes. Some similar findings have also been found in other countries (Theme 4).

The study proved that one of the main factors leading to shadow education is also school quality. Another pressure on shadow education is financial gain for teachers or teacher corruption. According to the findings in the Cambodian context, shadow education is a part of the inclusive system and connected to low teacher salaries. Teachers are forced to seek alternative sources of income, such as opening shadow education classes or charging students informal fees. It is also found that shadow education is related to corruption and the shadow education market (Theme 5).

Finally, there were some measures to reduce shadow teaching. They have been tested with NGS, where shadowing is prohibited. A new initiative, New Generation School (NGS), is the Cambodian version of charter schools, similar to those found in the United States. Since 2014, the government has been working to create sustainable and autonomous public schools that are flexible enough to provide quality education to students. An entirely new way of teaching, learning, and managing is based on a pilot project called the Beacon Schools Initiative. Cambodia Action first implemented the project to Promote education in 2011, and since 2015 it has been piloted by MoEYS (Theme 6).

3.2. Discussion

Here, the authors strongly agree with [7], [17], [17], [19], [25], and [19], showing that shadow education is related to corruption and the shadow market. It is widespread that teachers do not explain all points to students during regular teaching hours. They teach basic lessons, and sometimes they do not even teach any lessons but copy the lessons on the board for the students and then leave the class and keep those exercises to explain in their private classes. Despite the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports warning, those teachers claim they cannot give up their shadow education classes due to inadequate salaries. Still, most of the teachers who open shadow education classes are not poor; a majority earn at least \$100 per day from their shadow education classes. Also, they come to school in modern cars; thus, shadow education in Cambodia is really due to teacher corruption.

Based on the findings above, to reduce shadow education, first, the teachers should be attentive and active during regular school hours. The lessons should be carefully planned within provided schedules, giving students enough time to ask questions and discuss lessons and exercises; particularly, assign them appropriate exercises to practice at the end of each lesson. Besides, class teachers should assess and evaluate their students' learning outcomes to ensure they have made progress in learning. Second, rather than just thinking about income, teachers should reconsider the negative impacts of shadow education on poor students. Not all students can afford to pay fees for shadow education; thus, if the teacher pays less attention to teaching or teaches nothing during the regular school teaching hours, those disadvantaged students will asymmetrically lose their chances

to learn new things and fail their learning. Finally, teachers should plan, teach, and assign a lot of mock national examinations to students to cut down on dependence on shadow education due to too much anxiety about the national examination. Learners will get used to the real national examination settings after many mock national examinations. Therefore, they will not need any shadow education anymore.

4. CONCLUSION

Education plays an essential role in developing all sectors of society, particularly economic and social development. Since the increasing need to advance educational outcomes and the consciousness that investment in education can result in high returns, achievement in key examinations, and entrance to upper secondary schools and universities, shadow education has seen significant growth worldwide, including in Cambodia. Three main factors leading students to depend too much on shadow education in the Cambodian educational system are the overemphasis on examinations, the school quality, and economic benefits or teacher corruption. To reduce this shadow education reliance and to avoid the negative influences on the outcomes of education and educational equity, teachers should reconsider their teaching behaviors and performance during school hours by focusing on their duties more than the additional income, as not all students can afford the fee [29], [30]. NGS is the best means of reducing shadow education in the Cambodian context [2].

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