Book Review

Shadow Education in Africa: Private Supplementary Tutoring and its Policy Implications by Mark Bray, Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong, 2021, 91 pp., US$16 (paper) or free download ISBN 978-988-14241-9-8

Madison Collins
Teachers College, Columbia University

Mark Bray's book (2021), *Shadow Education in Africa: Private Supplementary Tutoring and its Policy Implications*, is the first of its kind providing a comprehensive look at tutoring in Africa, which is most commonly researched in Asia (Bray, 2021, p. viii). On a continent where educational development has taken many forms, Bray draws attention to the educational opportunities privileged students in Africa have access to through for-profit tutoring. His analysis draws on the same aspects of African education that pose challenges to educational development in general, such as an unqualified teaching force, unsatisfactory compensation for teachers, international and region assessments, and the rural/urban divide among student achievement. Bray's book provides a warning to the field of International Educational Development of what could become of African education with increased shadow education or increased supplementary tutoring and provides a guide on how to combat it with policy recommendations that expand the best practices found already in place in some countries. Researchers and practitioners can gain a foundational awareness from this book regarding the implications of global education development standards and the progression of shadow education in practice in Africa.

The author's vast scope of all 54 countries in Africa is bold but unrealized as only a few countries are found to have significant data to quantify shadow education in the region. However, this scope does provide comparison through what data was found. By comparing the quantity and quality of data for Egypt to that of Burkina Faso or Ethiopia, it is clear that some regions on the continent are ahead of others regarding considerations of shadow education. To this point, without any uniform procedure for data collection across the continent focused on private tutoring and its effects, the data is scattered. This scattered data used as evidence to support the presence of shadow education in Africa describes various cases with different populations making it difficult to compare. This lack of uniform data is a finding in itself as it highlights a gap and establishes a first step toward addressing shadow education in Africa. Although the data is not strong, Bray has made it clear it is not too early to consider shadow education and its effects on the continent of Africa. He has found quantitative and qualitative evidence to show it is present in the region and widening the gap between public and private education.

Supply and Demand: Teachers

The development of African countries has often been compared to that of Asian countries, with Asia as an example of a success while African development is viewed as a failure with continued poverty and underdevelopment found throughout the continent (Noman & Stiglitz, 2012). Universal standards for educational development such as the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) presented by the United Nations and the predecessor, Education For All (EFA) initiatives, create an uneven playing field for the various contexts around the world to achieve simultaneously. Bray argues that these goals have led to an acceleration of shadow education as the result of an increased push for universal access to quality education. Shadow education, through the private sector, can bridge some of the financial gaps and elevate the overbearing responsibilities put on teachers that are created by these global goals.

Many factors, such as the current stage of African educational development, the challenges across the region, and influence from international actors, combine and contribute to a supply and demand situation in favor of shadow education as a commercial good to increase the competitiveness of schooling on the continent. Bray highlights the commodity of education as a "positional good" (Bray, 2021, p.67). Children's education is an indication of a families' ability and willingness to afford additional resources like tutoring positioning them above other families who cannot afford this.

The economic impact of shadow education becomes clear through the incentives of teachers and families to contribute to this supply and demand. Teachers feel they are unable to teach the entirety of the curriculum during official school hours, and at the same time are underpaid; while parents want their children to get the best quality education they can. Evidence compiled by Bray illuminates this dynamic, leading to an increase in tutoring by teachers after class time, exclusively for students able to pay extra money (Bray, 2021, p.11). Parents are willing to endure these costs to provide proper preparation for the national assessments that determine students' success in education (Bray, 2021, p.7). The burden of global educational standards and families' need for educated children is left to the teachers by completing the curriculum, providing quality teaching, and supporting individual students' educational needs. These challenges are often witnessed by those working in African educational development contexts, but Bray's book identifies these challenges in a unique way as contributing to private tutoring. This renewed view of these well-known challenges facing education in Africa puts increased pressure on organizations and governments to address the challenges at the source.

The Data

Through the use of tables, the data is contextualized with details such as the source, year, population, etc. This presentation of data is necessary given the vast differences in data collection and analysis sourced for this study. Unfortunately, this also makes it overwhelming for the reader, difficult to compare, and hard to understand the meaning of the data as evidence for the continent-wide analysis. Of the 54 countries included in this study, only 25 countries are presented in Table 1, which highlights "selected cross-national indicators of shadow education" (Bray, 2021, p. 13). Of these 25 countries, the

author digs deeper to identify differences within groups of countries such as Arabic-speaking North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa as well as by Francophone, Anglophone, and Lusophone (Bray, 2021, p.11). Bray identifies challenges in gathering data from every country in Africa, such as restricted access or the lack of existence of data on this topic for some countries. With less than half of the countries on the continent represented, making generalizations about the entire continent would be unfair and inaccurate. Therefore, the author's approach to presenting each country individually with the data available through tables helps to contextualize the similarities and differences across the region, but this is left to the reader.

Bray expands his analysis into various areas, such as the business sector, as some tutoring is done through private for-profit businesses, which contribute to the business sector of development for a country. By examining various elements of shadow education such as in rural versus urban settings, the business climate in various African countries, and perceptions of tutoring, Bray is truly "mapping the landscape" as he has titled the chapter in which much of this data is held (2021, p. 13). This comprehensive overview of the data -what little is available- establishes the foundation for continued research of the shadow education situation in the African region. Therefore, after presenting the *landscape* of African shadow education, Bray provides policy recommendations to prevent the recurrence of many of the harmful effects of private tutoring seen in other parts of the world.

Bray's Recommendations

From the data presented in the book, it is clear that there is shadow education happening on the continent and that only some students and teachers benefit from these practices, while most are impacted negatively. Bray outlines what steps governments can take now to prevent a total loss of control of education to the private sector through increased shadow education. The recommendations are categorized into four areas: *securing data and monitoring trends*, *reforming assessment selection and curriculum, devising and implementing regulations*, and *developing partnerships* (Bray, 2021, pp. 50-63).

The first section identifies the critiques made in this review that the author assembled a "jigsaw puzzle" of data, but with many missing pieces (see also Bray, 2010, p.3). He notes this as a commonality with shadow education research in general (Bray, 2021, p. 50). Bray addresses the need for a common yardstick to allow for comparison across countries when analyzing the case of Africa in regard to shadow education. Meeting this need should be viewed as furthering the research started through this book and Bray's other works (1999; 2003; 2009; 2010; 2017) and closing the gap made obvious through Bray's findings in this book.

The remaining recommendations are accurate and needed, but they are impractical for the scope of this book. With the scope of this analysis as the entire continent, it is assumed by the reader these are policy recommendations for the entire continent as well. How can assessment and curriculum reform be enacted across the African continent while maintaining individuality among countries? Similarly, how can the same regulations be

implemented across the continent while still allowing for economic competition in the region? Bray assumes all the countries in Africa will eventually succumb to shadow education, so therefore, these recommendations should be employed across the continent to address and prevent its expansion or presence. The author should have spelled out specific recommendations for the various levels of shadow education present in some countries, similarly to how he presented data that was available through tables. Bray does, however, describe practices already used on the continent by some countries to combat the negative effects of shadow education (2021, p. 59). By highlighting current best practices developed by those on the continent, a foundation for further recommendations is built. Finally, the recommendation of partnerships draws the attention of partners already established on the continent to prioritize private tutoring and develop more effective responses.

Conclusion

The book *Shadow Education in Africa: Private Supplementary Tutoring and its Policy Implications* by Mark Bray examines a new concern for educational development in the African region. His recommendations for expanded data collection specific to shadow education and consistent across the continent is well warranted and address the critiques described in this review. The "scattered" nature of data on shadow education in Africa calls on future researchers of this topic to streamline approaches to collecting data across the continent. This data collection can be done through the partnerships presented in Bray's recommendations working with organizations already collecting data on other topics throughout the region; for example, national household surveys could include questions regarding shadow education. While his other recommendations are useful, they should be contextualized to each country on the continent regarding the current level of private tutoring taking place and the level of development the country's education system is in. This book begins the conversations surrounding shadow education in the African region and provides a foundational resource for others to expand through its accessibility to the public via open access online download. I recommend this book as an introduction to the current state of supplementary education practices as they unfold on the continent of Africa as well as a warning to inform practitioners and researchers of the implications of global educational development standards in the region. This book is also a helpful database resource for statistics regarding shadow education in different forms, in different contexts with various populations of students.

Madison Collins *is a recent graduate of the International Educational Development Master's program at Teachers College, Columbia University. During her time at Teachers College Madison led the Center for African Education by developing events focused on human rights education, developing resources for students and expanding the center's network with stakeholders on the continent.*

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