

# Shadow Education and Inequality: Comparison of Government Policies in South Korea and Japan

## Topic and Research Question

Over the past years, scholars have been reporting the growth of the industry that is specialized in supplementation of formal schooling known as shadow education. Its various forms from private tutoring to cram school business have emerged and gained popularity worldwide. The entire practice of shadow education usually aims at the enhancement of academic performance, targeting preparation for specific exams or a remedial revision of the material.

Policy planners and educators have been critical of the role that shadow schooling plays in society. They argue that the system creates socioeconomic inequalities and disrupts the wellbeing of students. Also, it consumes substantial human and financial resources which potentially could be more efficiently distributed. Additionally, shadow schooling is often viewed to be an indispensable component of educational success, putting students of low-income families to disadvantage due to the cost of participation. The split between rich and poor, accompanied by fierce educational competition, builds pressure on students and is believed to be one of the reasons for emerging social and health problems.

Prominence of shadow education sector in East Asian countries, especially in South Korea and Japan has been in the spotlight of attention. Both countries have the largest shadow education systems in the world as well as a rich (and contrasting) history of its regulation.

The purpose of this MA thesis is to provide an understanding of education systems of South Korea and Japan, analyze an effect that shadow education might have on economy, society and education systems of both countries and examine policies that target this industry. The comparative analysis of these two cases outlines a set of possible actions on how to regulate the shadow education system.

Research Question: "What are the similarities and differences of South Korea's and Japan's government policies targeting equality of educational opportunities and student wellbeing (with the focus on shadow education system)?"

## State of the Art

A general analysis of the shadow education industry and its connection to education equality was previously carried out by Bray (2003, 2006, 2009). Reasons for its

worldwide growth and impact on the education system and society were analyzed. Similar research was carried out by Bray and Lykins (2012) that focused specifically on South and East Asian regions.

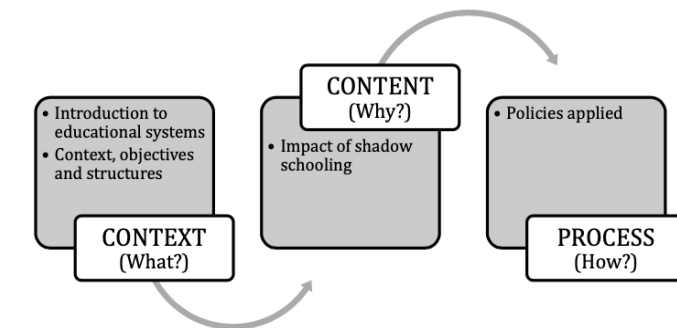
Rohlen (1980), Harnisch (1994), Russel (1997), Roesgaard (2006) and Mawer (2015) researched the origin, curriculum and content elements of the most common Japanese shadow education formations, known as *juku*. A similar study was made with a focus on the Korean case (*hagwon*) by Kim (2016).

Relationships between participation in shadow schooling and academic achievement in Korea and Japan were previously investigated by Stevenson and Baker (1992), Baker et al. (2001), Choi et al. (2012), Matsuoka (2015) and Entrich (2014).

Lee et al. (2010), Kim and Lee (2010) and Choi and Cho (2015) focused specifically on policy responses in Korea whereas Mori and Baker (2009) and Yamato and Zhang (2017) did the same for the Japanese case.

## Methodology and Approach

An eclectic "context-content-process" comparative framework is based on the methodological literature that focuses on education policy analysis. (Goedegebuure et al. (1994), Haddad (1995), Napier (2005), Wiseman and Baker (2005), Mok (2006), Yano (2013), Jie (2016), Commonwealth Secretariat (2017), OECD (2017)).



The first part analyses contextual aspects of Korean and Japanese educational systems and its "shadows". It explores key demographic, economic and educational characteristics of these countries. It describes how shadow education developed in Korea and Japan and studies its scale, intensity and mode.

The "content" part describes what influence it might have on the economy, society and education system of both countries and how that influence brings the discussion on the equity of educational opportunities.

The "process" part studies the regulations applied to shadow education systems.

## Main Facts

In 2015 total private expenditures for all types of tutoring in Japan were about 12 billion USD. (~7.8 billion USD on *juku*) In Korea, total private expenditures were about 18 billion USD (~9 billion USD on *hagwon*). Estimated household expenditures for shadow education are also higher in Korea than in Japan (~17% and ~10% on average on all school levels respectively).

The participation rate in tutoring for academic subjects is generally higher in Korea than in Japan: almost 10% more for elementary, 4% more for middle and 20% more for high school students. Besides, the number of tutoring organizations in Korea is higher than in Japan (69.678 vs 50.000). About half of high school students in Korea used shadow education for competition. In Japan, only about 13% of middle and high school children attended *juku* for that purpose. The main reasons for the attendance are remedial and socialization. Costs of *hagwon* are generally higher than on *juku*, e.g.: 305 vs 531 USD for high school.

## Results

Different regulatory response patterns to shadow education were identified. The Korean government connected shadow education to the issues of social inequality and to the "examination hell" problem. In contrast, the Japanese government used mainly *laissez-faire* and indirect approaches leaving the system to the market forces.

Patterns	South Korea	Japan
Policies equalizing school allocation and regulating resources	- Abolition of middle school entrance examinations (1968) - High school equalization policy (1973) - Fee-free high schools (2021) - Standardization of high school graduation exam (1995)	- "Yutori <i>kyouiku</i> " or "pressure-free" reform (the 1990s) - 6-year secondary schools (1999) - Standardization of high school graduation exam (1999)
Policies limiting private tutoring	- Ban on shadow education activities (1980) - Control of the private teaching institutes and tutoring activities (1997-2020) - Income tax	- Income tax
Policies improving the quality of mainstream education	- Policies increasing school autonomy and reducing shadow education spending (2000-2009)	- Improving the status of teacher profession (the 1970s and the 1980s)
Policies broadening access to supplementary education	- Educational broadcasting system and after-school programs (2000-2020)	- <i>Chiiki Mirai Juku</i> Program (2015)

The analysis indicated 4 main response patterns: policies equalizing school allocation and regulating

resources; policies limiting private tutoring; policies improving the quality of mainstream education and policies broadening access to shadow education.

Shadow education helps students to learn and improves their human capital. Moreover, it is an important source of income for tutors and can be an important socializing element for pupils. However, the research showed that the proliferation of shadow education might cause socioeconomic inequalities through the reproduction of wealth. For both country cases, shadow education might put families from lower SES to disadvantage, since their children have fewer possibilities to succeed in academia then students from more affluent families, despite possibly high academic abilities.

Results of the research show high levels of household expenditures on shadow education, especially in Korea, highlighting substantial differences in consumption depending on SES of families. Additionally, the experience of Korea and Japan showed that shadow education can become a demotivating factor for mainstream school teachers. Finally, the cases of Korea and Japan showed that fierce competition, excessive cramming approaches and limited freedom for self-expression might hurt students both mentally and physically.

Based on the results of the comparative analysis implications for policymakers were discussed. Utilization of technology; restructuring of the allocation systems; development of partnerships; improvement of the quality of teaching staff and school accountability; modification of the curriculum and other methods of regulation were spelt out based on Korean and Japanese experience.

## References

All references can be found in the full version of the MA thesis available at <http://othes.univie.ac.at>

## About the Author

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