

Supplementary Education

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Abstract

Private tutoring is an attendant phenomenon of school education, in which every third student in Austria is participating. However, social inequality in the education system is deepened not only through paid tuition, but also through additional educational opportunities. The article argues for an extended access to extracurricular educational opportunities in order to reveal social disparity.

Keywords: Inequality in education, supplementary education, private tutoring, cultural capital, social distinction

Introduction

In the past, public education in industrialised countries continuously developed towards a comprehensive system. However, this expansion does not limit itself to the so-called “developed” countries, but rather can be seen as global, even if in the so-called “developing” countries the quota of alphabetising and educational participation to an extent of 100% is still far off (UNESCO, 2016). This enormous expansion has led to serious consequences in every societal and cultural context. According to Baker (2014), the massive expansion of the public educational system during the 19th century was led by a “powerful culture”, which “transformed most individuals in the world, and created far-reaching consequences for all facets of society” (p.55). Simultaneous to the development of the public educational system, additional educational opportunities were established. To some extent the existing educational opportunities simply subsisted or complementary opportunities emerged in addition to the public school system.

Before nation-wide and nationally organised general education was introduced, it was, together with cultural heritage, one of the most important distinctive tools of the societal elite. Despite the introduction of compulsory education, those distinctive advantages of the societal elite still have not been equalized; instead, the superiority was simply shifted. Distinctive advantages in the educational system are still present, less in compulsory education (for example, private schools), but increased alongside compulsory education in the form of complementary and extracurricular education.

In German-speaking regions, despite the educational political topicality, private tutoring had been one of the least researched topics in the field of educational sciences. This lack of research slowly changed during the 1990s. Nowadays, research into private tutoring is well established, but often fragmented and limited towards specific aspects (Dohmen, 2009; George, 2011; Haag & Jäger, 2011; Klemm & Hollenbach-Biele, 2016; Kramer & Werner, 1998; Luplow & Schneider, 2016; Rackwitz, 2005; Synovate, 2007). The focus on private tutoring itself leads to such limitations, since the inequality reinforcing dimensions of non-compulsory education are covert. One could claim that private tutoring can be used as a tool to decrease the gap of social inequality (i.e. through introducing educational vouchers for low-income families, or free private tutoring) in order to disguise the real inequality reinforcing moments of non-compulsory education.

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Terminology

Educational opportunities alongside compulsory education are extremely heterogenic. Already when defining the terms and categories themselves, several competing terms evolved in the English language. Names such as "Supplementary Education", "Supplementary Tutoring", "Private Tutoring", "After-School Tutoring" or "Shadow Education" have been mentioned (Bray, 2003, 2006). This points out the diverse facets of the field of non-compulsory educational opportunities and the rather heterodox relationship to the public educational system. However, in the German language all aspects of supplementary education are traded under one name: private tutoring. Traditionally, private tutoring is defined as any supportive action or opportunity which refers directly to the curricular content of compulsory education, but is offered outside school and out of regular school hours (Klemm & Hollenbach-Biele 2016; Dohmen et al. 2008). Remedial education, which is offered in the school environment, explicitly does not fall under the category of private tutoring. The same applies to simple help with homework. Private tutoring should be defined through its additional costs, even if low-income families are not affected by payments due to additional subsidies of third parties. Such opportunities can be offered by special institutions, single persons, or as an online service.

Theoretical framework

Numerous studies regarding private tutoring have been conducted in the recent decades. Surprisingly, almost all of them without a theoretical link, an exception being two studies of the sociologist Thorsten Schneider (Schneider, 2005; Luplow & Schneider, 2016). In his first study (Schneider, 2005), he refers to the theory of occupational choice. From this theory, Schneider deduced several hypotheses which he tested via secondary analysis of the German socio-economic panel study. However, just two of his original hypotheses could be confirmed. Loss of societal status as a trigger to participate in private tutoring has not been verified. Furthermore, older siblings and parents (mother) with a higher level of education did not influence the amount of participation (ibid, p.377). Luplow & Schneider (2014) presented a further analysis focusing on primary education. In addition, he extended the theoretical point of view with the theory of "social capital" established by James Coleman (Coleman, 1988). The hypotheses were tested with the data gathered in the longitudinal study „Bildungsprozesse, Kompetenzentwicklung und Selektionsentscheidungen im Vorschul- und Schulalter“ (BiKS). It is interesting that little evidence was found to prove these hypotheses. In addition, the previously assumed causality between income and probability of participation could not be confirmed (Luplow & Schneider, 2014, p. 46). A surprising fact, since in previous research (Schneider, 2005) the same researcher assumed a higher selectivity in the education system through private tutoring. At least in primary education this cannot be seen as valid. One explanation could be that parents in primary education are still able to compensate the visible learning difficulties of their children themselves, while when facing the same problem in secondary education, the necessary knowledge needed for support is missing (ibid, p. 47).

Different studies provide dissimilar results (AK, 2017; Haag & Jäger, 2011). By attempting to prove that almost all theory-based hypotheses cannot be validated, it seems reasonable to assume that the reference theories did not measure the correlations in question, especially the approach towards rational choice reduces the decisions in education to conscious and rational decisions of the parents. This seems natural in this case, but not exclusive when related to decisions in education. Above all, Bourdieu (1982) impressively showed that cultural capital is transferred unconsciously, and that concerned parties are often not able to articulate those matters since these are not reflected in their habitus. In addition, Coleman's theory of social capital cannot register such "fine differences".

Findings

Reasons for participation

Literature shows four major motives to participate in private tutoring: student-oriented, school-system-oriented, parent-oriented and job-market-oriented. Student-oriented motives result, for example, from missing lessons or being overwhelmed and should simply close the gap of missing knowledge (Kramer & Werner, 1998). School-system-oriented shortcomings refer to perceived flaws in the education system. Structural shortcomings (many students in one classroom, lack of teachers, overstuffed curricula, early selection) are to be compensated (Schneider, 2006). Parent-oriented motives are connected to aspirations in education, which partly do not meet the actual capability or performance of children, which leads to a higher participation in private tutoring. The last motive, job-market-orientation, refers to acquiring the highest possible certificates in education in order to raise the chance of achieving the most lucrative employment (Schneider, 2005).

Extent / Subjects

Approximately 18% of Austrian students have participated in private tutoring in the ongoing or past school year, although 14% was at the participant's expense (AK, 2017). Differences according to gender could not be found. As expected, the rate of participation is not divided equally in relation to different educational institutions, but rather the highest amount of requests appear in higher secondary education (BHS 5-year vocational schools 26%; AHS gymnasium 28%), followed by vocational schools with a duration of 4 years or less (23%). In lower secondary education the request rates between lower secondary schools (German: neue Mittelschule) and upper secondary schools (German: Gymnasium) are almost similar (15% und 17%). In primary education, just 3% of the students participate in paid private tutoring. The above-mentioned Schneider's statement can be used to explain these results. Parents of children in primary education are still able to compensate themselves the visible learning difficulties of their children, while, when facing the same problem in lower (SEK I) and higher secondary education (SEK II), support is no longer possible. In Germany, the participation in private tutoring is divided differently between educational institutions: according to the study "15. Shell Jugendstudie", students in lower secondary (German: Hauptschulen) participate the most in private tutoring (26%), followed by 22% in grammar school (German: Gymnasium) and 21% in middle school (German: Realschule) (Albert & Hurrelmann, 2006, p. 72). However, according to a study in Luxemburg, Mischo and Haag (2002) did not find any significant differences in participation in private tutoring or division of educational institutions. It is simply referred to as a general "school-system-stabilising factor". The high participation quotas vary depending on different educational organisations: rates in all-day school are cut in half and a similar result can be observed if remedial education is included in school time. Parallel results can be found related to specific subjects in which private tutoring is requested: German and other foreign languages follow frontrunner mathematics (in Austria: mathematics 62%, foreign languages 42%, and German 22%). In terms of subjects, distinct gender differences can be observed as well: female students more frequently request mathematics (65% vs. 59%) and male students more frequently request German (26% vs. 18%) (AK, 2017, p. 34).

When is private tutoring requested?

A study of the "AK Wien", the Chamber of Labour Vienna, indicates that 50% of the respondents participate in private tutoring in order to receive higher grades. Another 33% are facing a re-test or are trying to avoid a negative grade. Merely 4% mention that private tutoring is needed to be accepted into a higher educational institution (AK 2017, p. 38). Interesting is that 5% of the

respondents state that even when in need of private tutoring, they are not able to draw from such resources. Low-income family 12% and highest-income family 4% (ibid, p. 39). This leads to the assumption that it is not in general financial issues that hinder participation in private tutoring. 60% of the respondents of low-income families state that they cannot afford private tutoring, even if needed, 38% state that they cannot afford it at all and 21% state that the right tutor for private tutoring is missing (ibid, p.40).

However, the possibility of compensation is not sufficient to explain the participation in private tutoring. Inquiries have shown that preventive reasons can become issues that are more important. For example, in a study from "Scoyo" using a survey for parents it is stated that: "For consistent grades (52%) or changing to a different educational institution (49%), parents would decide towards private tutoring besides normal lessons" (Scoyo, 2015, p. 2). Therefore, private tutoring can be seen as an instrument to secure and improve individual life-chances of children at an early stage of their lives.

Financial strain / Socio-economic background

Generally, it is assumed that private tutoring can only be afforded if one has a relatively high income. At the same time, children from low-income families (often with migrant background) are accused of having a higher demand for private tutoring. However, the findings of participation in private tutoring and household-income are inconclusive. Schneider (2005) outlines a clear connection between family income and participation in secondary education: a higher income leads to higher expenses in private tutoring. Schröder, Spieß & Stork (2015) have different findings: higher income leads to a higher willingness to invest into education, but lowers the expenses for private tutoring. In Schneider's (2005) approach, both parameters increased. The Chamber of Labour Vienna (AK Wien) outlined a clear correlation between household-income and costs for private tutoring: Children from low-income families (up to 1800 €) participate the most in private tutoring. Yet, a general trend cannot be recognised. In the highest-income families (over 3000€) the quota for participation decreases (16%). If one takes the figures of the analysis of households as a calculation basis, the so-called "Matthew Effect" occurs. The higher the family income, the higher the participation in paid private tutoring.

In addition to that the Chamber of Labour Vienna (AK Wien) outlines correlations between the educational level of parents and the private tutoring quota: children of parents with lower secondary education (German: Hauptschule) participate the most in private tutoring (27%, paid 20%). The quota of children's participation decreases to 15%, respectively to 13%, if the parents have an academic degree (AK, 2017). In Germany, those findings could not be proven: Klemm and Hollenbach-Biele (2016) were not able to outline a correlation between parents' educational background and participation in private tutoring. However, both studies agree that children from educationally alienated families participate significantly more in free private tutoring than children of well-educated parents (Austria: 8% vs. 2-3%; Germany: 37, 5 vs. circa. 20%).

Findings related to students with migrant background are likewise inconclusive: the Chamber of Labour Vienna (AK Wien) found that children with migrant backgrounds have a higher participation rate in private tutoring than children without such backgrounds (22% vs. 12%). According to Klemm & Hollenbach-Biele (2016), students without migrant backgrounds participate more often in private tutoring than students with migrant backgrounds (14% vs. 11%). In the Bildungsbericht 2010, an educational report in Germany, no differences could be found.

Indeed, the presented data does not lead to causality between income and participation in private tutoring, but there are clear indicators that households with higher incomes tend to use private tutoring more often. If this is equitable or not, cannot be easily answered. According to Schlösser & Schuhen (2011), privately funded education is not per se unfair, but becomes

inequitable the moment it covers shortage or flaws in the public education system. This leads to a violation or constraint of “education as a civil right” (Dahrendorf, p. 377). This aspect led to an international discussion about educational policies and the demanded for specific political counter-measures: in the U.S.A. with “No Child left Behind” and in Australia by providing educational vouchers (introduced in 2004; eligible families can receive vouchers up to \$700) with the goal of providing private tutoring for children from families with an income below average. The idea is to provide equal educational standards for everyone, and to avoid a sharp fall back of children from disadvantaged families (Mori, 2013; Watson, 2008). The effectiveness of those measurements cannot be foreseen, but it seems to be apparent that an educational voucher for equalisation ensures a fair balance between low-income and high-income families. The general focus of private tutoring differs, depending on various cultural environments (“Holistic Education” or educational arrangements existing beyond compulsory exams and subjects versus educational arrangements simply focusing on passing the already existing compulsory education and exams).

Impact

Maybe one of the most important questions related to private tutoring could also be the one most difficult to answer. Since private tutoring is paid for, one does expect a positive impact on educational performance. However, it is hard to determine such relations, since it is impossible to measure the development without private tutoring; a comparison between control groups is highly problematic. It is little surprising that the (subjective) satisfaction of the participants is relatively high, contradicting the findings of the research. Stefanie Hof (2014) used Swiss PISA data to investigate the impact of private tutoring and concluded that no general findings can be provided, since the impact correlates with various parameters, i.e. aspiration level of educational institutions, students’ level of competence and the amount of private tutoring. Luplow und Schneider (2014) state: “According to the analysed data of our students who participate in paid private tutoring, no significantly increased developments of competences was shown” (p. 47). When considering international research, they outline: “international findings related to efficacy of private tutoring are very heterogenic” (p.33). However, there are occasional positive correlations between private tutoring and students’ performance. According to Haag (2001), significant improvements of students’ performances and motivational-affective areas were made by using a pre- and post-conceptual control group test.

Perspective and further development

A previous overview about the phenomenon of private tutoring shows, on the one hand, that private tutoring has become a permanent factor of school. On the other hand, that this status becomes problematic if deficiencies in the school system have to be compensated. Such compensations would lead to a direct influential disadvantage for certain groups of persons.

The assumption that paid private tutoring leads to an intensification of social disparity in the education system seems to be apparent and reasonable, but cannot be proven unambiguously by empirical methods. It is possible that the weaknesses of previous studies lies within the theoretical assumptions leading to wrong hypotheses, or that many studies do not rely on theoretical background (or without expatiating the theoretical background). Especially by focusing on inequality caused by private tutoring, the previous terminology as well as the theoretical and empirical framework are defined too narrowly. Research on private tutoring does at least scratch the surface of the topic, although without representing the deep structure of social disparity. A gain in distinction through education does not just arise from official certificates, but rather emerges through cultural and social capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1971; Bourdieu 1985). In order to gather and cultivate such capital it is not enough to participate in compulsory education-related private tutoring. Instead, such capital “is inherited” through family and is refined in specific settings which usually take place outside the family environment and, like private tutoring, parallel to school (which does not have

to be public). If children attend expensive private schools, private tutoring is offered during school hours, i.e. afternoon courses. Many private schools advertise resolutely with such non-curricular opportunities.

This calls for an expansion of the terminological framework, the theoretical basis and the empirical operationalisation in order to reveal the phenomenon of social inequality through educational opportunities outside of the school environment.

Terminological Extension

Private tutoring draws its legitimacy from the close connection between school lessons and educational performance goals: transferring knowledge, successful exams, training in methods and preparation towards higher education. Following this logic, it can be assumed that educational performances, documented by certificates from schools lead to career positions which are connected to social status and income. This meritocratic logic appears to be fair and democratic, but does not work in general. Besides educational certificates (symbolic capital), cultural and social capital play a crucial role in attaining career positions. These are transferred and cultivated, in addition to family-transferred capital, through musical, aesthetic, linguistic, sportive and (high) cultural educational opportunities which are usually involved in outside of the school lessons but paid for by parents. These lead to the acquisition of good taste, to elaborate use of language and include children into a social network in an early stage. Summarised: "fine differences" (Bourdieu) are already manifested very early. This gain in distinction leads to a higher social disparity in the education system, disadvantages low-income families and undermines the goals of inclusive education. Hence, the suggestion that all educational opportunities which run alongside the school system should fall under the category of „supplementary education“. Classic tutoring in education is presented as a sub-category of supplementary education.

Theoretical Extension

In theory, conceptual expansion needs consequences. A possible approach would be to use Bourdieu's (1982) capital- and habitus-theory for studies in the field of supplementary education. In addition, parallel testing of further approaches to measure different kinds of capital is necessary. Schneider's (2005) research used James Coleman's (1987) theory about social capital which should be extended to the field of supplementary education (supplemented through Robert Putnam's studies) as well as the concept of human capital by Gary Becker (1964). Within this overview and the current status of research no suggestions for adaptation and operationalisation towards those approaches can be made.

Empirical Extension

Despite the rapid development of research in private tutoring over the past years, the methodological approaches are very homogenous. Most of the studies are based on inquiries of students, parents and teachers. Few engage supplementary education teachers directly (except Thomas et al., 2006). In order to gather the defined expansion of supplementary educational opportunities, additional methodological approaches are needed. Even if one cannot reject inquiries, qualitative methods should be applied in order to gain a deeper understanding of single phenomena (Lareau, 2011). This is especially necessary for the acquisition of family capital. Examples of such data capture are: a survey amongst students regarding their (high) cultural activities (DiMaggio, 1982), or questioning students regarding their reading, music, and TV preferences (Sullivan, 2001). Others focus on parental cultural and social capital (De Graf, De Graaf & Kraaycamp, 2000). Mohr and DiMaggio (1995), Sullivan (2001) and Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) connect both perspectives. All those approaches are instructive but are in need of adaptation concerning supplementary education.

In addition, the focus has to be enlarged content wise. For example, an inventory of supplementary educational opportunities for different age-groups and educational institutions is needed (public and private). Not only the costs and the ratio of family income should be investigated, but also the effects that supplementary educational opportunities have on educational performance.

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